

# **External Evaluation Study for Japan Platform Syria Response**

## **Final Report**

**By Independent Evaluation Team**

**Tokyo, 02 March 2015**

**Sabine Becker-Thierry  
Stephanie Jayne  
Katsuji Imata  
Yuko Fujino**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
KEY TERMS IN THE JPF SYRIA RESPONSE.....	7
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	8
<b>I. BACKGROUND – JPF SYRIA PROGRAMME EVALUATION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II. EVALUATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>10</b>
1. SPECIFIC CONTEXT FOR THE JPF EVALUATION .....	11
2. SCOPE AND TIME PERIOD: FOCUS IS ON EVALUATION OF JPF AS A PLATFORM.....	11
3. EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY .....	12
<b>III. KEY EVALUATION COMPONENTS AND APPROACH .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1. THE STRATEGIC LEVEL: RELEVANCE OF THE JAPANESE SYRIA RESPONSE.....	13
2. THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL: EFFICIENCY OF THE JPF FUNDING MECHANISM.....	13
3. THE IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL: EFFECTIVENESS OF JPF AS A PLATFORM.....	13
4. ALL LEVELS: VALUE ADDED OF JPF AND JAPANESE FUNDING IN THE SYRIA RESPONSE.....	14
5. ADDITIONAL THEME THAT EMERGED: ROLE AND MISSION OF JPF .....	14
<b>IV. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>14</b>
1. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS .....	14
2. SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES: BY THE NUMBERS.....	15
3. DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH.....	17
4. LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY .....	18
<b>V. EVALUATION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1. STOCKTAKING: CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
1.1. <i>The international response is severely underfunded .....</i>	<i>19</i>
1.2. <i>The Syria response has been a priority issue for Japanese emergency funding..</i>	<i>19</i>
1.3. <i>Japan ranks #9 in amount of contributions providing 3% of total appeal.....</i>	<i>20</i>
1.4. <i>Yet, government funds to JPF/ NGOs for Syria response is a small percentage..</i>	<i>22</i>
1.5. <i>Government emergency funding to NGOs comes through MoFA.....</i>	<i>22</i>
1.6. <i>International community is not well aware of JPF’s Syria response activities....</i>	<i>23</i>
<b>2. UNDERSTANDING THE JPF STRATEGY, MISSION, AND ROLE .....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1. <i>JPF Member NGOs do not have a clear picture of the JPF strategy.....</i>	<i>24</i>
2.2. <i>JPF’s Programme Specification Document provides only general direction .....</i>	<i>25</i>
2.3. <i>It is unclear how JPF’s strategy should be formulated within the Japanese</i>	
<i>government policy for Syria.....</i>	<i>25</i>
2.4. <i>JPF Member NGO activities follow the Regional Response Plans .....</i>	<i>26</i>
2.5. <i>Primary activities of the JPF platform were identified for the Syria Response ...</i>	<i>27</i>
2.6. <i>Additional factors to be considered when developing JPF’s strategy .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<b>3. JPF’S MISSION/ ROLE IN THE SYRIA RESPONSE IS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD BY</b>	
<b>STAKEHOLDERS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1. <i>Member NGOs have many expectations of the role of JPF/Secretariat .....</i>	<i>29</i>
3.2. <i>JPF has planned to expand their role, but little has been implemented .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<b>4. THE JPF PROCESS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
4.1. <i>Mapping the JPF process .....</i>	<i>32</i>
4.2. <i>From start to finish, many steps are required.....</i>	<i>33</i>
4.3. <i>Proposal formulation is driven and coordinated by the member NGOs, but not</i>	
<i>equally .....</i>	<i>34</i>
4.4. <i>Guidelines and criteria for decision-making are neither standardized nor clear</i>	
<i>for all member NGOs.....</i>	<i>35</i>

4.5. <i>The value of some steps in the JPF funding process are debated among NGOs...</i>	36
4.6. <i>Mixed reviews on the speed of the JPF funding process.....</i>	36
4.7. <i>Focus is on rules and details rather than a streamlined process .....</i>	37
<b>5. MORE COORDINATION COULD BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE JPF SECRETARIAT, BUT EXACTLY WHAT KIND? .....</b>	<b>38</b>
5.1 <i>More coordination in Tokyo among NGOs? Unclear .....</i>	38
5.2 <i>More coordination among different sectors of the platform? Yes.....</i>	38
5.3 <i>More coordination in the field? In specific cases possibly, but in general, costs likely outweigh the benefits .....</i>	40
<b>6. EFFECTIVENESS/ RESULTS .....</b>	<b>40</b>
6.1. <i>Assessing the main results achieved by JPF-funded NGOs by using the OECD-DAC criteria.....</i>	40
6.2. <i>Coverage.....</i>	41
6.3. <i>Efficiency .....</i>	42
6.4. <i>Effectiveness.....</i>	44
6.5. <i>Key Findings within JPF Effectiveness .....</i>	45
<b>7. VALUE ADDED OF JPF AND JAPANESE FUNDING IN THE SYRIA RESPONSE ....</b>	<b>47</b>
7.1. <i>Funding as a main benefit, but too little and short funding cycles.....</i>	47
7.2. <i>Broad range of non-monetary benefits.....</i>	48
7.3. <i>Value-Added of JPF Secretariat .....</i>	50
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
ANNEX 1 - JAPAN'S SUPPORT TOWARDS SYRIA CRISIS - UP TO OCTOBER 2014 .....	55
ANNEX 2 - 2013 MONITORING REPORT TABLE OF OUTPUTS AND BENEFICIARIES .....	56
ANNEX 3 - JPF PROCESS FLOW CHART.....	60
ANNEX 4 - MONTHLY REPORT TEMPLATE .....	61

## Executive Summary

Since 2012, the Syrian crisis has created unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian community, having displaced millions of people within Syria and abroad including in Turkey Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Within the context of the international response, Japan Platform (JPF) has been playing a role for the Syria assistance by way of allocating USD 25.4 million of the Japanese government's funds to 12 Japanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The **focus** of this evaluation is on JPF's actual work as a platform and is divided into four components:

1. Strategic relevance and role and mission of JPF,
2. Operational process as a JPF funding mechanism,
3. Effectiveness of JPF results, and
4. Value-added of JPF as a platform.

The **data collection** in this evaluation included desk review of international strategy documents; policy priorities for Japanese government Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian assistance; JPF documentation on strategy and processes, NGO project formulation and appraisal, and monitoring documentation and reports, etc. as well as site visits to Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon and stakeholder interviews both in Japan and in the field (27 in Japan and 47 in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq).

In general, the evaluation team found that the activities funded by JPF in the field are operational and that JPF funded activities fall within the activities outlined in international strategy documents. In addition, Japanese NGOs are being supported financially in their efforts to provide humanitarian services to Syrian refugees, and most member NGOs feel that they are being well supported by the JPF Secretariat.

More specifically, the evaluation team came to the following conclusions:

**Strategy and relevance, role and mission of JPF:** JPF member NGOs demonstrate the relevance of their activities by carefully following international strategy documents, such as the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6). However, with a relatively small amount of the Japanese government funds and limited visibility in the UN/ international community, it is important that JPF member NGO projects have a clear purpose within a larger JPF strategy. Therefore, the following findings are important.

- JPF Member NGOs do not have a clear picture of the JPF strategy for its Syria response: JPF's implementing NGOs have difficulties seeing how and where they fit into a coherent plan between the strategies of the UN, the Japanese government, and JPF;
- JPF's programme specification documents provide only general direction;
- It is unclear how JPF's strategy should be formulated vis-a-vis the Japanese government policy for Syria.
- JPF's mission/role in the Syria response is not well understood by stakeholders, and member NGOs have many and varying expectations of the role of JPF and the Secretariat.

**The JPF operational process:** A review of the current processes, procedures, and criteria used by JPF to assess, and fund proposals from member NGOs showed that, overall, the process is functional. However:

- From start to finish, many steps are required, each step takes varying lengths of time, and reviews on the speed of the JPF funding process are mixed.
- Proposal formulation is currently driven and coordinated by the member NGOs, but guidelines and criteria for decision-making are neither standardized nor clear for all member NGOs.
- The value of some steps in the JPF funding process are debated among NGOs, especially related to the Core Team and Project Examination Committee.
- Focus is on rules and procedures rather than efficiency, at the same time, the Secretariat is perceived as highly accommodating, supportive and responsive in its reaction to queries.
- Additional coordination could be undertaken by the JPF Secretariat, more so in Japan than in the field.

**Effectiveness/ Results:** Three main components of effectiveness were assessed:

- Coverage: With such a large-scale refugee crisis, the number of beneficiaries reached by JPF-funded projects is (naturally) relatively small.
- Efficiency: Data suggest that JPF work is rather efficient overall and in some sectors and countries even more efficient than others in terms of \$/beneficiary, yet outputs of JPF member NGOs are spread across sectors and countries.
- Overall effectiveness: Without a clear JPF strategy and specific goals and objectives to measure against, it is difficult to evaluate JPF's effectiveness in a consistent manner. While there is no evidence that any results on the ground have had negative effects, it is difficult to make the connection that the "results" of member NGOs are also "results" of JPF.

**Value added of JPF and Japanese funding in the Syria Response:** "Value-added" of an organization is how the organization is *perceived* by others in terms of its strengths and contribution to overall goals.

- Access to JPF funding is perceived as the main benefit for member NGOs, yet, too little funding is available and short funding cycles make the situation challenging.
- A range of non-monetary benefits was also identified, including the promotion of networking/ information sharing among member NGOs, advocating on behalf of member NGOs, highlighting the Syria refugee crisis and the work of Japanese NGOs in the public, and the high degree of support and responsiveness continuously provided by very committed JPF Secretariat staff.

**Overall,** JPF's Syria response has shown itself to be well operational and functional since the start of its Syria response activities in November 2012. The member NGOs acknowledge that the JPF Secretariat's support is positive without which they would not have been able (or not to the same extent) to respond to the crisis, while many feel that the whole system can be improved as stated above. Now entering its third year of support, JPF needs to consider the challenges inherent in the complex and lasting crisis while, simultaneously, re-assessing its internal structure in order to ensure it can provide even more focused, efficient, and

value-added support to the Syrian refugees and become more known and respected outside of Japan.

The evaluation team formulated five main **recommendations** that should assist JPF in:

- **Clarifying its role and mission as well as ensuring (more) strategic relevance** through the JPF Secretariat taking a leading role in defining the JPF Syria response strategy as well as laying out JPF's Syria response logframe and strengthening communication on this with member NGOs;
- **Further streamlining the JPF funding mechanism process** by reviewing which steps are crucial and which may be removed before standardizing and documenting each step.
- **Enhancing the implementation and effectiveness of JPF results in the field** through taking specific measures in information gathering/transfer, monitoring and evaluation, and communication;
- **Strengthening the value-added of JPF as a platform in the Syria response – internationally** by more actively improving its visibility, for instance through a revised website; **and in Japan** by preparing and executing an annual awareness-raising and fundraising strategy.

## Key Terms in the JPF Syria Response

Japanese	English	Note for translation (“__” would be direct translation)
常任委員会	Standing Committee (SC)	
趣意書（初動）	NGO Proposal for Project Initiation (NPPI)	For the project initiation, it was a “concept note” written by member NGOs.
申請書（複数年）	NGO Proposal for Project Continuation (multi-year)	It was then called “proposal” for the multi-year intervention afterwards.
要望書	NGO Request	The term “request” is used sometimes when NGOs/IPs write to JPF
事務局整理、プログラム方針	Draft Project Specification Document / Project Specification Document (PSD)	A simple “staff explanation” term is used when the secretariat writes up a document, usually for the SC to explain the staff position on the NGO proposal, which is rather automatically used as project specification.
支援方針案、支援担当レベル方針案	Staff Proposal	For the 2014 cycle, the terms “support proposal” and “support proposal – staff level” were used to explain the staff position.
事業申請書	NGO Activity Proposal	Individual activity proposal written by NGO/IP for its own project.
モニタリング報告書	Monitoring Report	
2014JPF シリア支援担当レベル方針案 (2013年12月16日)	Staff Paper	This is a staff paper written in response to the Monitoring Report, which formed a guidance to the “new policy” from 2014,
調整・連携 (chosei/renkei)	is <b>different from</b> Coordination	The English term "coordination" has a connotation of much more substantive work than the Japanese term "chosei."

## List of abbreviations

AAR	Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CCP	Campaign for the Children of Palestine
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
HQ	Headquarters
(I)NGO(s)	International Non-governmental Organisation(s)
IPs	Implementing Partners
IVY	Name of Japanese NGO
JARC	Japan Actions for Relief Center
JEN	Japan Emergency NGO
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JPF	Japan Platform
KnK	Kokkyo naki Kodomotachi: Children without Borders
MoFA	(Japan) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan)
NFIs	Non-food items
NICCO	Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development
NPPI	NGO Proposal for Project Initiation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PEC	Project Examination Committee
PSD	Project Specification Document
PWJ	Peace Winds Japan
RRP	The Regional Response Plan
SCJ	Save the Children Japan
SC	Standing Committee
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(UN)OCHA	The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WP	Wakachiai (Sharing) Project



## I. Background – JPF Syria programme evaluation

The Syrian crisis has created unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian community. Within nearly 4 years, the war has displaced close to 6.5 million people internally within Syria and forced over 3.7 million Syrians to seek refuge abroad, primarily in the neighbouring countries of Turkey (1,165,279 registered refugees), Lebanon (1,146,405), Jordan (619,777), and Iraq (228,484).<sup>1</sup>

For the international community, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been leading the coordination of the response for the influx of Syrians in need of protection and assistance in the neighbouring countries. However, the High Commissioner for Refugees already noted in 2013 that UNHCR and its partners had been 'stretched to the limit'.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, the numbers of multilateral and bilateral actors involved (both governmental and non-governmental) have grown and resulted in a more and more comprehensive and complex set-up for the response. Each year, UNHCR and the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) have led the development of coordinated response plans in the form of Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) as well as Regional Response Plans.

The guidance documents most relevant for this study are:

- ***The Regional Response Plan (RRP6)***<sup>3</sup>
  - o Is a 12-month inter-agency plan, coordinated by UNHCR that articulates the shared vision of how to respond to the affected population's needs;
  - o Covers the region and each refugee-hosting country;
  - o Outlines priority objectives, agreed needs assessment, strategic response, and resource requirements;
  - o Is a joint product of governments, operational partners and donors;
  - o Provides a baseline for future changes due to fluctuating situation.
- ***The Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan***<sup>4</sup>
  - o Is the strategic plan for the inside- Syria operations;
  - o Complements the government led humanitarian response and other appeal frameworks (e.g. by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies);
  - o Implemented in full coordination with the Government of Syria and in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 ("Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations");
  - o Contains Guiding Principles (Annex) that actors commit to deliver humanitarian aid with full respect to the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic; and
  - o Underscores the need to ensure timely delivery of assistance.
- ***The Response Plan for the Syrian Humanitarian Operations from Turkey July 2014 – June 2015, as well as the recent regional and national response plans for Lebanon and Jordan.***
  - o It lays out six strategic objectives to which over 96 organizations, donors, and sector working groups from all humanitarian sectors agreed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers dated 1 December 2014; Egypt also counts refugees (137,504) - <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

<sup>2</sup> The formal opening of the 64th annual session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in Geneva, 1 October 2013. <http://www.unhcr.org/524ae6179.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.data.unhcr.org/syria-rrp6/regional.php>

<sup>4</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2014-syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-sharp>

- It counts more than 35 international NGOs, a significant number of Syrian NGOs, and 25 Turkish NGOs as providing support.

The Government of Japan, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has been supporting the international community in its Syria response both by directly funding UN organizations, such as UNHCR, OCHA, WFP, etc. and by providing funds to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japanese Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) through Japan Platform (JPF)). Since the eruption of the crisis, the Japanese government has committed more than USD 300 million in humanitarian assistance to Syria and its neighbouring countries.

JPF has been playing a role by allocating a portion of Japanese government’s funds for the Syria assistance to Japanese NGOs<sup>5</sup>.

<b>Japan Platform (JPF)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ is an international humanitarian aid network of Japanese NGOs</li> <li>✓ delivers aid through close cooperation between NGOs, the business community, and the government of Japan since 2000</li> <li>✓ provides financial support to 49 Japan-based member NGOs as implementing partners to respond to emergencies including natural disasters and conflicts.</li> <li>✓ Since its creation in 2000, it has implemented 980 humanitarian aid projects, totaling approximately US\$ 318 million in over 40 countries.</li> </ul>

Active since November 2012 on the Syria Response, JPF has allocated a total of USD 25.4 million for emergency humanitarian assistance covering multiple sectors, such as Non Food Items (NFIs), Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Education, Child Protection, and Livelihoods while also focusing on vulnerable groups.

For the Syria Response, JPF counts a total of 12 implementing partners (IPs; member NGOs) that operate in one or more of Syria’s neighbouring countries. These are:

- AAR:** Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
- ADRA:** Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- CCP:** Campaign for the Children of Palestine
- IVY**
- JARC:** Japan Actions for Relief Center
- JEN:** Japan Emergency NGO
- KnK:** Kokkyo naki Kodomotachi: Children without Borders
- NICCO:** Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development
- PWJ:** Peace Winds Japan
- SCJ:** Save the Children Japan
- WP:** Wakachiai (Sharing) Project and
- WVJ:** World Vision Japan

## II. Evaluation Goals and Objectives

Given the continuing crisis in Syria, the likelihood of increased funding from the Japanese government and recent questions about strategic and field-level coordination, JPF has commissioned an external evaluation study to:

<sup>5</sup> The IPs that obtained funds from JPF have been assigned as part of the RRP6.

- “improve aid transparency, accountability for our donors,
- understand and comprehend JPF programme achievement, and
- advocate lessons learned that could contribute in practice to make JPF Syria Response more effective and efficient.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the overarching goals of this (external) evaluation are two-fold:

1. Provide learning to JPF (and its member NGOs) to inform its strategy and coordination role; and
2. Provide accountability to the donor and the public in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and value-added of JPF’s work.

## 1. Specific Context for the JPF Evaluation

Several key factors influence the specific context of the 2012-2014 JPF evaluation.

Firstly, various JPF stakeholders (JPF Standing Committee, advisors, and members of the JPF Secretariat) have recently shown interest in further exploring the optimal role to be played by JPF as a network. For example, the Standing Committee of JPF has been advocating for strengthening JPF’s coordination role, whereas in the past, JPF’s primary role seemed to be to provide fast funding to its member NGOs. More recently, the need for quality assurance and coordination of the Japanese Syria response is growing in its importance and thus, it is in this context that JPF has commissioned an evaluation of its Syria response.

Given the goals and objectives of this evaluation, the primary audiences for this evaluation are JPF and its 12 member NGOs involved in Syria response activities, as well as MoFA, who provides the funding through JPF on behalf of the Japanese government.

In addition, this evaluation was conducted in English, for the first time for JPF. Hence, it provides an opportunity to present JPF’s work to the international community more broadly, with regard to its contributions in general and its contribution to the RRP6 in particular.

## 2. Scope and time period: Focus is on Evaluation of JPF as a platform

The purpose of this Evaluation is to assess JPF as a platform, within the context of its Syrian refugee response activities.

Because JPF as a platform does not conduct refugee response activities itself on the ground, the focus of this evaluation is on JPF’s actual work as a platform and not as an implementing agency. **This includes the relevance of its work and/or strategy, the efficiency and effectiveness of its appraisal process, technical/thematic guidance, and its coordination activities in Japan and in the field, and the overall value-added of JPF as a platform.**

It is important to clarify that this evaluation should not be understood as a repository of comprehensive individual project evaluations for the 38 JPF funded projects that are part of the Syria refugee response portfolio.<sup>7</sup> Extensive assessment of the Syria response projects and activities implemented by JPF member NGOs is more appropriately suited for the role of JPF monitoring and/or the monitoring and evaluation efforts of the member NGOs themselves.

---

<sup>6</sup> Terms of Reference for this evaluation (p. 1, Study Background, last paragraph).

<sup>7</sup> 15 ongoing projects and 23 finished projects at the time of this evaluation

That said, the evaluation team reviewed JPF monitoring reports and selected project results to the extent these helped in understanding JPF’s strategy, coordination role and challenges. The evaluation team also conducted field visits to a sample of the 15 on-going projects to better understand the situation encountered by JPF members in the field.

The time period covered in this evaluation is from the start of JPF engagement in Syria response activities in November 2012 – December 2014. This includes three funding phases for JPF’s Syria Response programme and corresponds to two regular funding cycles as well as three supplementary budget rounds by MoFA.

### 3. External Evaluation and Confidentiality

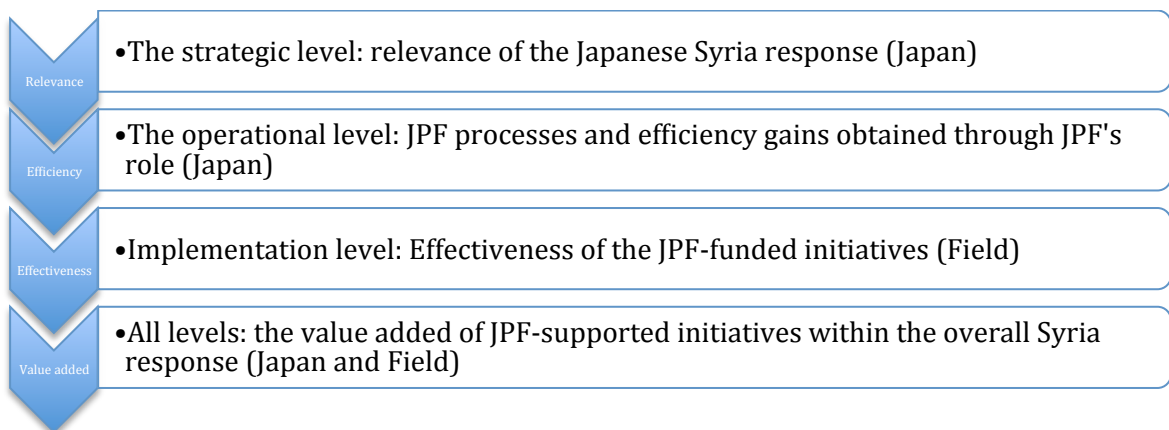
The understanding of the evaluation team is that JPF commissioned an external evaluation with third-party evaluators because of a desire to better understand how to improve its work along multiple dimensions – as a funding distribution mechanism, as a platform of member NGOs, and as an international player in the humanitarian and emergency response community.

One of the most fundamental elements/benefits of an *external* evaluation is that data, especially from interviews of key partners and members, is more likely to be direct, straightforward, and insightful when conducted *independently* by third-party evaluators. The evaluation team understands that field visits/field interviews with no JPF staff present is a new approach for JPF, and their decision to follow this international standard raises the standard of its own evaluation process.

All 73 interviewees the evaluation team spoke to were assured absolute confidentiality. Most respondents were willing to share insightful feedback that will prove valuable to JPF in the long run. However, this also means that some data and/or quotes may seem vague because important details had to be redacted to fulfil the evaluation team’s commitment to confidentiality.

## III. Key Evaluation Components and Approach

Against this backdrop, this JPF evaluation focused on the following key evaluation components:



## **1. The Strategic Level: Relevance of the Japanese Syria response**

This part focused on compiling information regarding the international strategy of support to Syrian refugees for January-December 2014, as laid out in key documents, such as the RRP6 and SHARP. With these as guiding documents for the international strategy, the role of JPF support was explored, as well as attempting to clearly identify the Syria response strategies employed by JPF. Financial data from the OCHA database “Financial Tracking Service” (FTS)<sup>8</sup> was researched to help further explain the context within which JPF is working.

## **2. The Operational Level: Efficiency of the JPF Funding Mechanism**

At an operational level, one of the primary roles played by JPF is the project application and approval process for member NGOs interested in implementing Syria refugee response projects. This also includes distribution and monitoring of MoFA funds to support member NGO projects in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq. Thus, the efficiency of the JPF funding mechanism is an important element of an evaluation of the JPF organization overall.

Using the JPF flow chart<sup>9</sup> as a starting point, the Evaluation team developed an additional diagram that mapped out the JPF funding process, primarily from the perspective of member NGOs. This JPF process map was used as a discussion tool during interviews to better understand which parts of the process were working well and which needed improvement. The aim was to provide information to all parties as to ways that the funding process can be improved.

There are other humanitarian funding mechanisms in operation, such as mechanisms of the European Union’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) or its Emergency Response Fund (ERF), or the Office of the US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). But, these mechanisms have very different structures, approval processes and funding schemes such that the evaluation team did not feel that a comparative analysis would be beneficial to JPF.

## **3. The Implementation Level: Effectiveness of JPF as a platform**

After gaining a clearer understanding of the JPF funding process, it was also important to identify the effectiveness of JPF as a platform, and to the extent that data was available, the effectiveness of the funds distributed through this process.

To assess the effectiveness of JPF as a platform, the evaluation team used the evaluation criteria initially defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) and further adapted as a framework for the humanitarian context by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).<sup>10</sup> Thus, the DAC concepts of Coverage,

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://fts.unocha.org>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.japanplatform.org/about/flow.html>

<sup>10</sup>ALNAP/ Beck, Tony, available at <http://www.alnap.org/resource/5253.aspx>.

Efficiency, and Effectiveness were explored *within* the context of assessing overall effectiveness of JPF.

The evaluation team also analysed activities on the ground by sector and country, where summarized data was available. With 38 projects funded by JPF since November 2012 and each project required to complete weekly, monthly, and final reports, it was clear that JPF collects a lot of data that can be used for on-going JPF monitoring of project outputs and/or results. Thus, this was not a focus of the evaluation team.

## **4. All Levels: Value added of JPF and Japanese funding in the Syria response**

To determine the “value-add” of JPF at all levels, the evaluation team assessed the perception of JPF funded activities in the field in terms of both monetary and non-monetary contributions. In this way, JPF can identify areas of value to different players and also gaps in service that JPF may wish to consider strengthening.

All components of the JPF evaluation are linked and build on each other. For example, to understand the context within which JPF and its member NGOs work, one needed to first obtain an overview of the current Japanese Syria response and the role of JPF within that response. From there, the process used by JPF to fund member NGO projects that support Syrian response activities on the ground was analysed. This helped to reveal what type of projects are funded by JPF, how JPF response activities are implemented, and to what level of effectiveness. Only after analysing and understanding each of these components was it possible to assess both the value added of JPF and possible areas for improvement.

## **5. Additional theme that emerged: Role and mission of JPF**

An important theme emerged during data collection and was explored in conjunction with the four key evaluation components described above. This additional theme is related to the mission and role of JPF and it is discussed in conjunction with the Strategic Level component.

# **IV. Methodology**

## **1. Data Collection and Analysis**

With the key evaluation components in place, the evaluation team then dissected the components to develop a specific methodology as to how to collect and analyse the most relevant data and information.

The methodology for data collection in this evaluation included several components:

### **1. Desk review of:**

- International strategy documents for the Syrian refugee response (SHARP, RRP6, Response Plan for the Syrian Humanitarian Operations from Turkey, Mid-year-updates, etc.).

- MoFA policy priorities and criteria for Official Development Assistance (ODA) (to the extent available, including ODA Charter, Mid-Term Plan and Country Assistance Program (kunibetsu enjo hoshin), Humanitarian Aid Policy and the annual International Cooperation Priority Policy (kokusai kyoryoku jutten hoshin).
- JPF overall guiding documentation on strategy, processes, and criteria, including 'POWER' (JPF's New Project Structure and Operations) and 2012-2014 Mid-Term Plan.
- JPF NGO project formulation and appraisal documentation as examples of how the JPF funding process works.
- JPF 2013 monitoring report and JPF 2014 hearing sheets; reporting templates for member NGO weekly, monthly and project completion reports.
- JPF website, public and internal documents.
- Guidance specific to evaluation in humanitarian setting, including but not exhaustive of: OECD DAC evaluation criteria and additional guidance, ALNAP guidance on humanitarian evaluation, Sphere standards, INNE and other sector-specific guidelines, etc.

## **2. Process mapping & review**

- Developed process map of JPF funding process from start to finish
- Analysed potential areas for process improvement (using feedback from member IPs on the existing JPF process)

## **3. Stakeholder Interviews – in Japan and the field**

- Developed standardized, semi-structured interview guides in both English and Japanese for strategic, operational, field staff, and UN/international stakeholder interviews, as well as a one- page overview of the Evaluation project
- Conducted confidential interviews for five key stakeholder groups (see 'Summary of data sources: by the numbers'). Most interviews were conducted in person (90%); when necessary, interviews were conducted using other means (Skype, telephone, e-mail).
- Analysed results of three quantitative survey questions included in each interview guide.

## **4. Site Visits and Field Observation**

- Site Visits and field interviews were conducted in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon between 25 November and 4 December 2014. Interviews with Iraq-based individuals were conducted via telephone/ Skype.
- Field notes/ observations of working group meetings, staff meetings, member NGO activities, and discussions with beneficiaries were completed.

## **2. Summary of Data Sources: By the numbers**

In November-December 2014, data was collected from individuals from a variety of stakeholder groups and with a diversity of experiences; 64% of the individuals interviewed were field-based (n=47) while 37% of the individuals were Japan-based (n=27). One individual was interviewed in both Japan and the field, thus making the total number of interviewees 73.

**Table 1 - Japan-based Interviews, by number and stakeholder group**

Japan-Based Stakeholder Group	Number of Interviewees
Representatives of member NGOs, operational focus	15 interviewees 12 member NGOs
JPF Strategic Leadership (BoD, Standing Committee, Core Team)	5*
Japanese government / MOFA	2*
Other JPF stakeholders – (academic, UNHCR Tokyo)	3*
JPF Secretariat	4
<b>TOTAL JAPAN-BASED INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>27</b>

\*Two interviewees represent more than one stakeholder group, thus total differs by 2.

**Table 2 - Field-based Interviews, by number and stakeholder group**

Field-Based Stakeholder Group	Number of Interviewees	% of Total Field Interviewees
Representatives of member NGOs, Field-based	25*	53%
UN Agencies	18	38%
Ministry / Local NGOs	4	9%
<b>TOTAL FIELD-BASED INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*1 person interviewed in both Japan and field, thus total interviewees = 73.

It is important to note that Japan-based representatives from 100% of the 12 JPF member NGOs engaging/having engaged in Syria response activities were interviewed. JPF NGOs interviewed in Japan include:

**Table 3 - Evaluation coverage of JPF Member NGOs in the Syria response**

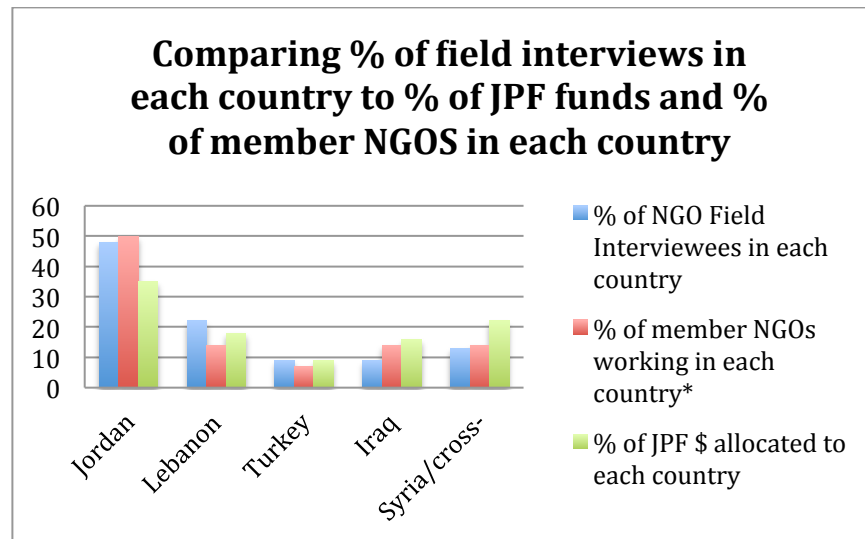
JPF Member NGOs in Syria response <sup>11</sup>	Interviewed in Japan?	Interviewed in the Field?
1. NICCO	✓	✓
2. PWJ	✓	✓ (skype)
3. SCJ	✓	✓
4. JEN	✓	✓
5. ADRA	✓	✓
6. AAR	✓	✓
7. WVJ	✓	✓
8. KnK	✓	✓
9. JARC	✓	No active projects
10. CCP	✓	✓
11. WP	✓	No active projects
12. IVY (in writing)	✓	✓
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>83% of total NGOs</b>

<sup>11</sup> For the full names of the 12 NGOs participating in the JPF Syria response, see p. 9. Note: the list does not include Oxfam Japan as there were no activities approved at the time of the evaluation due to the difficulty in receiving approval from Jordan's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC).



As shown in the chart below, the group of interviewed organizations/ individuals roughly matches both geographical distribution and financial distribution of JPF projects across countries in the region. This indicates that interview data is weighted fairly evenly in terms of the countries in which JPF member NGOs work as well as the amount of JPF funding received. The percentage of interviews in both Iraq and Syria are lower than the percentage of member NGOs working in that country and the percentage of JPF funding in each of these countries. This is largely due to security factors in these countries, which prohibited field visits.

**Graph 1 - Field interviews vs. financial and geographical distribution**



Source: self-compiled from data in JPF Syria Response Map-en20140731-1

### 3. Data Analysis Approach

With a focus on the four main evaluation components, team members reviewed the necessary documents and extracted key data. For important documents in Japanese, the documents were first translated / summarized in English.

For every interview conducted, detailed interview notes were recorded and assigned a numerical code to protect confidentiality. After all data collection was complete, team members met to brainstorm themes that had emerged from document review and extensive stakeholder interviews. These themes were centered around the four components.

Each team member then extracted relevant parts of the interview notes related to each theme. Additional themes were identified, some were further sub-divided and/or collapsed, and in this way, document and interview data were clustered by theme. Each comment captured in the interview notes of all team members was reviewed for relevance to possible themes, and identified as supporting, contradicting, or being neutral related to that theme.

Using this structured approach allowed the evaluation team to review and analyse qualitative data within a more structured (quantitative) framework. In addition, the interview guides for all respondents included three written survey questions. When possible, each interviewee was asked to complete the survey questions as part of the interview. The data from this survey is provided in the relevant sections of the report.

## 4. Limitations of the Methodology

As with any evaluation, especially in the emergency/humanitarian context, there are challenges that limit the methodological ability of the evaluation team to obtain the information needed in a clear and unbiased way. In this evaluation, the following limitations should be noted:

- There was no field visit to Iraq or Syria because of security factors, but the JPF member NGOs working in Iraq were interviewed via remote means. In addition, the evaluation did include interviews with individuals engaged in cross-border and within Syria operations.
- The evaluation team had limited access to specific information about operations inside Syria, due to legitimate security concerns.
- It was necessary for the evaluation team to discuss the list of interviewees with the JPF Secretariat as they are far more knowledgeable about the players; at times the Secretariat had a specific interest in including or not including possible interviewees.
- Data collection did not include interviews with all Standing Committee members, some of whom represent the business sector.
- This was the first time for JPF to request an evaluation in English; this involved several additional challenges because the language of large numbers of documents was Japanese. Two evaluation team members were able to effectively work in both Japanese and English but the two team members limited to English were unable to receive information first-hand in many situations. This may have been a challenge for JPF Secretariat members managing the evaluation process as well.
- Difficult translations between Japanese and English, especially with regards to the English terms “strategy” and “coordination.” This may have created some initial misunderstandings in discussions at the Standing Committee (SC) and/or during interviews in Japanese.
- Because of the timing of the decision by JPF Secretariat to allow the third-party evaluators to travel to field visits separately from JPF Secretariat members, there may have been some confusion in the field about the role of the evaluators, the purpose of the mission (i.e. monitoring vs. evaluation mission), and many interviews in the field had to be scheduled last minute.
- The evaluation team conducted no surveys/ formal interviews with beneficiaries because the focus was on JPF as an organization, and from the perspective of most/all of the beneficiaries, JPF is an entity largely unknown to the refugee community.

## V. Evaluation Findings

### 1. Stocktaking: context and relevance

In order to assess JPF’s Syria response, it is important to clarify what the response entails, and within which context the JPF Secretariat, the member NGOs and the Japanese government through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) operate. This includes an analysis of the Japanese funding situation for the Syria response as well as the JPF/Japanese strategy/guidance in relation to that of the international community.

## 1.1. The international response is severely underfunded

The Syria response is the largest humanitarian response so far in history. This is also reflected in the funding appeals. The RRP for 2014 is the largest appeal ever presented for a refugee emergency.<sup>12</sup> For January-December 2014, it originally requested a total of \$ 4.2 billion, which was revised later to \$3.7 billion. Still, as of 23 January 2015<sup>13</sup> (updated weekly), funding contributions only met 62 percent of the required amount. Similarly, the SHARP appeal for 2014, requesting \$2.28 billion of funds for January - December 2014, obtained 48% of funding, leaving needs of \$ 1.2 billion unmet.

**Table 4 – Financial coverage of major UN appeals for the Syria response**

Funding Appeal	Launch Date	US \$				
		Original Requirements	Revised Requirements	Funding	% Covered	Unmet
<b>RRP (2014)</b>	16-Dec-13	4,264,717,711	3,740,654,701	2,321,442,541	<b>62%</b>	1,419,212,160
<b>SHARP (2014)</b>	16-Dec-13	2,276,149,354	2,276,149,354	1,081,707,724	<b>48%</b>	1,194,441,630

Source: [http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R21\\_Y2014\\_asof\\_2\\_February\\_2015\\_\(03\\_01\).pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R21_Y2014_asof_2_February_2015_(03_01).pdf) (accessed on 2 February 2015).

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, the crisis *"has become the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era, yet the world is failing to meet the needs of refugees and the countries hosting them."* And although the response to had been generous, *"the bitter truth is that it falls far short of what's needed."*<sup>14</sup>

One of the reasons often being cited by UN entities is donor fatigue. Governments are facing their own budget cuts, a lack of appetite for humanitarian response and the difficulty of having a continued sense of generosity, in particular when it comes to protracted situations like Syria.

## 1.2. The Syria response has been a priority issue for Japanese emergency funding

Since it started contributing funds to the Syria response in late 2012, Japan's contributions have been consistent in terms of amount and proportion of its overall humanitarian spending. Allocating approximately 15 percent of its total humanitarian funds to the Syria response represents the biggest portion allotted to one single humanitarian crisis. For 2014, this is more than double the amounts allotted to the typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines, and three times more than the amounts contributed to the Ebola outbreak or the Afghanistan response.

**Table 5 – Allocation of Japanese emergency funding (2014)**

Emergency (2014)	Funding USD	% of Grand Total
Miscellaneous 2014 <i>(funding not earmarked by country or emergency)</i>	338,761,908	36.2%

<sup>12</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10520329/UN-makes-record-Syria-appeal-to-avert-greatest-humanitarian-crisis-in-modern-history.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=8056>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html> dated 29 August 2015.

<b>Syrian Arab Republic - Civil Unrest 2014</b>	<b>149,380,242</b>	<b>16.0%</b>
Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan - Nov 2013	63,328,022	6.8%
West Africa: Ebola Virus Outbreak - Apr 2014	48,023,484	5.1%
Afghanistan 2014	47,693,945	5.1%
Republic of South Sudan 2014	34,984,746	3.7%
Yemen 2014	31,823,543	3.4%
Mali 2014	22,920,000	2.5%
Somalia 2014	22,130,597	2.4%
Myanmar 2014	20,319,737	2.2%
Sudan 2014	19,200,000	2.1%
Niger 2014	14,250,000	1.5%
Mauritania 2014	12,400,000	1.3%
Philippines 2014	11,900,292	1.3%
Chad 2014	11,638,558	1.2%
Various other responses ( <i>1% and less</i> )	86,518,398	9.3%

**Table 6 - Allocation of Japanese emergency funding (2013)**

<b>Emergency - 2013</b>	<b>Funding USD</b>	<b>% of Grand Total</b>
<b>Syrian Arab Republic - Civil Unrest 2013</b>	<b>144,267,701</b>	<b>15%</b>
Afghanistan 2013	77,121,925	8%
Miscellaneous ( <i>funding not earmarked</i> )	69,241,097	7%
Republic of South Sudan 2013	57,476,260	6%
Mali 2013	54,587,485	6%
Somalia 2013	51,439,167	5%
Yemen 2013	49,915,054	5%
Ethiopia 2013	44,400,000	5%
Sudan 2013	40,917,594	4%
Democratic Republic of the Congo 2013	40,600,000	4%
Occupied Palestinian territory 2013	38,817,570	4%
Kenya 2013	35,663,265	4%
Niger 2013	33,662,750	3%
Myanmar 2013	30,956,508	3%
Uganda 2013	20,200,000	2%
Various other responses ( <i>2% and less</i> )	176,787,762	18.3%

Source: <http://fts.unocha.org> (Table ref: D6), accessed 2 February 2015.

### **1.3. Japan ranks #9 in amount of contributions providing 3% of total appeal**

As of February 2, 2015, Japan has contributed a total of \$ 307,908,818 to the Syria response since it started contributing in 2012, based on all humanitarian funds registered/tracked by OCHA and combining contributions to RRP and to SHARP. For 2012-2015, this data shows that Japan has funded 3% of the total funds contributed to the Syria response. This also makes Japan rank 9<sup>th</sup> among the major donors for the Syria response overall.

**Table 7 – Total contributions to Syria response by donor**

<b>Total contributions to Syria Response (RRP + SHARP) 2012-2015, all combined</b>			
		<b>USD committed/contributed</b>	<b>% of total</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>10,920,496,792</b>	<b>100%</b>
1	United States	3,059,234,528	28.0%
2	European Commission	1,422,607,885	13.0%
3	United Kingdom	929,389,418	9.0%
4	Germany	736,018,178	7.0%
5	Kuwait	633,220,977	6.0%
6	Saudi Arabia	620,096,757	6.0%
7	Private (individuals & organisations)	606,902,038	6.0%
8	Canada	397,149,071	4.0%
<b>9</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>307,908,818</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
10	Qatar	236,855,323	2.0%
11	United Arab Emirates	218,546,303	2.0%
12	Norway	201,501,770	2.0%
	Various other	1,551,065,726	12.0%

Source: [http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=search-reporting\\_display&CQ=cq260115191009dOLEaWyOry](http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=search-reporting_display&CQ=cq260115191009dOLEaWyOry), accessed 3 February 2015.

Comparing the years 2012, 2013, and 2014 by contribution amounts, data shows that Japan’s humanitarian funding for the Syria response overall strongly increased from 2012 to 2013, and then slightly also increased from 2013 to 2014. This is also reflected in the donor ranking, moving Japan from the 18<sup>th</sup> highest donor country in 2012 to the 9<sup>th</sup> highest donor country in 2014.

In addition to the overall humanitarian funds allocated to the international community (UN agencies, (I)NGOs), Japan has also been active in providing grants directly to the host countries of the Syrian refugees in the region. For 2014, UNHCR data show the following total amounts:

**Table 8 – Contributions by Japan directly to host country government**

**RRP6: January - December 2014**

Regional	\$12,195,121
Egypt	\$1,400,000
Iraq	\$2,920,000
Jordan	\$7,170,000
Lebanon	\$7,300,000
Turkey	\$4,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>US\$ 34,985,121</b>

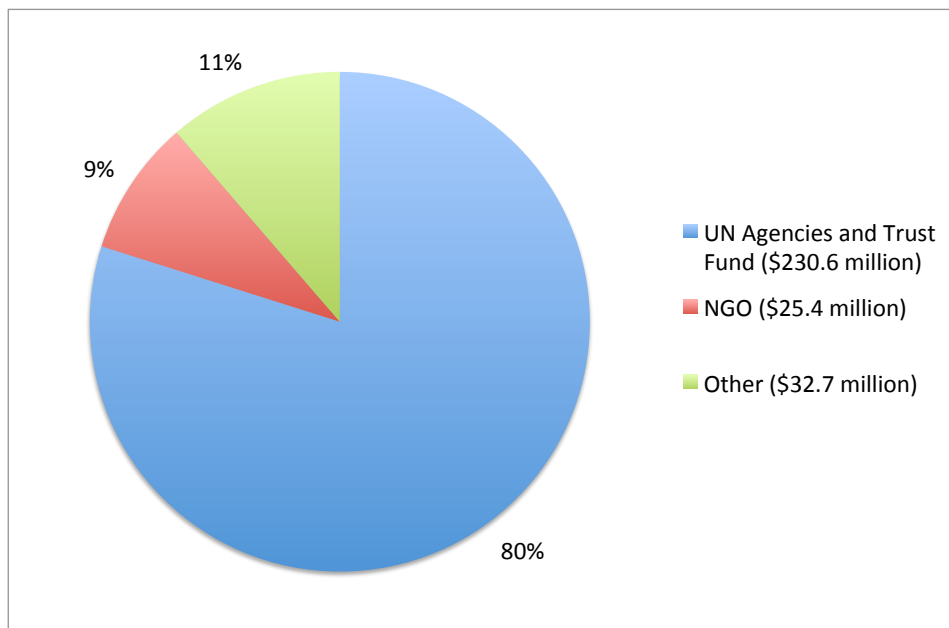
Source: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, dated 23 January 2015.

#### 1.4. Yet, government funds to JPF/ NGOs for Syria response is a small percentage

While the above-mentioned Japanese contribution amounts for the Syria response are considerable, funds allocated to Japanese NGOs through JPF remain more limited in comparison.

As Graph 2 - Recipients of MoFA emergency funds 2014 below shows, MoFA, in 2014, allocated almost 80 percent of its funding to UN agencies, 9 percent to Japanese NGOs, and 11 percent to others. This shows the relative importance of Japanese NGOs as indicated by MoFA contribution amounts. Among the 9 percent allocated to the various JPF member NGOs in 2014, the amounts received by NGOs range between US\$ 100,000 (Ivy) and US\$ 3.0 million (PWJ). See the Annex for the full list of details, including by JPF member NGO.

Graph 2 - Recipients of MoFA emergency funds 2014



Source: MoFA, January 2015, shared in follow-up interview.

#### 1.5. Government emergency funding to NGOs comes through MoFA

For JPF and Japanese NGOs working in humanitarian affairs, how to secure a stable, predictable and substantial sum of money from the Japanese government is an important issue of concern, especially because there are few other funding sources for humanitarian work stemming from conflicts.

Currently, the Japanese government's funding for Japanese NGOs comes through MoFA, and it is largely divided into two pots – emergency/humanitarian work funded through JPF and development work funded through MoFA's own funding instrument called Japan NGO Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects (N-ren). In fiscal year 2013, JPY 3.06 billion was

allocated to JPF for emergency/humanitarian work;<sup>15</sup> there is no specific allocation by NGO or by different response. Allocation of resource takes place within the JPF's funding mechanism.

As far as the Syria response work is concerned, besides the funding from the annual government budget, two other types of funding exist. One is "reserves" money that is set aside to respond to additional emergencies during the year that arise after the annual budget is depleted. The other is the "supplementary budget" of the government.

## 1.6. International community is not well aware of JPF's Syria response activities

JPF and its role in the Syria response are not well known. This is true for JPF as a Platform, with most UN representatives reporting having limited interaction with and/or limited knowledge of JPF. Of a total of 22 interviewee responses on this topic, about half (12) reported having little to no knowledge of JPF; one third knew JPF, but of those, less than a handful were able to explain more in detail. Overall, UN staff interviewed are mostly aware of the activities of the JPF member NGOs with whom they have working relationships through the clusters, direct personal interaction at coordination meetings, and in few instances more, such as staff members of JPF member NGOs taking leading roles; for example, serving as the focal point of WASH activities in Za'atari camp, conducting needs assessments in partnership with UNICEF, and chairing/leading the child protection working group.

In terms of the interactions between member NGOs and JPF, UN staff indicated having very little knowledge about JPF's existence and role. As representative of several other UN staff interviewed during the field missions, a UN interviewee in Turkey shared: *"It is not clear whether it is just the Japanese people or a Japanese NGO or a collaboration of Japanese NGOs, who are providing funding. And is it more than a donor? [It] might be useful to tell what this platform is, what their objectives are. We only know that these are Japanese people – do they represent the State or is it the humanitarian agency of Japan or an NGO – that's unclear."*

Those that know about JPF are mostly UN staff in charge of donor relations and fundraising, hence they have met with JPF Secretariat staff on their monitoring visits. They, as well as a very limited number of UN programme officers, when prompted about JPF, shared their positive impressions of JPF, including:

- JPF has a different and more regional approach ('regional overview');
- JPF Secretariat staff are well informed when meeting with UN field staff;
- JPF Secretariat staff demonstrate interest in the region; and
- JPF maintains contact with the UN through the Japanese Embassy.

Further, not all of JPF's member NGOs are listed as partners in official records of the international community, such as the OCHA database or UNHCR webportal.<sup>16</sup> Thus, there remains some ambiguity whether all JPF member NGOs in the field are considered UN

---

<sup>15</sup> JPF annual report FY2013, [http://www.japanplatform.org/lib/data/report/2013/2013jpf\\_accounts.pdf](http://www.japanplatform.org/lib/data/report/2013/2013jpf_accounts.pdf) (accessed January 20, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

‘partners’, or only those that also obtained UN funding. For FTS (<http://fts.unocha.org>), a database administered by OCHA that tracks global humanitarian aid flows, an OCHA interviewee flagged that more regular communication from JPF for updating funding information about Japanese member NGOs would be helpful as it would not only provide an updated picture of JPF’s response but also allow the humanitarian community to obtain a better overview of JPF’s activities in the region.

## 2. Understanding the JPF Strategy, Mission, and Role

With a relatively small amount of MoFA funds and limited visibility in the UN/ international community, it is even more important that the JPF projects have a clear purpose within a larger JPF strategy (i.e., a defined plan or method for achieving the goals for a defined period of time). This is essential as the NGO’s activities in each country and sector of the Syria Response are then able to demonstrate an overall approach to achieve the stated goals. It is also crucial for JPF to be able to allocate funding among the Japanese NGOs in a transparent, consistent way against the stated goals and objectives.

The evaluation team acknowledges that such a strategy is particularly difficult to define and maintain in the constantly evolving and far-reaching humanitarian context of the Syria Response. Yet, if JPF is to act as a platform, it is essential to have an agreed plan/ strategy for the response that derives from the international community/UN as well as the recipient and donor countries’ strategies and is communicated to the implementation partners regarding their activities on the ground. Therefore, it should be clear to all actors involved in the JPF Syria Response on what the ultimate goal is and how to align activities in order to achieve the goal

### 2.1. JPF Member NGOs do not have a clear picture of the JPF strategy...

JPF’s implementing NGOs have difficulties seeing how and where they fit into a coherent picture between the strategies of the UN (as defined by the RRP and SHARP), the Japanese government, and JPF. On the one hand, most NGO interviewees in the field perceive their activities to be representing Japan because of government funding. On the other hand, half of JPF’s implementing NGOs both in the field and at HQ<sup>17</sup> indicated not being aware of a JPF strategy or not having clarity on it. Typical reactions (selection of responses, not all) include:

**Table 9 – NGO comments on JPF strategy for the Syria response**

<b>(Selected, not all) Reactions on JPF strategy for the Syria Response</b>	
I’m not really sure what the JPF direction is or what the position of JPF is within MoFA (...).	NGO Field
What JPF should be doing proactively but is not: Constant information collection by JPF and coming up with JPF's own ideas about strategy for Syria response, not only through NGOs, not just taking/compiling all the NGO voices	NGO Field
(...) We must think “To whom and to what can we commit?” because we have not thought through this.	NGO Japan

Field NGOs specifically expressed their expectation that JPF provide strategic guidance to them in the field. That means most Field NGOs that acknowledged in interviews not being

<sup>17</sup> 6 NGOs in the field.



aware of a defined Japanese strategy for Syria do rely on JPF to establish that linkage and have not received the expected strategic guidance from JPF.

This is of particular importance to the Japanese NGOs involved in the Syria response, because the assumption is that JPF funding decisions are based on a strategy that they are unaware of or unclear about. If the JPF strategy were clear to the NGOs, they would be able to draft proposals that better align with that wider strategy. However, currently, there remains a perceived “lack of strategy” (and lack of transparency/criteria) during the funding process on the side of the NGOs. Hence, the current process is more driven by the NGO’s suggestions of the activities that they would like to implement rather than a JPF strategy.

## **2.2. ...and JPF’s Programme Specification Document provides only general direction**

For each of the three phases of Japan’s Syria response since its involvement in November 2012, JPF Secretariat have set out a “Programme Specification Document” (PSD) outlining the main parameters of the response, such as the programme name, target countries, intervention period, budget amount and type.

These PSDs provide the overall frame of the response for JPF and the 12 NGOs participating in the Syria Response. From the evaluation team perspective, the PSDs became slightly more detailed over time. While the PSDs may refer to the UN documents for overall alignment (see PSD 2) or highlight the importance of Japanese NGOs being involved in the coordination mechanisms on the ground (PSD 3), they remain fairly general and short (1 page).

No PSD spelled out selected sectors for the response by giving specific reasons. Proposed activities are described as being based on ‘utmost advantage of the strengths of each member organization’ of the participating NGOs (PSD 3) but no further details are given. Budget details include the budget amount for the programme overall as well as proposed plans in the event of the supplementary budget being allocated for the Syria response (PSD 3).

Comparing all three PSDs for the Syria Response, the most recent one (PSD 3, dated 17 December 2013), more than the previous two PSDs, offers a more specific rationale for the response and links the proposed programme to the international strategy. The NPPI (NGO Proposal for Project Initiation, “Shuisho”) for each funding phase, prepared by member NGOs, lays out a plan of member NGO activities for the response, but this does not equate to a comprehensive JPF strategy. In essence, all documents reviewed by the evaluation team remain too generic to be considered as strategic guidance and serve more as a general basis for the Syria Response.

## **2.3. It is unclear how JPF’s strategy should be formulated within the Japanese government policy for Syria**

There is an expectation by MoFA that activities funded by JPF should not only be following the humanitarian principles but also be in alignment with the Japanese government’s policy. MoFA information shared with the evaluation team included that JPF’s work should be consistent with: the humanitarian policy of the Japanese government, with the UN guidance and humanitarian principles, and with the overall foreign policy of the Japanese government. Most importantly, the evaluation team understood that there is a strong need

for the Japanese government to remain assured that the NGOs' humanitarian work is neutral and does not risk supporting political factions the government would not support as set out by the Japanese anti-terrorism law.

Yet, MoFA guidance documents available in the public domain, including annual priority plans, only provide a generic framework for the country's foreign affairs including development and humanitarian interventions.

Several NGO members, in interviews, also expressed their expectation that there should be an alignment between the Japanese government policy and JPF strategy:

**Table 10 – NGO comments on Japan's strategy/policy for the Syria response**

<b>(Selected, not all) Reactions on Japan's strategy/ policy for the Syria Response</b>	
To me it's not that clear what the government wants to do as its response – we are following the RRP's and plans and then JPF/Japanese government should be following those too, so that means we should be following the Japanese government/JPF strategy as well, but the JPF/ government position is not very clear.	NGO Field
Do they have a strategy? ] (...) Japan is an important donor to the UN but [has] no real strategy.	NGO Japan
Japanese strategy, Middle-East intervention: [does the Government] have any [defined] strategy?	NGO Field
Strategy for Syria response should be coming from Japanese government through JPF, because NGOs have own aim and aren't looking at the whole strategy. JPF should help us understand the government strategy.	NGO Field

## 2.4. JPF Member NGO activities follow the Regional Response Plans

Member NGOs use as their primary guidance documents those of the international community, such as RRP, SHARP, etc. This can be seen in the funding proposals (NPPIs) prepared by the member NGOs and submitted to JPF, where reference is made to the beneficiary targets/needs in each country as highlighted by the RRP6 and other UN guidance documents. Both NGO headquarters' (HQ) staff and field staff also confirmed in interviews that they perceived the UN strategy documents to be the 'ultimate' guidance that their activities should align with.

The member NGOs, through their field staff attending cluster/sector working group meetings chaired by UN agencies, have some understanding of the strategy in their respective sector/cluster. And those attending these coordinating meetings regularly also expressed having an overview of the situation and needs as they are evolving.

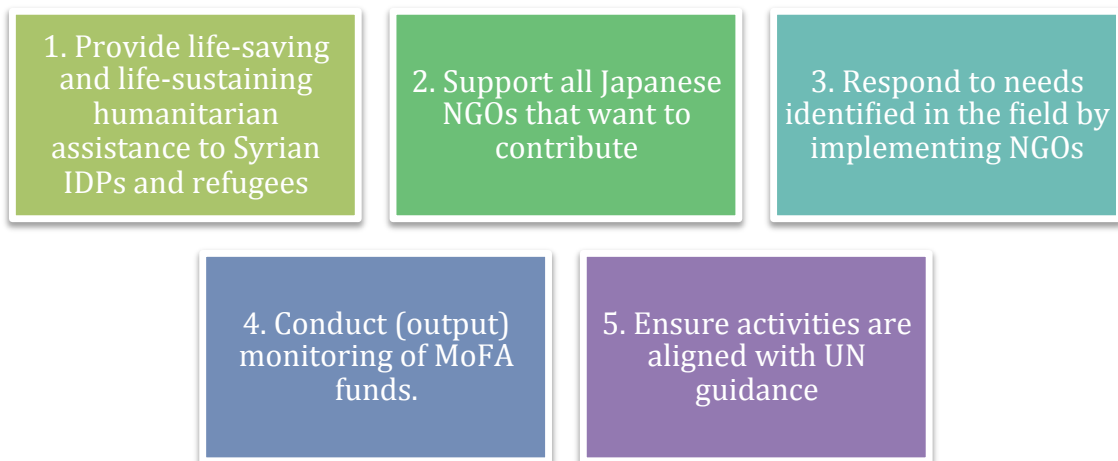
Because the RRP's are formulated in a very comprehensive way and intentionally cover wide-ranging activities in order to include all actors, most, if not all, JPF activities can be said to fall within the RRP priorities. However, the RRP6 may provide little *strategic* guidance for an organization such as JPF with limited resources. Hence, there is a need for JPF to clarify its own strategy, regardless of whether or not it should be in alignment with the relevant government strategy.

In essence, the evaluation team deems that a strategy has 1) a strong sense of goal-orientation where one has analyzed the logical path between what one does and what can be caused by it; 2) a keen understanding of efficient and effective resource use where one's

leverage can be utilized within a larger framework; and 3) sets goals, objectives and indicators over a defined period of time. From this perspective, all JPF planning and guiding documents reviewed by the evaluation team remain too generic to be considered as strategic guidance and serve more as a general basis for the Syria Response.

## 2.5. Primary activities of the JPF platform were identified for the Syria Response

Without a clearly defined JPF strategy, the evaluation team attempted to define the main activities of JPF as a way of understanding its strategic priorities in action. Thus, from the perspective of the evaluation team, the current JPF Syria Response seems to include the following priority activities:



Given the broadly defined RRP6 strategy for each sector by the UN, the general MoFA direction guiding ODA by region, and JPF's priorities that allow for flexibility depending on the NGO supported and actual needs encountered, it is difficult to conclude alignment or non-alignment among these different strategies. Since all of them are formulated rather broadly to allow for numerous players and activities to be covered, there is no contradiction or non-alignment evident.

As mentioned, given its small operation, JPF as an implementation platform of diverse member NGOs and other stakeholders would benefit from a more defined strategy. This could not only clarify and facilitate planning with the UN and with MOFA, but also contribute to greater transparency on funding decisions vis-à-vis its member NGOs.

## 2.6. Additional factors to be considered when developing JPF's strategy

As the Syrian refugee crisis continues, additional factors must also be considered within a possible JPF strategy, such as the individual response plans by country, e.g. for Jordan, Iraq, etc. Interviews with NGOs in Jordan pointed at a need to better understand and integrate the Jordan Response Plan<sup>18</sup> in JPF activities and within the wider context of the RRP6. As

<sup>18</sup> RRP6, page 37. In 2014, increased convergence between the humanitarian and development interventions is anticipated, as national planning and coordination arrangements will be

shared in those interviews, Field NGOs are seeking strategic guidance from JPF as to how to integrate these new local strategies.

Another factor to be considered in the strategy is the shift from emergency activities towards longer-term development activities. Following the most recent guidance documents (Syrian Arab Republic Strategic Response Plan for 2015, launched in December 2014)<sup>19</sup>, this shift is already on its way. Hence, there is a need for JPF to determine where its mission lies in this regard, e.g. what type of humanitarian activities it will continue to engage in and under what contextual circumstances, and where to draw the line on (development) activities that are outside JPF's humanitarian/ emergency scope. This will assist JPF in staying focused on its own mission when deciding on the allocation of funds to its member NGOs; it will also counter skeptical voices in MoFA about some JPF member NGOs becoming interested in doing more development work in the response. (See also section on JPF mission.)

### 3. JPF's mission/ role in the Syria response is not well understood by stakeholders

JPF's mission/ vision, according to its (Japanese) website, translated into English is stated as:

*Bringing Japanese NGO aid to the world, and creating a world where everyone can shape his/her own future.*

- *Effective mutual cooperation for assistance: As a platform that brings together the wisdom of NGOs, government, business communities, and experts, we will provide swift aid operation for the sake of bringing sustainable and optimal assistance to the beneficiaries.*
- *Supporting disaster survivors toward self-reliance: Together with our beneficiaries, we will build a society where people with diverse sets of values can be self-reliant and coexist with each other.*
- *Leading NGO activities: We will evolve and create the ideal model of NGO activities and play a central role in making that a reality within and outside Japan.*

Source: <http://www.japanplatform.org/about/>  
(translation from Japanese into English by evaluation team)

This is a re-translation by the evaluation team of the vision/mission statement in Japanese, because the English version on the website is less clear to the reader, as perceived by the evaluation team and several interviewees in the field. While this statement gives some indication of JPF's focus on humanitarian aid and emergency response, it is not evident from the website whether JPF focuses on emergencies only, or also on development.

---

established by Governments. In Lebanon this will be oriented towards implementing the Stabilization Plan agreed with the Government. In Jordan, the National Resilience Plan is currently being developed under the leadership of the Government and in close collaboration with donors, UN agencies and NGOs, within the dedicated coordination mechanism ("the Host Community Support Platform") led by the Ministry of Planning and International cooperation. Based on its findings, the Government of Jordan expects the UN and partners to support the development of the National Resilience Plan (NRP).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/syria/document/2015-syrian-arab-republic-strategic-response-plan>

Specifically, the English version of the website shares less detailed and less clear information for the reader. One high-ranking UNHCR official in the field explained in the interview that “(...) when I looked JPF up on the internet, I didn’t find it very clear. [They] said they worked on WASH activities in [this country], but then I find out it’s actually education and primary health care. [There was] conflicting information out there, [the] website [was] confusing, not clear.” And staff of an implementing partner shared similar feedback: “when I started, I tried to understand more about JPF. I googled, but couldn’t get a clear sense of who they are.”

Not that different from the UN’s reactions in the field, JPF member NGOs in the field were also unclear about JPF’s (and the Secretariat) strategy and role in the Syria response. Reactions included:

#### Table 11 – NGO Field staff comments on JPF Secretariat’s role

##### NGO Field Staff about JPF Secretariat’s role (selection, not all)

Although JPF values the NGOs’ initiatives, in terms of thematic programming, it is just scattered around.

Not sure everyone in [local NGO] realizes what [NGO] and what JPF is, apart from management.

[JPF-Secretariat] write[s] us with suggestions on what they want to do. Don’t think they have a fixed point of view (...) but they shouldn’t tell us what to fund as they are less on the ground and not in [our area]. It should be needs based.

[It] would be good to have one voice, [but] we don’t want to simply merge and just be ‘Japan’. Some loose (not too tight) community for JPF would be good; if JPF [Secretariat] could sort of just coordinate the liaison part.

We should have supervisory decision-making power, because we [NGO vis-à-vis local NGO partner] are the donor (and JPF is the back donor). However because they are an independent entity, I do not really have a say in there (...)

Source: Field mission interviews with NGO Field Staff.

### 3.1. Member NGOs have many expectations of the role of JPF/Secretariat

Although JPF has no field-based staff, there are regular monitoring and programme planning visits, at which time there is direct contact between the JPF Secretariat and field NGO staff. However, the interaction remains limited to output monitoring as on-going contact typically occurs between NGO HQ staff in Japan and JPF Secretariat, and not field staff of member NGOs.

Given the limited direct interaction with the JPF Secretariat, Field NGO staff expressed several expectations of JPF Secretariat, which include:

- **Advocating more proactively for member NGOs**
  - To MoFA and the Japanese Embassies to obtain more political support; playing a more pro-active role between MoFA and the NGOs (especially during the funding approval process) and less of an ‘execution’ approach only. As one NGO member stated: “JPF should ‘fight’ more on behalf of us, not just receive comments from MoFA, (...).”
  - To the Japanese public to highlight the collective work of Japanese NGOs; a few field NGO interviewees mentioned the possibility that JPF Secretariat could better utilize the media to “move the Japanese public opinion [on the

Syria response” and that “not nearly enough of that [was] currently being done” by the JPF Secretariat. Others flagged that not all platform members – business, academia, media – were currently sufficiently utilized to get the Syria response and JPF’s involvement better known to the public.

- To UN entities in order to get the Japanese NGOs more known, and to obtain/strengthen the partnership with the UN.
- **Diversifying JPF funding to better support member NGOs.** Several Field interviewees from Japanese NGOs expressed their concern that accessing government funding for the protracted crisis was becoming more difficult and hence they saw the need for JPF Secretariat to get more private funding. Others flagged the risk of being too dependent on government funds and being not as dynamic as activities funded by the public and business could facilitate. Or as one said “[a]s intermediary funding organization, JPF does have corporations’ attention, but with so much government funding, the program itself is weakened”.

NGO HQ (Japan) interview data further highlight a mismatch between the NGOs’ and JPF Secretariat’s understanding of the platform’s current role, which creates confusion and sometimes frustration for NGOs in the Syria response:

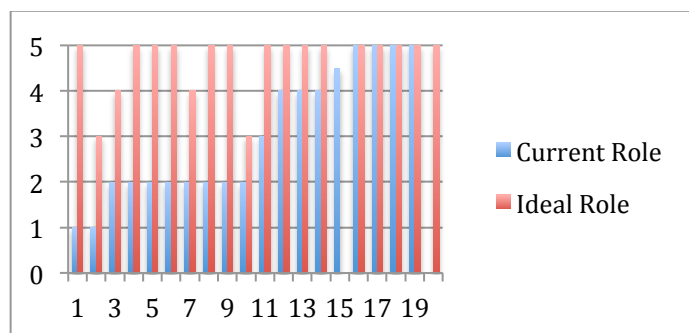
As to the role of the JPF Secretariat, comments shared by NGOs were:

1. JPF Secretariat as a funder
2. JPF Secretariat as an advocate for the Japanese NGOs
3. JPF Secretariat in the position of fully utilizing business, academia, media
4. JPF Secretariat to do fundraising for member NGOs
5. JPF Secretariat to provide capacity building to field staff
6. Some frustration from NGOs on unfulfilled role(s) and/or not understanding the role.
7. JPF Secretariat to build awareness of the Japanese public on NGO work, on emergency response in general, and on Syria in particular.

Further, most HQ NGOs, in interviews, when asked how important they saw JPF’s role with regard to the Syria response, responded seeing JPF playing a potentially higher/ more important role than it currently does:

Graph 3 – NGO perception of JPF’s current vs. ideal role<sup>20</sup>

*How important do you see JPF in your area of work/ sector of the Syria response – on a scale from 1 (very little importance) to 5 (very high importance)?*



To summarize, the NGOs see the JPF Secretariat very much as their representative vis-à-vis the MoFA/Government and acting on behalf of the member NGOs. This is true for

<sup>20</sup> The horizontal axis in the graph indicates the numbers of respondents (=n); the vertical axis shows the scale of importance from 1 (very little importance) to 5 (very high importance).

advocating for funding at MoFA and elsewhere, allocating funds to the NGOs based on the NGO's requests, and providing additional services, such as administrative support and capacity building to NGO staff in the field. Many member NGOs feel the role of the JPF Secretariat should be to work primarily on their behalf and do not want the JPF Secretariat to take on more responsibility/authority that might detract from the current role of member NGOs.

That is different from how the current JPF Secretariat sees itself. Secretariat members, in interviews, mentioned that, historically, their primary role was to be a mediator or "in the middle seat" between MoFA and the NGOs. This included the important function of providing fast and flexible funding (sometimes referred to JPF as an "ATM" or cash provision role) for NGO field activities. And some in JPF continue to see the Secretariat's role as 'servicing' the NGOs and not having a separate organizational identity/ authority.

However, that position has become somewhat 'contradictory' and debated within JPF and its Secretariat: *"As an ATM, we deal with too little money, but to be more than an ATM, we don't have the authority. For JPF to matter, we either need more funds to be a better ATM or new rules so we can do more in non-funding capacities."*

A few NGO HQ representatives also see a need to clarify JPF's mandate, e.g. saying *"JPF [Secretariat's] mandate must be[come] clear. At [the] beginning it was clear, but now it becomes confusing"* and some also have reservations on the process and efficiency of JPF with comments such as *"are they efficient? All this process? All this administration of JPF? Is it worth it?"*

Hence, there is currently not clear alignment between JPF Secretariat and its member NGOs as to the optimal role of JPF as a platform and/or as the Secretariat. Therefore, there is the need to clarify JPF's theory of change (intervention logic) and mandate of the JPF Secretariat as the situation has evolved since JPF was established.

Further, JPF Secretariat sees that another important function is to coordinate between the UN and the Field NGOs (on the ground) but acknowledges that this is very difficult for them to do, especially remotely, and requires the involvement and willingness of all.

### 3.2. JPF has planned to expand their role, but little has been implemented

Several changes to clarify and strengthen the JPF Secretariat role were approved by the Board of Directors in March 2012 (see Mid-Term Plan March 2012-2014). However, the approved changes, described below, have had limited effect on the role of JPF, as very little appears to have been implemented.

- **Shifting to a "programme approach"**: The understanding of the evaluation team is that this equates to a desire for a clearer plan/strategy within which JPF member NGOs can fit.
- **Rapid increase in private funds**: There has been little change; the 2014 Syria Programme was 99% funded by government funds, and the 2015 Programme will be similar. From the perspective of the field NGOs, a dramatic increase in public/corporate fundraising is still much needed and would offer greater flexibility in allocation/ spending.

- **Promoting inter-NGO linkage and coordination:** Similarly, from the perspective of field NGOs, this has not yet occurred but would be welcomed, especially as Field staff do not have the time or budget to reach out to their colleagues in the region to exchange lessons learned. A staff member in Turkey mentioned having gone on a private trip to Jordan to meet NGO colleagues, which resulted in a helpful exchange on lessons learned. But it only happened due to a personal motivation, not facilitated by the Secretariat.
- **Drastic strengthening of the Secretariat:** Although there is mixed feedback from the NGOs on this topic. In general, founding members and bigger NGOs ('category 4' with regard to funding criteria) prefer a scenario that allows them to call on the Secretariat for support and especially funding. Smaller/ newer NGOs, however, tend to prefer a strengthened Secretariat in charge of strategy and funds allocation with the aim of greater fairness and coherency. This also includes replacing some of the current functions of the SC and Project Examination Committee (PEC) with a stronger Secretariat role.
- **Horizontal linkages and cooperation:** Basically to establish cooperative relations with business corporate social responsibility, academia, experts, and specialized agencies in order to incorporate their input for JPF's programs or evaluations. From the perspective of some Field NGOs this has not occurred, but they feel it would be beneficial. Several interviewees both in the field and at HQ mentioned the UNCHR-JPF Symposium as an excellent example for building such linkages as well as raising public awareness.

## 4. The JPF Process

The evaluation team reviewed the process of the JPF funding mechanism at HQ through documenting the current steps, procedures, and criteria used by JPF to solicit, assess, and fund proposals from member NGOs.

### 4.1. Mapping the JPF process

The evaluation team first identified all elements of the process. Using the official JPF flow chart as a guide (in Annex), and in consultation with JPF Secretariat and member NGOs, the evaluation team developed a draft JPF process map.

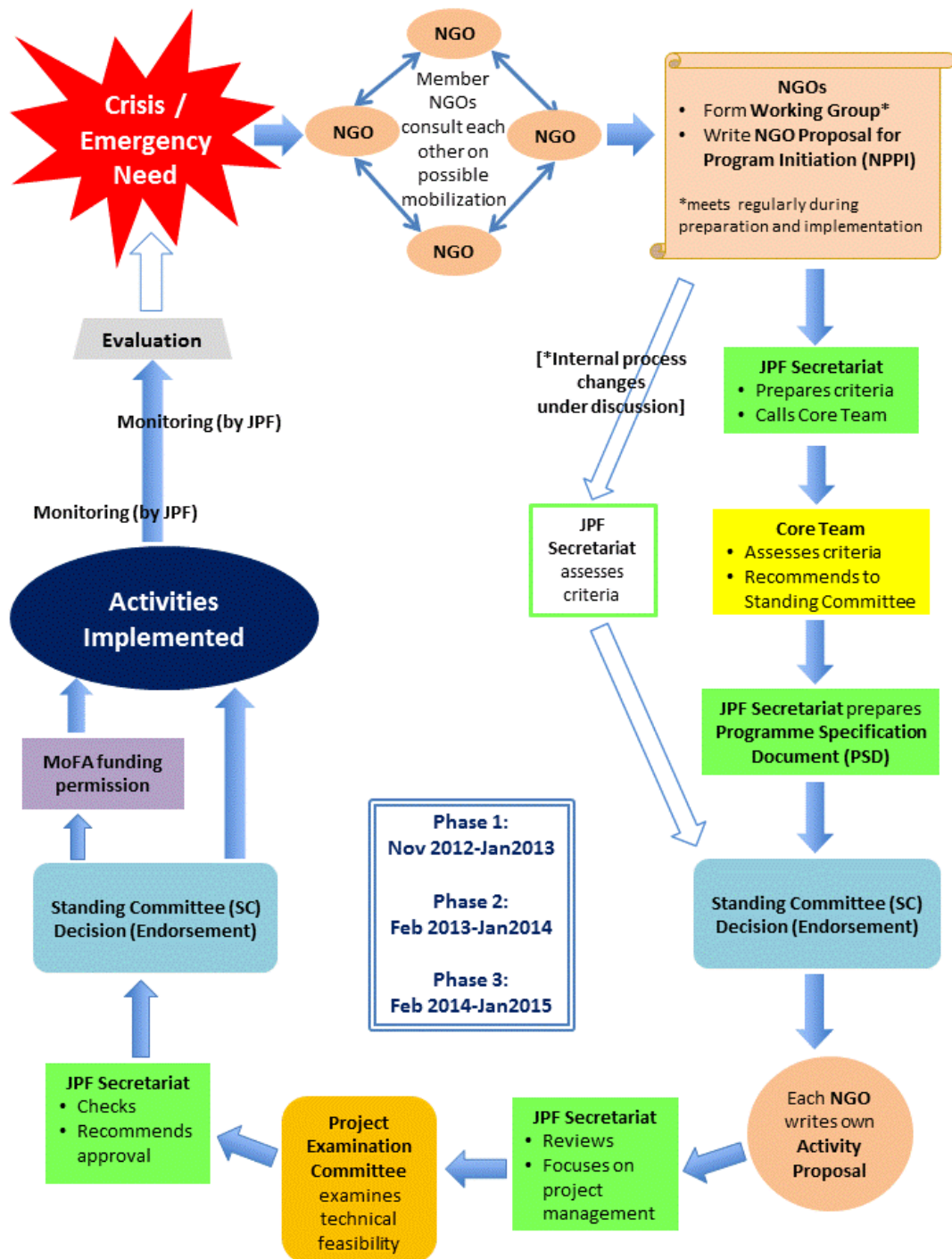
Compared to the JPF flow chart<sup>21</sup>, the draft process map provides more details of the current process, which involves many steps between the occurrence of an emergency or a disaster and the implementation of humanitarian aid and emergency relief activities by member NGOs. The draft process map also highlights the many different actors involved in formulating and assessing those activities. The extent to which these multiple layers and actors serve for or against efficient and optimal process and results is explored further below.

---

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.japanplatform.org/about/flow.html> (translated from Japanese into English by the evaluation team), accessed 5 February 2015



Graph 4 – JPF Process Map



Data source: Self-compiled.

Using the process map as a basis for discussion with JPF NGOs, the evaluation team observed the following.

#### 4.2. From start to finish, many steps are required

The JPF funding process involves many steps as seen in the process map and each of the steps takes varying lengths of time. According to some interviewees, there can be a

significant difference in the process between responses to natural disasters that happen quickly vis-à-vis conflicts that unfold over a longer period of time, suggesting that it is possible for the multi-step process to be completed quickly. For the purposes of this evaluation, the focus is on the process that occurred in response to the Syria crisis.

In the funding process, JPF seems to function as an intermediary between MoFA - the primary source of funds, and member NGOs - the primary source of programming. Therefore, the JPF Secretariat is involved in each of these steps in intermediary roles, but the degree to which they drive the process along also differs from step to step.

### **4.3. Proposal formulation is driven and coordinated by the member NGOs, but not equally**

At the beginning of JPF's involvement in the Syria emergency response, there were a few key member NGOs, who, in July 2012, took the lead by consulting other member NGOs for possibilities of mobilization. In October, eight NGOs developed the program initiation proposal (NPPI in process map), which stated the urgency of the crisis at hand, and the needs that could be met by each organization. In the stakeholder interviews conducted by the evaluation team, respondents from four of the eight NGOs at HQ in Japan specifically mentioned that the beginning of the first phase was NGO-led, and that there was a sense of ownership among the NGOs.

Similarly, the individual activity proposals for the Syria response were also NGO-driven, in that they reflected the uniqueness of each organization in terms of their expertise and past experience. A few of the HQ NGOs noted that this was a positive aspect of this process, as it meant that each NGO could decide independently how it could best contribute to the Syrian refugee crisis.

During the group/initial proposal formulation stage (NPPI), the process is led by all member NGOs participating in the Syria response as the so-called "Syria Working Group." However, the leadership and coordination of the Syria Working Group was not always optimal. From data collected during interviews (primarily with Japan-based NGO members), two main problems were identified:

- Firstly, the role of the Syria Working Group meant that program formulation and initiation were not driven by a strategy or a vision for JPF member NGOs as a whole, but rather by individual NGOs' programming preferences. Within the Working Group, many questions needed to be answered: how many or which NGOs should implement activities in which sectors? In which physical locations? At what funding size? Answers to all of these questions depended on what the NGOs preferred and were able to provide. This resulted in some inconsistencies in project implementation because there was not a single identified leader of the process or clear JPF strategy to follow.
- Secondly, not all member NGOs within the Syria Working Group have the same weight with regards to discussions and decisions made as a group. Concern was voiced in interviews with different representatives of four NGOs that the current set-up did not grant smaller and/or less experienced members of the Working Group the same "voice" compared to larger, more experienced member NGOs. Thus, the current set-up does not promote equity among member NGOs.

The primary question is whether the NGOs themselves or JPF Secretariat should be taking the lead in making decisions at this stage of the process, and how all member NGOs can be involved in an equitable manner.

#### 4.4. Guidelines and criteria for decision-making are neither standardized nor clear for all member NGOs

While the criteria for the initial mobilization/ group project proposal are compiled in a checklist and known to most HQ NGOs, the guidelines and criteria for decision-making on the individual NGO activity proposals (implementation) are not. The latter are neither standardized nor comprehensively documented and also not known to all of the NGOs. In interviews with about half of the Japan-based NGOs, there was some degree of concern voiced over how the guidelines were applied to their projects and how their projects were assessed; this perceived lack of transparency is a hindrance to the process.

A few NGOs noted that they were not certain to what degree their projects being aligned with the priorities of the RRP6 mattered in their funding requests being approved. For example, two Japan-based members of NGOs expressed that their projects were in alignment with RRP6 but were not approved. Without additional documentation or specific criteria for funding approvals, these NGOs felt that their projects met the required criteria because they were aligned with RRP6, yet the proposals were rejected. In the project proposal process, NGOs are asked where and how their project fits within the policies and plans specific to the sector, and when they demonstrate alignment but are still asked to make changes to their project, they may perceive the outcome of decisions made by the Secretariat or the PEC as arbitrary.

For the newer member NGOs, they were unclear about many steps in the process. These less experienced NGOs found the process difficult to navigate without hands-on help from either the Secretariat or from more experienced member NGOs. Comments from three different member NGOs were:

- *“A lot of the things that the JPF Secretariat seem to take for granted are not documented, so we don’t know to what they are referring.”*
- *“Even though we have guidelines for budget and project in general, these guidelines are not always explained or apply equally to everyone and everything, so things need to be checked with the JPF Secretariat to see what really can and needs to happen.”*
- *“All the paperwork we ever need are all supposed to be in one packet. Or better to say one application packet and there’s the other packet. But they are everywhere on the web...it is hard to even find things when we don’t know what is where and we don’t know what the full picture is ... and don’t know what exactly we are looking for, we could be missing a lot and spending a lot of time looking for things.”*

Most NGOs reported that the Secretariat provided hands-on support to both inexperienced and experienced NGOs, but lack of standardization meant that much of the process depended on individual JPF secretariat staff members. While most member NGOs found the JPF Secretariat competent and supportive, lack of standardization and transparency led to some member NGOs desiring greater professionalism as a platform. Lack of standardization also led to increased time required simply because when there were questions or uncertainty about the projects or the process, the member NGOs had no choice but to consult the Secretariat.

#### 4.5. The value of some steps in the JPF funding process are debated among NGOs

Interview data showed that among the many steps of the JPF funding process, the portions related to the Core Team and PEC were perceived as especially problematic, either by lacking clear standards or providing little value to the JPF process.

Questions regarding the roles and standards of the PEC were heard most often, and were raised by the majority (eight of 12) of member NGOs at HQ. Their general understanding seemed to be that the PEC was supposed to assess technical and operational feasibility. However, comments such as *“it’s not really clear what PEC is judging”* and *“PEC looks at general operational feasibility, without necessarily having expertise”* suggests that the PEC is adding little value to the JPF process for many member NGOs. A few of the NGOs even mentioned that project approval by PEC seemed to be a matter of *“luck”* rather than based on set criteria or defined objectives. Thus, member NGOs would like to see more standardization in the proposal assessments carried out by PEC, as they often have to spend additional time trying to meet the undefined expectations of PEC members.

Similarly, HQ member NGOs were quite vocal about the Core Team and the SC. On the Core Team, one interviewee said that it is *“not quite clear what [Core Team’s] role is and why JPF Secretariat cannot decide without them on the programme initiation as well as on the allocation of emergency response fund (public and private).”* And about the SC, several HQ NGO interviewees shared strong opinions, suggesting that there are *“too many experts ...and experts can’t add much value because they are too far removed from the field.”* Such comments underline that not all steps of the process are considered essential or needed.

In order to improve and shorten the process, the Secretariat developed a ‘concept note’ approach to streamline the process and to clarify the steps involved.

#### 4.6. Mixed reviews on the speed of the JPF funding process

Approximately half of the NGOs in the Syria Working Group commented on how fast the JPF funding process is, especially in comparison with other funding schemes. *“Being able to start projects quickly is valuable (...) we believe speedy humanitarian aid was JPF’s motto from the very beginning, and it has really been that way.”*

Similarly, many member NGOs (7 of 12 at HQ and 6 of 12 in the field) identified that JPF’s ability to be extremely fast and flexible in the event of program changes during implementation was a contributing factor in their ability to provide humanitarian assistance. For example, one interviewee commented, *“We saw a need, requested approval, got it quickly from JPF, then mobilized a solution”* while another commented, *“When we want to change our proposal a bit, their response is immediate and quick”*.

Some member NGOs shared “shortcuts” to the process that allow for very fast decisions, but these are not always clear or known to all member NGOs; this is an example of the unstandardized and not well-documented nature of the JPF process.

On the other hand, three NGOs felt that the approval process for Syria response activities has been unnecessarily delayed at times. They attributed the delay to decisions on budget

changes not being able to be made in the field, and how much detail the activity proposal requires.

#### 4.7. Focus is on rules and details rather than a streamlined process

Member NGO staff at HQ and in the field highlighted concerns about JPF requirements often being too strict and cumbersome and not offering the flexibility needed in the Syria context. For example, during the application process, a few NGOs found that the questions received from PEC and/ or SC were focused on small details rather than big-picture issues. For example, one member NGO at HQ explained that they submit their proposal, including a logical framework, and *“then we receive many questions, some totally irrelevant, and this happens consistently.”* A different member NGO in the field also commented, *“Procedures for approval are a bit of a pain with the JPF approval process in Tokyo – it slows down the response with constant requests for information from us... sometimes there are questions which we think are a bit irrelevant coming again and again and the need in the field is to do the activity right away.”*

Some NGOs find the bills of quantities, which ask for exact estimates, difficult and unrealistic at such an early stage of the project. For example, one interviewee described a scenario that happened several times in which the NGO was told *“we cannot approve your project until you have listed all the details in the form of project proposal,”* whereas for that NGO it seemed obvious that *“(w)e will not get that much detail determined until one day before operation begins, so we are asked to do the impossible.”* In addition, three of the NGOs in the Syria Working Group mentioned the need for unexpected costs to be covered when budgeting. They voiced how difficult it is to be 100% clear on every single item beforehand, and that having the ability to budget for contingency costs as a buffer would help in more efficient implementation of their projects.

For reporting, there is also much detail required, as is evident in the detailed template of a monthly report (See Annex 5).

NGOs found the purpose of some of the detailed information unclear, and they were also unsure how this data was used by JPF, if at all. Although the monthly reports are shared with all member NGOs of the Syria Response and the JPF Secretariat, the Secretariat clarified that the reports were primarily for information purpose but not necessarily further reviewed or commented on. Also, these requirements seem disproportionate compared to the (very short) length of the project proposal and PSD (1-3 pages).

Other NGOs found it difficult to comply with such reporting requirements in Japanese because they have limited numbers of field staff members who are fluent in Japanese. In fact, most NGO activities only have one Japanese staff member in the field, who is responsible for all the administrative and reporting work to the NGO’s HQ and from there to JPF.

A high level of frustration was also observed from field staff regarding lack of timely and useful feedback on the reports that they submit and the field monitoring visits that they arrange.

## 5. More coordination could be implemented by the JPF Secretariat, but exactly what kind?

Coordination was a specific topic of interest highlighted by JPF Secretariat and the SC. Overall feedback from JPF member NGOs both in Japan and in the field showed that coordination by the JPF Secretariat remains limited, however the existence of JPF as a platform (with member NGOs) creates some inherent level of coordination. Depending on how “coordination” is defined, different stakeholder groups perceive different levels of value for increased coordination by JPF Secretariat.

### 5.1 More coordination in Tokyo among NGOs? Unclear

The JPF Secretariat convenes the Syria Working Group composed of JPF’s member NGOs active in the Syria response on a bi-monthly basis. Member NGOs find it to be a very helpful forum to discuss issues quite openly. The JPF Secretariat does not “coordinate” the NGOs activities in that group, but it facilitates/convenes the meetings at which the member NGOs make decisions.

The Syria Working Group, by its nature, is a coordinating body of member NGOs. They are in contact with each other, at least at the headquarters in Japan, and present a unified voice at the programme formulation stage. They also engage in informational exchange and provide learning opportunities amongst the group. When coordination is defined in those terms, then currently the JPF Secretariat does not engage in those actions, though coordination is occurring naturally through the Syria Working Group.

Various other activities, such as member NGOs sharing their monthly progress reports with JPF Secretariat, the discussions within the Syria Working Group, and sporadically sent email newsletter updates by the JPF Secretariat on the Syria response all provide some information sharing among the NGOs at HQ. At the same time, the progress reports are sometimes lengthy and multiple stakeholder groups admitted to not regularly reading or consulting these to stay abreast of the situation.

Both field and HQ member NGOs would like to see stronger knowledge management and information sharing facilitated and encouraged by the JPF Secretariat among the NGOs in the field - in each country and within the region of the Syria response. One interviewee commented, *“There are things that should take place in Tokyo and not in the field, and where the secretariat should play a stronger role. For example, intelligence gathering on the overall direction of political change, including how US, Iran and other powers are thinking about how to solve this crisis. That’s the kind of work that the secretariat can do throughout the year.”*

### 5.2 More coordination among different sectors of the platform? Yes

NGO HQ interviewees were asked two questions about the role of the JPF Secretariat in coordinating other sectors of the platform:

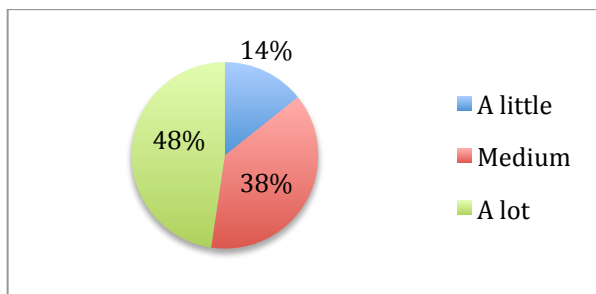
- Currently, how much of a role does JPF secretariat play in coordinating the Japanese Syria response among different stakeholders involved in JPF (MoFA, corporations, NGOs, academia/researchers and other)?

- In the future, should JPF secretariat be doing more - the same - or less in coordinating among different stakeholders in Syria response?

Many HQ respondents (48%; Member NGOs at HQ as well as MOFA interviewees) feel the JPF Secretariat is *currently* coordinating “a lot”; only very few (14%) expressed “a little” as the below graph indicates.

**Graph 5 – Current JPF role in coordinating stakeholders**

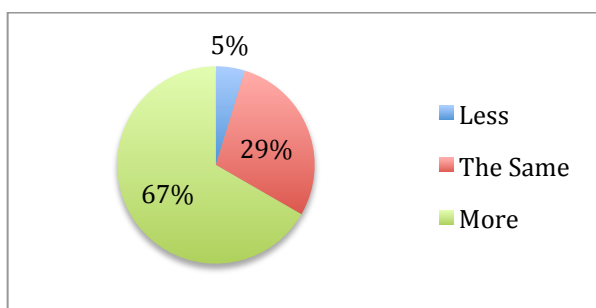
*Currently, how much of a role does JPF secretariat play in coordinating the Japanese Syria response among different stakeholders involved in JPF (MoFA, corporations, NGOs, academia/researchers and other)?*



And *in the future*, two thirds of the same respondents believe that the JPF Secretariat should do more coordination while one third does not see the need for a change in the level of coordination by the JPF Secretariat.

**Graph 6 C- Future JPF role in coordinating stakeholders**

*In the future, should JPF secretariat be doing more - the same - or less in coordinating among different stakeholders in Syria response?*



Many NGO members both at HQ and in the field, as well as other stakeholders, shared their expectation that JPF Secretariat take a more proactive role in strengthening the platform in terms of its membership in the corporate, media, and academic sectors. They identified several advantages of a stronger, more diverse platform, such as increased access to private funds, more publicity about the Syrian refugee situation, increased awareness of the Japanese public about the Japanese NGO sector, and greater technical expertise that could be gained from academic researchers. Several comments illustrate this point: “JPF Secretariat’s role is not only to coordinate with MOFA, but also to raise private funds, and coordinate with private donors;” “[JPF’s role is to] engage other stakeholders such as the mass media”; and “JPF needs to gear up its effort to fundraise from Japanese corporations.” In essence, most member NGOs see it as the role of the JPF Secretariat to lead and coordinate this effort of diversifying, strengthening and utilizing the complete platform membership.

Similarly, several member NGOs, especially field NGOs, highlighted the need for the JPF Secretariat to advocate more on their behalf with MoFA, which can also be defined as a proactive coordination role that could be played by the JPF Secretariat. One field NGO member commented: “If JPF can help us to explain the reality and the research to MoFA, that would be helpful. JPF encouraged us to provide more info to the Ministry but it was

*difficult for us to do that from the field.” Another interviewee shared that “Secretariat needs to advocate on behalf of the NGOs more with MOFA. Not sure how closely they are working together right now, though, from the NGOs’ perspective.”*

### **5.3 More coordination in the field? In specific cases possibly, but in general, costs likely outweigh the benefits**

Many NGO HQ and field interviewees did not see the need for JPF to have a regular presence/office in the region in order to coordinate the response. Effective and efficient field-level coordination would likely require a much greater field-level presence by Secretariat staff, which would likely be unrealistic and cost-prohibiting given the current resources.

In the field, NGO staff explained that coordination in the field happened mostly informally among the member NGOs working in the same cluster and through regular cluster/ sector coordination meetings facilitated by the specialized UN agency. Both field NGOs and UN cluster/ sector interviewees underlined that this functioned satisfactorily and generally did not lead to duplication of services by any of the Japanese NGOs, although a few UN interviewees flagged that they would prefer having a “block” or “representative of a group” as their primary contact rather than the individual NGOs. Another advantage mentioned for stronger JPF presence in the field is that, given the local culture (‘debates while drinking tea’ in Turkey), a donor presence in the field could be of use as this would further support the UN’s efforts in liaising and negotiating with the local authorities.

Field NGOs mentioned difficulties for them gaining access and approval from the local authorities (e.g. Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) in Jordan) as well as frustration with local bureaucracy (e.g. issuance of work permits by the authorities), where they wished for more support from Japan. Only a few field NGO interviewees indicated having regular contact with the Japanese Embassy and being able to rely on their support.

## **6. EFFECTIVENESS/ RESULTS**

### **6.1. Assessing the main results achieved by JPF-funded NGOs by using the OECD-DAC criteria**

In the emergency and humanitarian context, “results” are often difficult to define. Because interventions are quickly planned and implemented, the situation is fast-changing, and many activities address basic needs rather than long-term goals, the focus of project measurement is typically more on outputs, rather than results or outcomes.<sup>22</sup>

Because of the challenge in effectively defining and measuring “results” in an emergency context and because most of the quantitative data collected by JPF Secretariat on its Syria projects is focused on outputs, this offers limited “outcome results” data available to the evaluation team. Thus, the team used multiple methods and data sources to try and better

---

<sup>22</sup> In the context of evaluation, “results” typically refer to the outcome or the change that was a result of the activity or output, not the outputs or activities themselves.



understand the main results achieved by JPF as a Platform/organization in the Syria response. It should be emphasized, however, that the focus of the evaluation is on JPF as a whole and its positive or negative effects in the Syria response overall and not on the achievements of each individual NGO project.

Therefore, the evaluation team provides below a discussion of Coverage, Efficiency, and Effectiveness - using the OECD DAC definitions as further adapted to the humanitarian context by ALNAP of these criteria - a common practice in the international evaluation and humanitarian field.

## 6.2. Coverage

Coverage measures the extent to which “the need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are”<sup>23</sup> is addressed.

With such a large-scale refugee crisis, the number of beneficiaries reached by JPF-funded projects is relatively small. In total, JPF monitoring data indicates that it has reached 451,372 beneficiaries across 5 countries since it began its Syria refugee response activities (November 2012-2014).<sup>24</sup> This is only 5 percent of the affected population since the start of the crisis (refugees and IDPs within Syria), as estimated by the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute.<sup>25</sup>

Further exploring the issue of coverage, the Evaluation team has analyzed JPF 2013 Monitoring data for activities in Jordan; Jordan is used as an example as it is the only country for which complete data on JPF beneficiaries and sector goals are available in the 2013 Monitoring Report.<sup>26</sup>

Table 12. Percent Coverage by Sector, 2012-2013, Jordan shows the number of beneficiaries of JPF funded projects in Jordan in 2012-2013 relative to the target beneficiaries for each RRP sector also identified in the JPF 2013 Monitoring Report. For context, Jordan is the country that receives the largest proportion of JPF funds (35 percent).<sup>27</sup> Despite this, coverage by member NGO projects in Jordan is quite small; the percentage of target beneficiaries by JPF funded projects for six key sectors ranges from a low of 0.11 percent for food distribution to a high of 13 percent for distribution of winterizing supplies. Thus, JPF and its member NGOs do not contribute significantly to the effectiveness criterion of “coverage.”

---

<sup>23</sup> ALNAP/Beck, Tony, Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2006, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Filename of source: 参考資料：イラク・シリア紛争人道支援プログラム対応計画(2015.2～), p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> 9.5 million (refugees and IDPs within Syria) as indicated by <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>

<sup>26</sup> The JPF 2014 Monitoring report was not available at the time of writing.

<sup>27</sup> Source: JPF Syria Response Map, Nov 2012-Feb 2015.

Table 12. Percent Coverage by Sector, 2012-2013, Jordan

ACTIVITIES IN JORDAN, 2012-2013 BY SECTOR <sup>28</sup>	SECTOR TARGET # of Beneficiaries, as indicated in 2013 Monitoring Report	# of BENEFICIARIES in JPF PROJECTS, 2012-2013	% Coverage by SECTOR in Jordan
PROTECTION	Psychosocial support: 224,000 participants	<b>About 300 persons attended workshops</b>	0.13%
EDUCATION	Education-related psychosocial support: 2,230 participants	<b>About 180 persons attended workshops</b>	8%
	Provision of school supplies: 148,000 people	<b>525 persons received school supplies</b>	0.36%
	Receipt of formal education: 120,000 people	<b>1,853 persons received formal education</b>	1.5%
	Provision of non-formal education: 148,000 people	<b>7,406 persons received theater, music, and story-writing education</b>	5%
FOOD	Distribution of meal vouchers: 895,000 people (total)	1,000 meal vouchers for host community	0.11%
HEALTH	Critical care: 650 people Subsidies for critical care: 100 people	Caesarean section costs for 100 people subsidized at an obstetrics clinic in Amman	unknown
	Mental health counseling: 86,400 people	Mental Health Counseling / referrals and subsidies for medication: 864 people	1%
NFI	Distribution of daily supplies/hygiene kits: 147,372 kits	Hygiene items: 1,151 +525	1.14%
	Distribution of wintering supplies: 151,610 people covered	Winter items: 4,134+15,850	13%
WASH	Installation of plumbing equipment (such as toilets): 300,000 people	Installed laundry facility serving 11,985 people	unknown
	Water sanitation improvement in schools: 135,000 people	Renovation of school WASH facilities (4 areas): 11,017 people	8%
	Hygiene kit distribution: 550	Hygiene awareness activities in schools (4 areas): 11,017 people	unknown

### 6.3. Efficiency

“Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used.”<sup>29</sup>

The standard method of measuring efficiency is to compare ratios of inputs per outputs,

<sup>28</sup> Source: 2013 Monitoring Report, translated into English.

<sup>29</sup> ALNAP/Beck, Tony, Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2006, p. 20.

most commonly in the form of \$/beneficiary or \$/specific output (such as \$/hygiene kit distributed). Because of the extreme diversity within the JPF portfolio of funded projects, in terms of type of activities and operating costs in its five countries of service, the evaluation team has presented data on the yen/beneficiary for each sector of work as well as the yen/beneficiary for each country of operations.<sup>30</sup> See Table 13. JPF Support by Sector and Country, 2012-2014 below.

**Table 13. JPF Support by Sector and Country, 2012-2014<sup>31</sup>**

¥/Beneficiary & \$/Beneficiary of JPF Support, by sector and country, 2012-2014						Most efficient
						Least efficient
	Lebanon	Jordan	Syria	Turkey	Iraq	\$/Beneficiary by Sector
Food	¥3,082		¥2,754	¥1,612	¥792	<b>¥1,559</b>
	\$26		\$23	\$14	\$7	<b>\$13</b>
Health	¥1,465	¥11,805			¥1,992	¥2,721
	\$12	\$100			\$17	\$23
Basic Needs	¥3,923	¥2,637	¥2,039	¥2,604	¥3,755	¥2,905
	\$33	\$22	\$17	\$22	\$32	\$25
WASH		¥5,606			¥2,047	¥3,801
		\$48			\$17	\$32
Protection	¥16,459	¥9,855	¥20,897	¥22,070		¥17,829
	\$140	\$84	\$178	\$188		\$152
Education		¥27,591	¥36,265	¥5,379	¥11,337	¥18,619
	\$0	\$235	\$308	\$46	\$96	\$158
Livelihoods	¥63,082		¥166,314	¥218,378	¥6,934	<b>¥82,789</b>
	\$536		\$1,414	\$1,856	\$59	<b>\$704</b>
Shelter						
Total	<b>¥8,658</b>	¥6,759	¥6,027	¥3,922	<b>¥2,670</b>	¥4,908
	<b>\$74</b>	\$57	\$51	\$33	<b>\$23</b>	\$42

Data Source: 参考資料：イラク・シリア紛争人道支援プログラム対応計画(2015.2~), p 2

As is evident from the data above, JPF funded projects in Iraq are most efficient at \$23/beneficiary and projects in Lebanon at \$74/beneficiary are least efficient when analyzed through the \$/beneficiary lens. Similarly, this data also shows that the Food sector can reach a greater number of beneficiaries with fewer inputs (lower \$/beneficiary, \$13/beneficiary) followed by Health (\$23/beneficiary) and Basic Needs (\$25/beneficiary). When combining the concepts of coverage and efficiency, it is interesting that the Food sector (\$13/beneficiary) is the most efficient but has the lowest coverage in terms of target beneficiaries (0.11 percent). On the other end of the spectrum, the Livelihoods sector has a

<sup>30</sup> Raw data on number of beneficiaries by sector and country, and JPY by sector and country was sourced from 参考資料：イラク・シリア紛争人道支援プログラム対応計画(2015.2~), p2.

<sup>31</sup> Raw data from Source: 参考資料：イラク・シリア紛争人道支援プログラム対応計画(2015.2~), p 2

higher \$/beneficiary ratio (\$704) and is thus less efficient. To further explore efficiency, it would be helpful to compare several alternative approaches with the same inputs in the same country, but JPF activities are too limited for such an analysis.

## 6.4. Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which *an activity achieves its purpose or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs; implicit in this criterion is the issue of timeliness.*<sup>32</sup>

Without a clear JPF purpose, it is difficult to fairly and comprehensively evaluate JPF's effectiveness. As described in the Section *"Primary activities of the JPF platform were identified for the Syria Response"*, JPF's main activities seem to include five key priorities; a very general assessment of each of these priorities is provided in the table below. Without more specific indicators defined, only a very general thematic assessment can be conducted.

**Table 14 – Thematic assessment of JPF activities with regard to the Syria response**

JPF Activity	General Assessment on Effectiveness
1. Provide life-saving and life-sustaining humanitarian assistance to Syrian IDPs and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian assistance is provided to Syrian IDPs and refugees.</li> <li>Mix of life-saving/ life-sustaining and additional activities, e.g. psycho-social activities, remedial education.</li> </ul>
2. Support all Japanese NGOs that want to contribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JPF seems to have an unwritten policy that largely permits funding of all/most interested Japanese NGOs.</li> </ul>
3. Respond to needs identified in the field by implementing NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JPF does respond to/fund needs identified by member NGOs, though these needs may not always be considered life-saving (see Activity 1).</li> </ul>
4. Conduct (output) monitoring of MoFA funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of MoFA funds does occur; 2 annual monitoring trips are conducted.</li> <li>Monitoring feedback/data is not always compiled and/or analyzed in a timely fashion.</li> </ul>
5. Ensure activities are aligned with UN guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN guidance is broad and far-reaching, such that all JPF funded activities can be considered in alignment.</li> </ul>

Source: self-compiled

It may be thought that assessing the effectiveness of JPF member NGOs is also considered an adequate assessment of JPF as a whole. The difficulty here is that the current JPF process is based on the goals/benchmarks set out in the activity proposals developed by individual member NGOs. If individual member NGOs achieve the purpose they defined, this is more a reflection on the results/ effectiveness of the JPF member NGOs and less a reflection on JPF. Without clear goals and strategy set by JPF, it is difficult to make the connection that the "results" of member NGOs are also "results" of JPF. Thus, the outputs of member NGOs are

<sup>32</sup> ALNAP/Beck, Tony, Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2006, p. 21.

a reflection on JPF funding more than a reflection on any specific coordination or activities of JPF as an organization.

Included in Annex 2 is the complete table of outputs and beneficiaries from the JPF 2013 Monitoring Report categorized by both country and sector.<sup>33</sup> Some of these outputs, such as blankets, stoves, food, hygiene kits, toilets, etc. can reasonably be assumed to be assisting refugees, if distributed in a timely fashion (as stated in the DAC definition of effectiveness).

Other more complex outputs, such as workshops, provision of public education, mental health counseling, etc. cannot easily be deemed “effective” based solely on the fact that the service was provided. Additional data collection with a specific focus on behavior change and impact of the activity would need to be completed to measure “effectiveness” of these types of activities. One field NGO reported this type of data in an interview explaining that their hygiene promotion activities have been effective in that *“the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) survey showed that more than 80% of students are washing hands”*, but this type of data seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

## 6.5. Key Findings within JPF Effectiveness

In addition to the data above, interview responses also offered helpful insights on the concept of JPF effectiveness.

### 6.5.1. Outputs of JPF member NGOs are spread across sectors and countries

As shown above in Table 13. JPF Support by Sector and Country, 2012-2014, JPF has chosen to fund activities in 5 countries across 12 member NGOs and in at least 7 different sectors (Protection, Education, Health, WASH, Livelihoods, Basic Needs, and Food). Thus, activities of JPF member NGOs are diverse and geographically dispersed as opposed to concentrated in a single geographic area or sector.

When asked during field interviews, respondents offered a diversity of responses to the question, “What do you think is your/JPF’s greatest contribution/ results?” and “what are your main contributions in the Syria response (under JPF-funding)?” For direct distribution activities such as food, NFI distribution, winterization, etc., many respondents described their outputs as results and explained that it assisted the refugees’ survival/comfort. For education, psychosocial, hygiene promotion and livelihood activities, most field staff shared anecdotal evidence as examples of their results, such as seeing the behavior of children improve or that participants in their project had “earned enough money to send kids to university and get treatment/medications for breast cancer.”

Only one respondent shared actual data related to results and impact; the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice survey showed that more than 80% of the students in their hygiene promotion program were washing their hands regularly; this interviewee also mentioned that their activities were helping to reduce water-borne diseases.

### 6.5.2. Little/no duplication of services; yet opportunities may exist for greater collaboration and efficiency

Because the needs are so great, no duplication of services was identified. There may, however, be inefficiencies in multiple Japanese NGOs doing similar work in the same

---

<sup>33</sup> JPF’s 2014 Monitoring Report was not yet available at the time of writing.

geographic area. This issue was raised quite directly by a local official when s/he posed the questions:

*“There is a difference in content of the projects between Japanese NGOs working in my country. Why is that? The Japanese NGOs have similar aims but different ways in implementing even though it’s the same program / same donor. Why? From our perspective, it’s better to have the same services (....), to have consistency across programming”.*

It is simply an issue of coordination to divide each NGO’s work in each country as to which NGOs do what work in what areas, and this could be a role that can be assigned to JPF Secretariat in creating greater efficiency and effectiveness.

### **6.5.3. Expertise levels vary; this affects likelihood of efficiency and effectiveness**

Because JPF-funded NGOs work in multiple sectors; there is often no clear focus on an area of expertise. This is especially important in a situation in which the data collected measures outputs rather than results. For the more complex activities where effectiveness can not be assessed with output data, there is no way to determine if member NGOs have the expertise and/or training to be effective in their chosen activities.

Some JPF NGOs seem to have an expertise in a certain type of activity; while others do not. For example, one member NGO is highly regarded by local officials as the “shelter expert” yet JPF does not fund any of their activities in the shelter sector. In another case, a JPF member NGO was described as working on a range of activities so different from each other that that NGO was perceived as “inefficient” and “not strategic” by a local UN official. In addition, a different UN official also identified the potential inefficiency for an organization whose work is spread across several sectors. “For agencies/IPs that work across 2-3 sectors, it becomes a heavy investment in terms of their time to attend the various Working Group meetings.”

Some view this “generalist” approach as an asset, as does the NGO field member who stated, “We cover a lot of categories – that is our strong point, that we are broad and do a lot of different activities”. Others perceive it as a hindrance to effectiveness and efficiency, as does the UN official in the field who stated “not actually sure of X NGO’s strong points; it is such a mixed bag – it is not strategic in its work.”

Similarly, some see one aspect of JPF’s role is to help Japanese member NGOs grow and build capacity, fully acknowledging that some member NGOs may not have extensive expertise when first starting their work in the humanitarian/emergency sector with JPF funds. However, this has the potential for negative consequences because the nature of the work is sensitive and complex. For example, one sector expert expressed some concern about adequate training (both local and Japanese staff) for some of the staff leading especially sensitive psycho-social activities. Without adequate training and expertise in these situations, “they are putting themselves in front of big risk of harming beneficiaries”. This sector expert also identified that approximately 55-60 other organizations are providing psycho-social activities, such that this is not a scenario where JPF member NGOs are filling a significant gap or niche.

## 7. Value added of JPF and Japanese funding in the Syria Response

“Value-added” of an organization is often difficult to measure; yet it is important for an organization to understand, especially in terms of how the organization is *perceived* by others in terms of its strengths and contribution to overall goals. While one function of JPF is clearly the distribution of MoFA funding, the objective for this section was to better understand what additional non-monetary roles/benefits JPF provides to its member NGOs and the broader international humanitarian community.

For example, when asked the question “without JPF services, do you think your results would be better – the same – worse?” the majority of Field NGO staff responded “worse” (71%) and one third ‘the same’ (29%), no interviewee said ‘better’, which clearly underlines JPF’s importance for the NGOs.

### 7.1. Funding as a main benefit, but too little and short funding cycles

When asked the question, “In addition to funding, what benefit, if any, does JPF provide to its implementing partners?” the responses were varied. More than half of field-based NGOs (n=7) expressed that funding was the primary benefit of JPF and there was little/no benefit in addition. This was significantly less for Japan-based member NGOs with only 3 out of 12 member NGOs responding in a similar way (approximately 25%).

UN representatives in the field were also asked this same question, but very little data was collected because most of the interviewees knew very little about JPF and thus were not able to respond adequately. That said, when the evaluation team member described the JPF funding amount of \$19.6 million to two UN representatives, they seemed surprised and commented “that’s not tiny” but still seemed to consider them a small player given the larger contributions they received from other sources.

Further, eight NGOs identified JPF funding as crucial to their ability to produce results in the field. This seems especially true for smaller NGOs with fewer sources of support. Comments from member NGOs that illustrate this point include:

- JPF [financial] support is very important.
- With JPF we could expand our project enormously.
- For us, JPF-funded project has been larger and longer. We think of [other donor] as filling the crack when there is a shortage.
- As most Japanese NGOs, we rely on JPF; wouldn’t be able to survive without JPF funding.
- If we do not get the JPF funds, means we’d need to stop doing the [activity].... But then no alternatives for the [refugees].

However, when asked the interview question, “During the project implementation phase, what are hindering factors for your NGO in the field?” the two main hindering factors identified by member NGOs were:

1. Funds available are relatively small.
2. Short funding cycle makes it difficult to predict and plan.

Most member NGOs indicated that they understood that JPF has little control over the amount of government money they are awarded through MoFA. In terms of predictability, there is a certain degree of shared understanding among MoFA, JPF secretariat and JPF member NGOs as to how much funding can be expected to JPF from the annual government budget. The amount of MoFA funding to JPF overall has seen a steady increase over the last several years. Some NGOs feel that these amounts are still small compared to the needs, but MoFA seems to feel that the capacity of Japanese NGOs needs to improve in order to be able to effectively use a larger amount of MoFA funds.

Funding from the supplementary budget is harder to predict, and the amount can fluctuate due to the severity of particular emergency situations as well as the Japanese government’s overall stance on each situation. Furthermore, because of the single year cycle of the Japanese government budget, government funding is not guaranteed over multiple years, thus making it very difficult for member NGOs to develop a multi-year plan for stable humanitarian assistance. This is especially true after the initial response phase is over, as was experienced in the Syria response. This is an area where JPF member NGOs would like to see improvement, and they have been trying to independently push for streamlining and increasing the government budget allocation by lobbying Diet members.

Precisely because of this, several member NGOs expressed a desire for JPF to fully utilize its role as a platform of NGOs, private sector, corporate members, academics and media. They expressed the need for JPF to build its own fundraising capacity and awareness-raising domestically about the work of Japan in humanitarian situations.

## 7.2. Broad range of non-monetary benefits

In addition to JPF funding, member NGOs identified a broad range of benefits provided by JPF that contribute to its “value-add.” There were not one or two clear themes that emerged as the *primary* JPF benefits perceived by a majority of stakeholders, and many of the topics perceived as benefits by some were perceived differently by others. This suggests that the role of JPF and how it serves/works with the member NGOs is not well-defined and/or clear to the member NGOs.

Listed in the table below are the categories of additional benefits that JPF creates for at least some of its member NGOs, and a sample of comments that illustrate the point.

**Table 15. JPF Value-added Benefits and supporting comments**

<b>JPF “Value-added” benefits – as seen by member NGOs (comments made in interviews)</b>
<b>Give support to member NGOs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [JPF] are an understanding, accommodating donor.</li> <li>• JPF people in charge of this response are cooperative with the NGOs and make us feel as partners. They are ‘defending’ the role of the NGOs to get the approval from the Ministries.</li> <li>• When they [JPF Secretariat] come, they aren’t trying to judge us, they are trying to help us find a better way – I appreciate that.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunity for Japanese NGOs to work in humanitarian aid / build capacity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its existence itself is the benefit. Because of them, we have more chances as a Japanese NGO to grow.</li> <li>• Small and medium-sized Japanese NGOs can have their capacity built in the areas of international humanitarian aid.</li> </ul>
<b>Allow independence and flexibility in responding to local needs</b>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of strong points about JPF: flexibility: we can always adjust the project following the situation!</li> <li>• The nature of what we are able to fund is different: not purely humanitarian nor development; really strong added-value of JPF more than any other donor.</li> <li>• Independence, because when the funding is not connected to UN agencies, we have a lot more freedom to form our projects responding to the need.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordination with MoFA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with MOFA, lobbying, getting them to understand the real needs and gaps on the ground.</li> <li>• We feel that JPF Secretariat has been good at supplying us information from MOFA that we don't have...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote networking / information sharing among member NGOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking, sharing information, better communication, and sense of cooperation among NGOs are all valuable. We have heard that Japanese NGOs didn't used to get along with each other before JPF. We don't see this phenomenon of "not getting along" any more...</li> <li>• Networking with other NGOs is an added benefit. We don't necessarily do projects together, but good relationships are formed with other NGOs here in Japan because of JPF.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Japan's neutrality; ability to work inside Syria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JPF is the only Japanese donor funding projects inside Syria. The government wants JPF to work inside Syria, since politically, no one else can.</li> <li>• Within Syria, NGOs are the only ones who can bring humanitarian aid, so we're making a contribution.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visibility of Japan in the Syrian response, "aid with a Japanese face (presence)" [=kao ga mieru shien]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japan is known as a country of giving funding and not people, but we are changing that – JPF is enabling that shift that Japan is also a country of caring people.</li> <li>• JPF is important in a sense that Japan becomes visible in the field.</li> </ul> <p><u>Interview comments that contradict this as a benefit:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One issue is that their focus seems to be "we are a Japanese org," not "this is our work, this is what we're good at."</li> <li>• We don't see NGOs as "these NGOs are from Japan and these are from X, Y, Z."</li> </ul>

In the case of "visibility of Japan in the Syrian response," there were very mixed reviews, especially from members of the UN/international community on whether this should be considered as a strength of JPF. For example, one UN official commented "*one issue is that their focus seems to be 'we are a Japanese organisation', not this is our work, this is what we're good at*" while another said, "*We don't see NGOs as "these NGOs are from Japan and these are from X, Y."* Such reactions suggest that the visibility of Japan in the Syria response is far more important to Japan/JPF than it is to anyone else in the humanitarian sector.

In a more operational sense, a member NGO questioned the necessity of the Japanese "face" with the comment "*A [Japanese person on the ground] just overseeing that everything goes well so that the partner NGO can do the way they want (...); not necessarily reasonable to have a Japanese face on the ground in that setting*". In contrast, several member NGOs mentioned the positive perception of the "Japanese-ness" of their work (detail-oriented, thorough, hands-on, personal) as a point of personal pride.

Further, some NGO staff in the field underlined seeing a benefit in JPF funding smaller operations without the explicit goal of scaling these up. Arguments put forward (selection) by NGO field staff included:

- "*Our scale of activity is small. We cover a lot of categories – that is our strong point, that we are broad.*"
- "*Despite low funding, we are all doing such unique and effective aid activities.*"

- *“Our budget is not too large, but we provide “kimekomakai” (=hands on, detail-oriented, meticulous, personal) aid and establish close connections with the people we serve.”*

However, this is not equally perceived as adding value by the UN counterparts on the ground. Their reactions for example (selection) included:

- *“Some field NGOs are too small to be effective, they try to act alone. They want to be unique rather than working in partnership with bigger NGOs.”*
- *“If I look at the volume: it is not huge, not amongst top 5 partners, but every assistance counts. If they can scale up, we would be happy to help them. “*

### 7.3. Value-Added of JPF Secretariat

There was general agreement among most member NGOs as to the “value-added” of current JPF Secretariat staff working on the Syria response. A majority of member NGOs (n=9) interviewed found the JPF Secretariat members to be knowledgeable and supportive.

Comments included:

- *When they come to evaluate, that’s the biggest occasion for us to interact with them. Usually they know the experience of field and they come to understand, not to check/evaluate/judge. I feel the distance is not far between us and JPF.*
- *Syria-Iraq staff team in the JPF secretariat are “really into their stuff.” We can tell they study the subject really well; they know the situation well and are willing to provide bigger assistance to the situation.*
- *JPF staff are trying to communicate with us and share info (updates on communication with MOFA, funding size, planning for next year) with us. In that sense, we are pretty happy with their work in the Syria response.*
- *Both staff members in charge of Syria Program are knowledgeable about the issues. They focus on the right things, and their comments are always appropriate and on the point. Compared to other funding schemes, they are considerably more familiar with emergency aid, so they make swift necessary judgments. They know the field and know how to give NGOs effective support at every stage of the entire process.*
- *The Secretariat staff know the field and are very helpful. They go out of the way to make sure our proposals go through.*
- *Highly capable, their response was quick.*

As seen in the list above, that data is quite positive. To provide both sides of the story, below we have listed comments from member NGOs that may also provide helpful feedback to the JPF Secretariat:

- *This is not necessarily just with the Syrian Program, but how smooth or well things work all depends on who exactly is working with the Program among JPF Secretariat staff.*
- *JPF staff seems overwhelmed; responses are sometimes not timely.*
- *Lack of technical expertise within JPF.*
- *Monthly monitoring reports: don't receive any feedback from JPF (...). If they don't provide feedback – what is the point of doing those?*
- *JPF is (generally) a partner of NGOs, but sometimes we feel that they are our donor, and some JPF staff rather respond as donors rather than partners to us.*
- *Monitoring missions are not really useful for us. We are eager to make changes based on feedback, but we do not receive much of it, and there is no discussion right there on the field. Especially for the field staff, they are put under a lot of pressure that the monitors are coming,*

*and when they're there they have no meaningful interaction, so they feel burdened by the whole process and are demoralized.*

## CONCLUSION

Overall, JPF's Syria response has shown itself to be well operational and functional since its start in November 2012, and the JPF Secretariat was found to be supportive, responsive, and reliable in its work with JPF's NGO members. Now entering its third year of support, JPF needs to consider the challenges inherent in the complex and lasting crisis that is including more and more development elements; simultaneously, JPF needs to re-assess its internal structure in order to ensure it can provide (more) focused, (more) efficient, and (even more) value-added support to the Syrian refugees.

Although JPF's response so far has been in general alignment with the UN response plans, humanitarian principles, and also compliant with Japan's anti-terrorism act, there is a need for further clarifying that alignment also with the Japanese policy for Syria and the region. Similarly, there is also a need for JPF to clarify further its own strategy in that regard, and whether this also means strengthening the prerogatives of the Secretariat or continuing to rely on its Member NGOs.

On the JPF funding process, although so far functional, current discussions on further streamlining the process and particularly clarifying its elements, requirements, and decision criteria can only contribute to a stronger, shorter, and more transparent response cycle; again, this poses the question of strengthening or not the JPF Secretariat role.

When it comes to the actual results of JPF-funded activities in the wider Syrian region, there is evidence that JPF is providing needed support and adhering to the humanitarian Do No Harm principles as well as more specific guidelines in the various sectors. However, activities are (too) dispersed to be able to make impact; the scale of most interventions remains too small to make a measurable difference; and JPF, although not present on the ground, could strengthen its remote support to assist the field-based NGOs whether this is through political backing vis-à-vis the UN or among the NGOs, and/or through capacity building, sharing lessons learned, or knowledge management.

The value added of JPF is perceived quite strongly by its Japanese stakeholders, especially the NGO members and MoFA. However, much more needs to be done if JPF would like to be perceived as able to accomplish more than providing funds and thereby enabling its member NGOs to participate in the Syria response. Working at a larger scale with greater visibility to the UN and the international community is crucial if JPF also wants to become more known and respected outside of Japan.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the report, the evaluation team makes the following five main recommendations to JPF (see text in **bold**). Suggestions that further specify the different aspects of each recommendation and how these could be fulfilled are listed after each recommendation (see numbered lists).

## Ensure Strategic Relevance and clarify Role and Mission of JPF

**1. In order to clarify JPF mission and role within the Syria response, JPF Secretariat should take the lead role, in (close) consultation with JPF member NGOs, to draft JPF's own Syria response strategy. This JPF Syria response strategy should:**

- **Serve as the basis for decision-making about JPF funded activities for the Syria Response,**
- **Be clearly communicated to JPF member NGOs and stakeholders,**
- **Include goals, objectives, key sectors/activities, and timelines.**

In order to form and implement this strategy effectively, JPF Secretariat may want to consider the following elements (steps):

- 1.1 Proactively engage with UN bodies and the Japanese government to gather and analyze strategic information on the Syria response, so that JPF is fully informed of the overall directions of the response of other key players, including understanding national response plans and the international strategic shift from emergency activities towards longer-term development activities;
- 1.2 Assist member NGOs, especially field staff, to understand how they fit into the JPF/Japanese strategy.
- 1.3 Articulate JPF's intervention logic (logic model or logical framework), which helps to clarify the purpose of JPF's activities and the logical chain of interventions (activities-outputs-outcomes-impact). Use this process to facilitate discussions within JPF regarding the key activities of JPF as a platform, key activities of member NGOs and key activities of the Secretariat.
- 1.4 Allocate appropriate resources (human and financial) to effectively deliver the above-mentioned tasks.

## Ensure a streamlined JPF Funding Mechanism Process

**2. The JPF Secretariat should be proactive in strengthening and streamlining the JPF funding process. This should include:**

- **A robust JPF discussion to clarify the necessity (or not) of each step in the funding process and decide on those to keep and those to remove (if any),**
- **Once those decisions are made, all aspects of the revised JPF funding mechanism/process should be standardized and clearly documented so that it is clear to all member NGOs.**

To accomplish this, JPF Secretariat may want to consider the following steps:

- 2.1 Identify and standardize the guidelines for all steps of the funding process as well as criteria used for funding decisions at all steps of the process: JPF Secretariat review, SC, PEC.
- 2.2 Clearly document and compile all funding criteria and guidelines in one central location, accessible for all member NGOs to use as reference materials throughout the process.

- 2.3 Provide clear feedback/ explanations to member NGOs (as well as MoFA and private donors) on funding decisions, in the form of a score sheet based on clearly defined criteria.
- 2.4 Allow line item/maximum percentage for contingency (unexpected budget costs) in NGO budget proposals to allow for flexibility in changing circumstances.

### Enhance Implementation and Effectiveness of JPF Results in the Field

**3. JPF Secretariat should internally discuss its specific role and support functions with regard to HQ NGOs and Field NGOs during the Syria Response implementation. This discussion should include:**

- **Transfer of information to and among member NGOs, such as lessons learned**
- **Monitoring and evaluation**
- **Type of support and targeted frequencies for each Secretariat support function**

In order to achieve this, JPF Secretariat may want to consider the following:

- 3.1 Pilot an annual lessons learning workshop: organized by the JPF Secretariat in the region and open to all NGO field staff. This would also be a platform to explore possibilities for project coordination among NGOs and to provide Secretariat feedback to member NGOs in the field on project implementation.
- 3.2 Link monitoring/ data collection directly to the JPF logframe. Review the monitoring report template with an objective to shorten background and other information and to focus on the reporting of indicators.
- 3.3 Develop a database or simple data system that facilitates the compilation of data from monthly/project completion reports, allowing JPF Secretariat to more easily use and learn from the information.
- 3.4 Define a timeline for JPF Secretariat to provide feedback to field NGOs on their monitoring reports. Similarly, provide a timeline for feedback to field NGOs after monitoring visits.
- 3.5 Consider (annually) organizing a monitoring session/seminar to inform field staff on the essential monitoring requirements as well as for providing information/ feedback to the field.

### Enhancing the Value-Added of JPF as a Platform

**4. JPF should improve its international visibility on its Syria response. For that, the JPF Secretariat should revise and revamp its website in English, e.g. more clearly spelling out JPF's role, mission, and current response activities in the region.**

Further, JPF may also want to consider taking the following steps:

- 4.1 On a 6-monthly basis at least, updating funding (and activity) information in the international financial portals (FTS) and/or to the UN focal points of OCHA and UNHCR coordinating information on the Syria response.
- 4.2 Joining international initiatives (e.g. ALNAP's *Syria Evaluation Portal for Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning*) in order to exchange knowledge and become more visible to an international audience.

**5. JPF should prepare and execute an annual awareness-raising and fundraising strategy for the Japanese Syria response (incl. milestones and funding goals) in order to broaden public knowledge and to increase monetary contributions in Japan.**

This could include:

- 5.1 (Co-)organizing events both for specialists and for the wider public, such as participating in and (co-) organizing conferences on humanitarian aid and the situation in Syria with think tanks/ universities, organizing information sessions/ debates with UN entities MoFA, JICA, the media, and involving business.
- 5.2 Exploring different funding activities that are most likely to be successful in Japan.
- 5.3 Identifying the networks and relevant skillsets of current Platform members and use these resources more strategically (business, academia, media), while also conducting outreach and recruitment to build a stronger, more diverse platform to assist the Secretariat in supporting Syria response activities.