

## Japan-UNICEF Joint Learning Mission

In November 2001, BCO received the visit of the Japan-UNICEF Joint Learning Mission. This was the first attempt to jointly take stock of the experiences of past collaboration and draw critical lessons from them and expand collaboration in new areas. The mission members consisted of officials of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JICA headquarters, UNICEF Tokyo and New York headquarters. Concerned staff of the local Japanese Embassy, JICA office and BCO joined the mission. Bangladesh was selected as the first country to receive such mission because of; 1) its successful and long history of Japan-UNICEF collaboration in both multi-bilateral technical assistance and grant aid schemes; 2) its close working relationship between the Japanese Embassy, local JICA office, and the UNICEF country office; 3) good possibility in initiating collaboration in new areas; and 4) its socio-economic situation giving high priority to social development.

During the one-week-visit in Bangladesh, the team reviewed the results of selected cases of the past collaboration between UNICEF and Japan including polio eradication, EPI, IDD control, and EOC, and studied the possibility of initiating cooperation in new areas such as the IDEAL project in primary education, and arsenic mitigation. These projects were reviewed in terms of **results and impact** of cooperation, **visibility** of the Japanese assistance, as well as level and process of **coordination** among Japan, UNICEF, and their government and NGO partners in the field. In addition to the meetings conducted in Dhaka with GOB partners, the team visited four districts away from Dhaka to see the actual implementation of various projects in the field.

The followings are the major lessons learned:

**Importance of selecting strategic areas of collaboration** where the results, impact and visibility of collaboration can be clearly demonstrated and areas which are critical for the strategic priorities of the Government of Bangladesh, the Government of Japan (e.g. Japan-US Common Agenda and the Global Issues Initiative) and UNICEF (e.g. Goals for 1990s).

**Visibility through Multi-Bilateral Collaboration can be ensured** with a standard package of visibility-related activities developed and carried out by UNICEF. UNICEF has very skilled staff in information and public relations, and their services were utilized in supporting the above-mentioned high profile events and media coverage.

**Importance of Close Interaction and Coordination** between Japan, Bangladesh and UNICEF with regard to the planning and execution of individual cases of collaboration including exchanging information on each other's priorities on various occasions. This has contributed to strengthening collaboration and making the entire efforts more "result-oriented". Moreover, it gave the individual cases of collaboration higher priority, more prominence and more stability over a long period of time.

The mission leaders expressed satisfaction with the results of the ongoing activities; and recommended the continuation of collaboration in the existing areas of polio eradication, EPI, IDD control, micronutrients and emergency obstetric care, in addition to the initiation of collaboration in the two new areas of arsenic mitigation and primary education.

It was apparent from the Mission that programme cooperation with UNICEF was appreciated and valued. The Japanese team highly commended UNICEF's implementation capacity, particularly in raising public awareness and working with communities and NGOs; community management; and continuous monitoring. These positive outcomes will be reported during the forthcoming Japan-UNICEF annual programme consultation meeting to be held in February 2002.