

International Cooperation for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Using the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the Republic of Indonesia

For over 70 years, Japan has employed the Maternal and Child Health Handbook to track the health of mothers and their children throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood, as well as to guide mothers and families to monitor the child's health at home. Japan now has one of the lowest maternal and child mortality rates in the world. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has supported the introduction of the handbook in the Republic of Indonesia (hereinafter, "Indonesia"), and has provided technical cooperation on the development, pilot, and promotion of a handbook that is suitable for the country for many years. In this section, Osaki Keiko, a health senior advisor, gives an outline of the initiative. (Text: Morohashi Kumiko)



Photo: JICA Osaki Keiko

Indonesia once faced high rates of infant and maternal mortality. The Maternal and Child Health Handbook is a tool long employed in Japan. The introduction of the handbook in Indonesia can be traced back to a request from an Indonesian doctor who visited Japan as part of a JICA training course. JICA's support started with Maternal and Child Health Improvement Projects in the 1990s. After planning, development, and training phases, the handbook began to be distributed and were gradually expanded throughout Indonesia. Osaki recalls the situation at the time as follows.

"At that time, in Indonesia, it was still common for midwives to assist with childbirth at home, and when medical care was necessary, families needed to bring women, mothers and children to the hospital on their own. Also, despite there were community-based child health checkups under the *Posyandu* system, once the mandatory vaccinations were completed, mothers tended to stop attending, resulting in limited opportunities to monitor the growth of infants and young child thereafter," she explains. "The introduction of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook has played a significant role in ensuring records of pregnancy progress, childbirth, and childcare, providing a means to communicate within families and between families and



Above: A healthcare professional, with the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in hand, inquiries about the health status of the child at home

Below: Motherhood education program utilizing the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the matchilhandbooks



A mother looks at her child's Maternal and Child Health Handbook, featuring illustrations tailored to the circumstances in Indonesia



Above: Maternal and child health handbooks in Indonesia have been adapted to each province by featuring a photo of a local mother and child on the cover, making them more relatable.

Left: Sharing insights gained in Indonesia through international training in Bali

healthcare professionals, then regularly monitor the health of both mother and child.”

The introduction of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Indonesia involved tailoring it to the country's unique context rather than simply translating the Japanese model. This adaptation included incorporating text as well as numerous illustrations to provide health and childcare information for pregnant women, mothers and their families, ensuring the provision of valuable health-related insights. In regions where the handbook was actively utilized, there have been observed improvements in the environment surrounding mothers and children, with continuous care provided throughout the pregnancy, childbirth, and period after childbirth. There has also been an increase in support from husbands for childbirth and home-based care. The handbook's design, featuring a photo of a local mother holding her infant on the cover, further enhances its appeal to Indonesian mothers.

“Differing from Japan's Maternal and Child Health Handbooks, the use of photos of mothers and children on the cover sparked considerable enthusiasm in the newly introduced regions. There was a strong desire to feature local parent-child photos on the cover, emphasizing the importance of increasing their sense of ownership,” explains Osaki. “While the standard version of the handbook now features a single cover, there was a time when we incorporated different parent-child photos for each of the 33 provinces in Indonesia.”

Now, with the introduction of the National Health Insurance system in 2014, the system is being put in place that anyone can receive the medical care they need. The circumstances surrounding childbirth has improved considerably. In addition, international training has begun in order to share the insights gained from the Indonesian projects with countries in Asia and Africa that are considering adopting Maternal and

Child Health Handbooks like Indonesia. JICA is also continuing to cooperate.

“Continued cooperation in various forms since the project began in the 1990s has provided Japan with a valuable learning experience in the field of international cooperation and development,” observes Osaki. “In fact, when the Maternal and Child Health Handbook was introduced, the Indonesian Ministry of Health had a strong desire to reduce infant mortality and was taking proactive steps to achieve this goal. While exploring approaches, the universal value of Japan's Maternal and Child Health Handbook, applicable globally, was recognized. I suppose that it was an opportunity for Japan to discover valuable tool that can contribute to the world.”

Reference

Key JICA international cooperation projects utilizing the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Indonesia

- **Project on Ensuring Maternal and Child Health Service with MCH Handbook Phase 2**
Term of cooperation: October 2006 to September 2009
Outline: In Indonesia, where both infant mortality and maternal mortality rates were in need of improvement, Japan provided technical assistance through development, promotion, and other forms of cooperation following the pilot implementation of the Indonesian version of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook in Central Java province in 1994. In this cooperation project, efforts were made nationwide to establish a system that would ensure the continued functionality of Maternal and Child Health Handbooks as a means of integrating maternal and child health services. Support included creating models for effective utilization of the handbook including motherhood education programs, enhancing training and monitoring of implementation, and conducting evaluation activities.
- **Project for Enhancing the Quality of Maternal and Child Health Program and the Implementation of Maternal and Child Health Handbook in the Era of Decentralization**
Term of cooperation: October 2018 to October 2024
Outline: To promote the continuum of care for maternal and child health in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the cooperation project focuses on pilot models of regular health check-ups using the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, the development of a booklet for preterm and low birth weight infants used alongside the handbook and exploring the utilization of digital technologies. These efforts are aimed at further enhancing maternal and child health services, particularly in key provinces. Additionally, the cooperation supports the sharing of insights with countries in Asia and Africa through the implementation of international training programs.

Reference websites:

<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/0600435/index.html>
<https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/project/1600614/index.html>