

Executive Summary

The importance of R&D and knowledge sharing in the field of development cooperation has always been emphasized. R&D in the field of development cooperation includes research on all aspects of society-wide strategic policies and technologies for the economic and social development of developing countries. Moreover, in recent years, its role has been expanding to include various research on global public goods issues such as rising inequality and climate change, as well as agenda-setting, development effectiveness, knowledge sharing and circulation, and future forecasting. Many development cooperation agencies currently operate research departments. Although there are differences in organizational management systems depending on the nature of each agency, they can be considered the same in that they accumulate and share knowledge at the institutional level, analyze the future, and propose solutions. In addition, they are expanding their roles through activities such as drawing up development cooperation agendas, producing research outputs, and sharing knowledge in line with the purpose and direction of each organization. Therefore, this study examines the meaning of R&D in the field of development cooperation and the role and characteristics of research departments in development cooperation agencies to suggest the function and development direction of KOICA's research department in the future.

The OECD (2015) defines R&D as creative activities that are systematically carried out to increase the amount of knowledge about people, cultures, and societies and to improve its application and utilization. Furthermore, R&D is generally an activity based on the exploration of objects, phenomena, and knowledge, and refers to systematic investigations that focus on the discovery, interpretation, correction, or reaffirmation of new or existing knowledge. In addition, it can also be said to analyze a phenomenon and propose alternatives to solve a problem by investing

financial, human, and material resources. In international development cooperation, research is not limited to a specific field. It includes not only research on development cooperation itself, but also the collection and analysis of knowledge in various categories that can be included in development cooperation from the perspective of various actors in development cooperation, and the resulting products to solve problems. Moreover, the demand for research on analyzing and predicting future issues to prepare for uncertainty in a rapidly changing environment and global crisis is also increasing, and the role of research organizations with research expertise in the field of development cooperation can be expected to be strengthened.

Major development cooperation agencies are equipped with research departments according to the nature of each organization to conduct various research required in the field of development cooperation. At KOICA, research activities are centered on the ODA Research Center. The ODA Research Center aims to suggest KOICA's strategy and business direction by studying major issues in the field of development cooperation, and its main tasks include research on policies, projects, strategies, or economic and social development of partner countries related to international development cooperation, collecting and disseminating information on international development cooperation, sharing knowledge on international development cooperation through academic conferences and publications, and establishing domestic and international research networks.

In this study, we look specifically at Norad, which has a similar operating system to KOICA: AFD, which has research as the centerpiece of one of its offices; JICA RI, which is part of JICA but has independent research institutes; and IDOS, an independent German development cooperation institute. Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, conducts research with three main objectives: to develop new knowledge, to strengthen research capacity in low- and middle-income countries, and to systematically utilize research-based knowledge for policy making and use. In addition to Norad, research is conducted through various forms of collaboration, such as through the Norwegian Research Council

and international organizations to promote research for development cooperation. France's AFD established a research department in 2002 and conducts research and knowledge sharing on sustainable development, public goods, and innovative financing instruments based on local and social contextual knowledge from its 80 years of experience as a development cooperation implementing agency. Currently, the Office of Innovation, Research and Knowledge is responsible for research, strategy, evaluation, and education, and conducts international research conferences every other year. Japan's JICA operates the Ogata Research Institute under the direct supervision of the President of JICA, which conducts policy research on issues facing developing countries, shares Japan's development experience and expertise, and aims to strengthen Japan's intellectual position in the international community. In Germany, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) conducts research activities through an independent research institute called the German Institute for Development and Sustainability (IDOS). IDOS is based on the interaction between research, consulting, and training, with three-quarters of its staff in research positions.

Comparing the research organizations of each agency, KOICA, Norad, and AFD have research departments under the development cooperation implementing agencies and are required to conduct research in line with the strategic direction of the agency and the needs of the agency, while JICA RI follows JICA's strategy but sets an independent vision as an international research hub, and IDOS is also commissioned to conduct BMZ research but is gradually trying to become independent with the goal of becoming a global think tank. Therefore, these two organizations are characterized by conducting more academic research than business-related research. AFD has the research office within the agency, but it has the vision of a global think tank and is focused on producing practical knowledge that can be applied to business, taking advantage of its strengths as a development cooperation implementing agency. AFD, JICA, and IDOS are all characterized by the fact that their research organizations emerged from leadership that recognized the importance of research. KOICA, on the other hand, despite having a relatively

long history as a research organization, has experienced several ups and downs due to changes in management and still operates with a small staff and budget. Looking at the main research topics of each organization, KOICA mainly conducts research on development cooperation paradigms, development effectiveness, and partnerships, while AFD focuses on climate, JICA RI on peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance, and IDOS on inter- and transnational cooperation for global public goods and solving common challenges.

The role of a research organization in a development cooperation agency can be seen at the macro level, identifying international trends and providing direction for the agency, and at the micro level, analyzing the effectiveness of projects and seeking ways to improve through organizational learning. Research organizations in development cooperation agencies may vary in their focus depending on the purpose and strategic direction of the organization, but they basically produce research outputs. KOICA has been operating a research department since its establishment, but despite the fact that the role and importance of research has been increasing internally as the agency's budget and manpower have increased, and externally as society at large has become more aware of and invested in R&D due to growing uncertainty, there has been no significant change in the research department in terms of manpower and budget. In order to expand R&D at KOICA, it will be necessary to build on the strengths of the existing research organization and establish a vision for ODA Research center that resonates within the organization. Specific consideration should be given to whether KOICA intends to keep ODA Research Center as internal organization at the level of research to support business execution, or to position itself specializing in development cooperation that is competitive with other research institutions. The development of a research organization can help build KOICA's development cooperation knowledge base through a variety of research activities, provide strategic and business direction, and help KOICA strengthen its voice and expand its role in the international community. Given the current structure of the ODA Research Center, it would be reasonable to prioritize research that provides future directions and

serves as a platform for expanding KOICA's role, and gradually expand to research that strengthens the knowledge base as the research staff and scale expand. In the short term, focusing on existing internal capacity-building functions under the vision of a professional research organization that provides strategic direction and supports organizational learning will lay the foundation for the ODA Research Center to become a platform for development cooperation research and a leading professional research organization in the domestic development cooperation academic ecosystem, and in the long term, a global think tank.

R&D is a systematic activity that continuously accumulates knowledge within an organization and creates new knowledge by utilizing it, and it can also be seen as a stepping stone to help organizations grow. At a time when the rapidly changing paradigm of development cooperation requires an integrated approach that combines the knowledge and expertise of various development cooperation actors, it is necessary to revisit the meaning of research from KOICA's perspective. Although it has remained largely unchanged for the past 30 years, KOICA will need to make various changes to fulfill its role as a research organization appropriate to its size and role.