

COMPLETION REPORT

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Subject of Research Project: **Japan Official Development Assistance to Mekong Region: A Comparison Study of Japan's Aids for Human Resource Development (HRD) in Burma/Myanmar and Vietnam**

Japan has implemented a proactive pacifist strategy towards international development assistance that emphasizes quiet dialogue and the cultivation of human capital rather than the mere acquisition of physical assets. As a result of this approach, Japan has emerged as a significant official development assistance donor to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Soviet Republic of Vietnam. These countries are of geopolitical importance, serving as gateways to the Indian Ocean for ASEAN and China and playing critical roles in the economic development of the Mekong Region.

Japan's approach to official development assistance is rooted in two primary principles: national interest (*kokueki*) and international affiliation (*tsukiai*). These guiding principles have been central to Japanese diplomacy since the postwar era and continue to shape Japan's approach to international development today. Since 2003, Japan's official development assistance program has undergone a significant paradigm shift, pivoting from focusing on physical capital development to prioritizing human capital development in aid recipient countries. This shift is reflected in the diversity of educational and technical cooperation initiatives implemented by Japan's official development assistance program and its support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

One notable example of Japan's commitment to human capital development is the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship by the Japanese Grant Aid (JDS) program. As of 2022, Myanmar and Vietnam were the primary beneficiaries of this program, which awarded scholarships to a cohort of 5712 individuals from 21 nations. Notably, 648 individuals from Myanmar have been awarded JDS scholarships, with 20 among them having been conferred with doctoral degrees. Similarly, 788 individuals from Vietnam have been granted scholarships, with 17 among them having completed their Ph.D. studies.

The JDS program primarily benefits government staff, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to take on essential responsibilities in international organizations like the UN and ASEAN and in national policymaking and development projects. However, there is room for improvement in the program, as recipients from NGOs and grassroots organizations are not currently included, and subjects like political science, human rights, and peace and conflict studies still need to be covered.

Despite these limitations, the JDS program is a powerful tool for enhancing Japan's soft power and influence in the region and positively benefits recipient countries. The sustainability of this human resource development support is indispensable, and efforts should be made to expand and improve the program in the years to come.

Overall, Japan's approach to international development assistance reflects a commitment to human capital development and quiet diplomacy rooted in the guiding principles of national interest and international affiliation. As Japan continues to play a significant role in the economic development of Southeast Asia, programs like the JDS scholarship will be crucial for cultivating the human resources necessary for sustainable and equitable growth.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

- I will be sure to provide updates as soon as I get any confirmation for academic conference for my research finding presentation.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)