

## Stories from the Field

### Utilizing Japan's experience in extending the lifetime of the infrastructure in Laos and promoting quality infrastructure!

—Nagasaki University promotes maintenance and management of the road infrastructure in Laos as well as human resources development in this field through industry-government-academia collaboration—



Public nomination

1

Laos is a landlocked country and the movement of people and goods heavily depends on its road network. Laos is as large as Japan's main island Honshu and about 80% of its territory is in a mountainous area. Therefore, the country needs to operate the road network soundly through the appropriate maintenance and management of over 3,600 bridges scattered across the country in order for the well-balanced socio-economic development of the country. In Laos, more than 15% of the bridges on the national roads have been in service for over 40 years, and 10% of them require early and urgent repairs. The technology for systematically maintaining and managing these bridges had been required in Laos.

In Japan, many bridges were intensively constructed during and after the period of high economic growth and these bridges are aging at the same time as those in Laos. Around half of the bridges in Japan are expected to exceed 50 years of service within a few years. In order to improve the situation, industrial, governmental and academic sectors are working together and research institutes and the industrial sector are leading the development of technological innovations for extending the lifetime of the infrastructure, while central and local governments are promoting the practical application of these technologies.

In line with these trends, Nagasaki University established the "Infrastructures Lifetime-Extending Maintenance Research Center" in 2007, and has been managing its "Michimori" (Road Guardian)" training course for local governments, private companies, NPOs and local residents, which aims to develop human resources for maintenance and management of the road infrastructure. The course has engaged more than 900 people qualified for maintenance and management of the road infrastructure. Nagasaki University takes an initiative and expands its activities covering development of international human resources.

As one of these initiatives, Nagasaki University has accepted government officials and engineers from developing countries and enrolled them in "Bridge Maintenance," a Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP) of JICA that aims to develop human resources responsible for the maintenance and management of infrastructure. 102 participants from 42 countries enrolled between FY2015 and FY2019 are playing active roles in their own countries while utilizing Japanese technology. In addition, Nagasaki University Graduate School has also accepted government officials, engineers, and researchers from developing countries for JICA's KCCP Long Term Training, "Core Human Resource Development for Road



An on-site exploratory survey at a bridge during the "Bridge Maintenance" training course (second from the left: Dr. Nishikawa) (Photo: International Development Center of Japan)

Asset Management." Two bridge engineers from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) of Laos were enrolled in the university's doctoral course through said program and completed it in 2021 with a doctorate degree.

Dr. Thavone, one of the participants, has carried out research on "Load Bearing Behaviors and Maintenance Methodology of Bailey Bridge."<sup>\*1</sup> He has returned to the MPWT of Laos and has achieved some results for on-site technical guidance on bridge maintenance and management as well as in nurturing junior staffs. He has also been contributing as a key person to the "Project for Capacity Development on Bridge Maintenance and Management," a technical cooperation project conducted through a public-private-academia collaboration involving Nagasaki University, the International Development Center of Japan, and other stakeholders.

Nagasaki University has been contributing to infrastructure longevity in Laos through practical and academic approach, by dispatching experts to Laos, supporting systematic maintenance and management of 860 bridges on national roads, and trying to ensure that the outcomes of Dr. Thavone and others' researches are utilized in actual infrastructure maintenance and management on-site. Dr. NISHIKAWA Takafumi, Associate Professor of Nagasaki University and deputy chief advisor of the project, said as follows: "Bridges and other infrastructure play a key role as social apparatus for a very long period of time, from planning to construction and after completion, serving for decades or more than a century. It will not happen overnight to develop organizations, human resources, and technologies for appropriate development, operation, maintenance and management of infrastructure. I really hope that these initiatives in Laos will contribute to the formation of a safe and secure road network and bring about further development of the country."

In this way, Japan is working to extend the lifetime of the infrastructure in developing countries through industrial-government-academia collaboration involving governments, universities and private companies. Such efforts contribute to the realization of economic viability considering life cycle costs, an element of the "G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment."<sup>\*2</sup>



Dr. Thavone confirming the strength of the components of a collapsed Bailey bridge, as part of his research activities in Laos (Photo: Nagasaki University)

<sup>\*1</sup> A temporary bridge used in many developing countries. Originally developed for military purposes, this kind of bridge can be easily set up but is not designed for long-term use. As these are being used as regular bridges in developing countries, bridge collapses happen frequently due to overloaded vehicles being driven across them and other similar situations.

<sup>\*2</sup> See the glossary "Quality Infrastructure" on page 31.

## Stories from the Field



Public  
nomination

2

### Japanese Cooperation Boosting Initiatives in Uganda, Africa's Largest Refugee-Hosting Country —UNHCR activities—



Uganda is located in the eastern part of Africa, also known as “the Pearl of Africa” for the beauty of its nature. Over the years, Uganda has been welcoming many refugees and has seen many influxes of refugees fleeing from neighboring countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where instability persists.

With the cumulative number of refugees in Uganda reaching approximately 1.4 million at the end of 2020, Uganda is currently Africa's largest refugee-hosting country. The refugee status recognition rate in Uganda was 95% prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2019), and there are 13 refugee settlements across the country by the initiative of the Government of Uganda. Efforts to meet the needs of refugees, such as land allocation, freedom of movement, and providing livelihood opportunities, have also been strengthened, and the program is recognized worldwide as a successful example of refugee integration.

Coordination with a variety of partners is essential for the refugee assistance in Uganda. In response to the growing environmental risks surrounding refugees under the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNHCR cooperates with a number of Japanese actors, including the Government of Japan, JICA, and NGOs across a wide range of fields to realize the “whole-of-society approach,” a concept set out in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).<sup>\*1</sup>

One example is the “Promotion of Rice Development (PRiDe) Project,” implemented in cooperation with JICA. Previous efforts from JICA, developed as rice-farming promotion, have been expanded to support refugees in cooperation with UNHCR since 2014. The project not only helped promote NERICA (New Rice for Africa),<sup>\*2</sup> which is resilient against drought and thus suitable for the African climate, but also provided training on rice-farming to both refugees and host communities, benefitting around 1,111 households (approximately 5,000 people) in 2021. The economic independence gained through the cultivation of NERICA has boosted the self-confidence of the refugees, and many of them say it has changed their lives.



A South Sudanese female refugee working hard on rice-farming, taking care of 19 children separated from their parents in conflicts (Photo: UNHCR)



Ms. TAKASHIMA Yumiko, who says “sustainable initiatives truly are the key,” visiting a field of NERICA cultivated by refugees (Fourth from the left) (Photo: UNHCR)

Such collaboration between JICA and international organizations has contributed to strengthening the Humanitarian-Development Nexus that aims to build a seamless coordination between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation (see Part II-2, 2-2 (1) for details). Moreover, to meet the diverse needs of refugees such as medical care, education, water supply, and livelihood improvement, UNHCR works to deliver support to each and every refugee for their better futures while strengthening its coordination with Japanese companies, NGOs, and others.

Many Japanese staff members also work actively in the field of UNHCR refugee assistance. Assistant Protection Officer Ms. KOBAYASHI Akiko at the Yumbe Office in Uganda, who has worked in Uganda for more than three years, said, “I often find myself inspired by the refugees who never lose their hope and do their best to thrive even though they have been forced to flee their homes and live in difficult circumstances.”

Ms. TAKASHIMA Yumiko, Principal Risk Management and Compliance Advisor at the UNHCR Country Office in Uganda, said, “I would like more people to know about not only the challenges refugees in Uganda face but the various forms of assistance being delivered from the people of Japan. And I hope you will join us in thinking about what more Japan can do to help.” It is expected that cooperation with Japan's expertise will continue to expand to support refugees in the future.

<sup>\*1</sup> Adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

<sup>\*2</sup> See the glossary on page 84.

## Stories from the Field

### Leave No One Behind in Times of Disaster!

—Striving day by day to promote “Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction” in the Asia-Pacific region—



3

15% of the total population in any given country are estimated to live with a disability.\*<sup>1</sup> Based on this estimate, it can be calculated that there are currently approximately 690 million persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2002, when I took up my position at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), whose headquarters are located in Bangkok, Thailand, that figure was 650 million. Although the number seemed too huge to grasp, it gave me a renewed determination to work hard in my position to improve the rights of persons with disabilities, which I look back on now with a feeling of nostalgia.

ESCAP provides programs in a variety of ways to the member states and regions\*<sup>2</sup> to support legal and judicial systems development for social and economic development as a whole in the Asia-Pacific region. With regard to persons with disabilities, since 1993, ESCAP has worked under the leadership of the Government of Japan to launch initiatives for ensuring their human rights and their participation in social and economic development at the policy level, under the “Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities”\*<sup>3</sup> framework. Today, ESCAP continues to implement various efforts that are not found in other regions, such as Africa and Latin America.

Under such circumstances, with the support of the Government of Japan, I have been working on a technical assistance project for disaster risk reduction, an urgent challenge threatening the lives of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, since 2014. Specifically, the project aims to realize “Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR; disaster risk reduction that reflects the perspectives of persons with disabilities).”

The death rate among persons with disabilities in the event of natural disasters is believed to be higher than that of disaster-affected people in general. This is due to a lack of evacuation drills and preparedness, barrier-free facilities such as evacuation centers and temporary toilets, provision of information through sign language interpretation and subtitles on television and the internet after a disaster strikes, and considerations for persons with a variety of disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and autism. There has also been insufficient focus on “disability-inclusion,” which reflects the perspectives of persons with disabilities, in the general policies adopted by most countries.

As a first step towards improving such circumstances, a conference was held in Sendai in 2014 with the participation of government officials involved in disaster risk reduction and various organizations representing persons with disabilities from Indonesia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, where disasters occur frequently. The results of the discussions among the participants created momentum that led to the incorporation of the “DiDRR” perspective into the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030\*<sup>4</sup> that



The author attending a conference in Bangladesh on “disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction” (Photo: Centre for Disability in Development Bangladesh)

was adopted the following year. This result marked a major step forward, including ensuring that the Sendai Framework recognizes persons with disabilities as an important social group that is greatly impacted by disasters, and proclaiming the importance of the universal design principles that ensure the creation of materials and systems that can be used easily by everyone including persons with disabilities, as well as the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, are involved in policy formulation from the initial design phase.

An ongoing project provides assistance for incorporating the perspectives of persons with disabilities into the day-to-day workings of the disaster risk reduction policies of various countries. The project selected four countries where disasters frequently occur but the “disability-inclusion” perspective does not seem to have penetrated in the mode of action and thinking of officials in charge of the frontlines of disaster risk reduction, and it is creating online education programs in languages of each country and aligned with their respective cultures and customs.

Post-disaster response has become more difficult in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under such circumstances, I intend to keep making my best effort to realize DiDRR, believing that this is the place to realize the “leave no one behind” principle, a core philosophy of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**AKIYAMA Aiko**

**Social Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

\*1 World Report on Disability 2011 (WHO) <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability>

\*2 A total of 58 countries and regions, including 49 members and nine associate members.

\*3 This was then extended in 2003 and 2013 for a further 10 years respectively.

\*4 Adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in 2015. (See Part II (7) Disaster Risk Reduction for details.)



## Stories from the Field

### Realizing Hybrid Power Generation in the Pacific Island Countries Using Experience and Technology of Okinawa

—Stable, clean, and low-cost power generation technology for the island countries with power vulnerability—



4

Diesel-power generation is mainstream in most Pacific Island countries. As these countries rely on imports for almost 100% of their fuel, they are vulnerable to the impacts of transportation costs and price rises, which is an energy security issue. There is also a need to shift to renewable energy sources such as solar and wind as a countermeasure against global warming.

In response to this situation, the “Project for Introduction of Hybrid Power Generation System”<sup>\*1</sup> in the Pacific Island Countries” was launched in 2017, with its base in Fiji. It targets public power companies in the five countries of Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall, Kiribati, and Tuvalu.

“Although diesel power generation enables a stable power supply, fuel costs and power generation facility maintenance costs are high, creating a considerable burden for power companies. On the other hand, renewable energy such as solar power is low-cost and clean, however it does not provide a stable power supply without appropriate planning because power output fluctuates according to weather conditions. A hybrid power generation system combines the respective advantages of these two power generation systems, namely stable and low-cost power supply. The governments of the target countries are highly conscious of the issues of global warming and energy security, and I feel their high expectations for this project,” said JICA Senior Advisor Mr. OGAWA Tadayuki, who works as Chief Advisor of the project.

In order to promote the introduction of hybrid power generation systems and to ensure that the equipment can be properly maintained and managed by the engineers of power companies in each country after the project is completed, the project has focused on instructing key engineers from each country who are appointed as “core trainers.” Furthermore, experts from Okinawa are passing on the expertise and technology that they have acquired from their experiences in the islands of Japan, in order to turn the training center of Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) into a center for South-South cooperation.



Providing guidance to Kiribati engineers on measuring engine parts (Photo: Okinawa Enetech)



Online training with engineers from each countries (Photo: Okinawa Enetech)

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project utilizes video conferencing systems to provide training on improving the operational efficiency of diesel power generation, and on introducing, operating, and maintaining hybrid power generation systems. “I think that even though the training has been conducted remotely, we have definitely improved the training impact by exercising our ingenuity, such as enhancing the study materials and conducting examinations to check trainees’ level of understanding. Another advantage is that when trainees have any questions on-site, we can contact them online and provide advice directly,” said Mr. KAKEFUKU Luis of Okinawa Enetech Co., Inc., who is playing a central role in technical consultation. This detailed consultation has produced concrete results in the various countries, including more efficient solar power generation and improved fuel consumption rates in diesel power generators.

In the training process, efforts were made to transform the mindsets of each country’s power company officials related to power generation, including safety management, and organization. “As a result of continuous consultation, the inside of power generation facilities are more organized and engineers who took part in the training have become more safety-conscious. I heard about engineers buying safety shoes, suggesting that they were taking a proactive approach,” said Mr. Kakefuku.

There have been high levels of interest in this project across the Pacific region. Some engineers from EFL became instructors in March 2021 and have carried out local training for seven countries<sup>\*2</sup> that were not originally covered by the project. The knowhow based on experiences in Okinawa has been accumulated in Fiji, and with EFL as a center, initiatives to introduce hybrid power generation systems are continuing to spread across the Pacific region.

<sup>\*1</sup> A form of power generation that combines two or more systems from among diesel power generation and various renewable energy sources (solar, wind, etc.).

<sup>\*2</sup> Cook, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga.

## Stories from the Field

### Making Use of Japanese Techniques and Expertise to Improve the Environment in Bolivia!

5

—The success of ECO-TOMODACHI created by ex-JICA trainees—



In Bolivia, tourism areas such as the Uyuni Salt Flats located at an altitude of over 3,000 meters above sea level are littered with trash brought in by tourists and lack available toilets. Improving the environment and sanitary conditions in these areas has become an urgent issue. The JICA Bolivia Office cooperates to improve these environments with the aim of revitalizing tourism, which has slumped in the wake of the global spread of COVID-19. In specific terms, JICA works with the Departmental Autonomous Government of La Paz to support the conservation of tourism resources as well as the establishment of a foundation for sustainable development, including training in sanitary management for tourism operators.



ECO-TOMODACHI's logo (Photo: JICA)

As part of this support, six Bolivians who had received JICA training in Japan formed a group called "ECO-TOMODACHI (Tomodachi means friend in Japanese)" in 2017. ECO-TOMODACHI carries out a variety of activities such as waste management, improvement of sanitary environments, and promotion of environmental education across Bolivia in cooperation with local public entities, private companies, NPOs and others. It promotes sustainable tourism development as well.

Having studied waste management and the composting\*1 of organic waste in JICA's Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP), they are applying the techniques and expertise acquired in Japan to Bolivia and working on their practical implementation and dissemination in a way suitable for the local environment, with JICA's support for their activities. ECO-TOMODACHI is not limited to JICA returnees, therefore the network has expanded considerably and Japanese technology for waste management and improvement of sanitary conditions has been utilized throughout Bolivia.

Mr. Edwin Encinas, a founding member of ECO-TOMODACHI who proactively promotes activities to spread waste management and composting, said as follows: "Legislation on waste management in Bolivia's local public entities was enacted only in 2015, and initially there was a lack of awareness in the country, and we had difficulties in gaining the cooperation of residents. Nevertheless, with the support of JICA, and through steady progress, more local public entities and residents are getting involved in waste management and reduction." He continued, "Japanese techniques for waste management and composting require some time and effort, however the approach itself is simple and is characterized by a high level of adaptability to natural environments. It is very pleasing and enjoyable to let people know that they can turn waste into resources through cyclical composting and use it to grow vegetables."

Ms. WATANABE Mariko, a JICA Bolivia Office staff, also said about their future activities, "While rolling out promotion, technical



Mr. Encinas and a compost consultant (ex-Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer) carrying out training on composting for residents involved in the tourism industry in Uyuni City (Photo: JICA)

cooperation, and tourism strategy proposals for environmental improvements, we try to establish an appropriate support framework through exchanges of views with local residents. As one of our environmental education initiatives, we have also worked with Japanese and Nikkei companies, local public entities, and ECO-TOMODACHI to develop a mobile phone app to learn composting methods. We hope to continue cooperation schemes with Japanese and Nikkei companies while listening to the voices of people in various locations."

Furthermore, the Bolivian Mountain Guides Association and the Socorro Andino Boliviano rescue team work in cooperation with ECO-TOMODACHI and JICA to improve waste disposal and toilet conditions on tourist routes, in response to the increased numbers of mountain-climbers from within and outside Bolivia. Through environmental education to mountaineering guides and residents at the foot of mountains, the Association and the rescue team aim to recycle human waste by composting it to use it for agricultural purposes. There is also a high awareness among the residents of the highland areas that are becoming tourist destinations. "People are proactively cooperating with activities, towards post-COVID-19 tourism development," said Daniel Zaconeta, director of Academia Aventura, a tourism school, expressing his hopes for the program. As a member of ECO-TOMODACHI, Mr. Zaconeta works with JICA to improve the environment in tourism areas.

Mr. Patrick Prieto, Chair of the Bolivian JICA alumni association and also of the JICA alumni association in Latin America and the Caribbean, said about the future outlook as follows: "The number of the JICA returnees in Bolivia is around 6,000. They are sharing their knowledge and experiences acquired in Japan with people around the country. Following the efforts to improve waste management and sanitary conditions together with local public entities, we will utilize our experience in realizing environmental improvements in the tourist destinations as well. We also hope to share our experiences of ECO-TOMODACHI in Bolivia with other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has around 70,000 JICA returnees, and carry out activities similar to ECO-TOMODACHI in other countries." The continued success of ECO-TOMODACHI, which aims to utilize Japanese technologies to create a recycling-based society together with JICA is highly expected.



Sharing composting techniques among ECO-TOMODACHI members specialized in waste disposal (Photo: JICA)

\*1 Composting means to produce useful compost by using the effects of microorganisms to ferment and break down organic matter such as food waste, fallen leaves, and sewage sludge.

### Strengthening Regional Connectivity and Promoting Logistics between Rwanda and its Neighboring Countries!

—Contributing to economic development across East Africa through comprehensive assistance unique to Japan—



6

Rwanda has seen continuous economic growth since the end of the civil war in the first half of the 1990s. However, the deterioration of its road transportation infrastructure and the cost of cross-border customs clearance have become problems for the country. The transportation routes in eastern Rwanda are part of the main international transportation corridor\*<sup>1</sup> of the East African region, and repairing the deteriorated bridges and roads and improving border control capacity will help to strengthen regional connectivity and promote economic development across East Africa.

In 2016, Japan recommenced loan aid to Rwanda for the first time in approximately 30 years with the inauguration of the Rusumo-Kayanza Road Improvement Project, under the Accelerated Co-Financing Facility for Africa (ACFA) of the African Development Bank (AfDB). In this project, the entire length (208 km) of the Central Corridor\*<sup>2</sup> will be repaired and widened in cooperation with the Government of Rwanda, AfDB, and the European Union (EU). Japan will provide assistance for work on the Rusumo-Kayanza section (92 km), which connects Rwanda and Tanzania, and will promote the further development of infrastructure over a wider area and improvements to logistics infrastructure.

Japan has been working to resolve issues relating to overland transportation in Rwanda, a landlocked country. Japan built the new Rusumo International Bridge between Rwanda and Tanzania and enabled safe two-way movement through the Project for Construction of Rusumo International Bridge and One Stop Border Post Facilities, a grant aid project that started in 2011. At the same time, Japan also developed One Stop Border Post (OSBP),\*<sup>3</sup> to facilitate smoother customs procedures, thereby contributing to the reduction of transportation costs and expansion of trade and investment between the two countries.

Mr. KAMEDA Hitoshi, who oversaw the work as a consultant for grant aid, said that it was not an easy task to carry out the project in two countries at the same time. He recalled that relations between Rwanda and Tanzania were sore at the time and said, “We had to make sincere efforts to deal with the issues one by one, including giving patient



Signing of the Exchange of Notes (E/N) for the Rusumo-Kayanza Road Improvement Project (Photo: JICA)

explanations to both governments and taking care to ensure that the locally employed workers were able to do their work within the borders of their own respective countries.” The ex-post evaluation found that the customs clearance capacity of Rusumo International Bridge increased approximately three-fold compared to before the construction. The subsequent loan aid this time will enhance further the impact of Japan’s assistance that has been implemented to date.

In addition, Japan has been providing the technical guidance needed for the operation of the newly-introduced OSBPs through the “Project on Capacity Development for Trade Facilitation and Border Control in East Africa,” a technical cooperation project that began in 2017. In this project, Japan worked in partnership with experts from the World Customs Organization (WCO) to streamline customs clearance procedures and develop border protection capabilities by capacity development of customs staff in the East African Community (EAC).<sup>\*4</sup>

In this way, such comprehensive support that combines a variety of schemes in the form of loan aid, grant aid, and technical cooperation, is one of the strengths of Japanese development cooperation. Ms. UJIE Kazuho of JICA Africa Department said “Co-financing with AfDB and technical cooperation with WCO is bringing about major impacts. I hope that the outcomes of our multiple projects in Rwanda will contribute to economic development throughout East Africa.”



New bridge named Rusumo International Bridge under renovation (Photo: JICA)

\*1 A major highway that is central to national and regional economic activity.

\*2 The corridor that continues from Rwanda through Tanzania to the Dar es Salaam Port, for the purposes of transporting the cargo of landlocked countries.

\*3 A form of administration of customs clearance that makes cross-border logistics more efficient by sharing and integrating all the procedures for imports/exports, which normally need to be carried out separately by the customs offices of both the importing and exporting country, thereby enabling them to be done in a single session.

\*4 An economic community comprising six member states: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.



## Stories from the Field

### JICA's Private-Sector Investment Finance (PSIF) Supports the Establishment and Operation of a General Hospital by Japanese Private Companies in Bangladesh



7

Bangladesh suffers from a chronic lack of medical care facilities and healthcare workers, and people often have to go to medical facilities in neighboring countries to receive appropriate tests and treatments. Therefore, it is a major issue to develop the domestic medical care system.

A delegation from Ship Healthcare Holdings, Inc., a company with experience working on ODA projects in Viet Nam, Myanmar, and other countries, visited Bangladesh medical college hospitals in 2013, and witnessed the severe medical situation, and consequently decided to establish and operate a general hospital in the country. "At the time, patients were sleeping on the floor, for example, even in medical college hospitals, and adequate medical care was not fully provided. We thought we would like to somehow create a medical environment where the people of Bangladesh would be able to receive appropriate tests and treatments within their own country," said Mr. KOBAYASHI Hiroyuki, an Executive Director at the company.



A joint team made up of Japanese and Bangladeshi staff carrying out a meeting on drug management (Photo: SAMSL)

In 2016, the company established a local subsidiary, Ship Aichi Medical Service Limited (SAMSL), and embarked on facility expansion of East West Medical College and Hospital\*1 to increase the number of hospital beds from

250 to 650, and on operation of the hospital. JICA invested in SAMSL in 2018 and has provided support for this project at Ship International Hospital, aiming to improve medical care standards of Bangladesh by utilizing the expertise of Japanese hospital administration.

In this project, the hospital was renovated and expanded according to the latest Bangladesh National Building Code,\*2 based on the belief that medical facilities must be able to function even at times of disaster. Meanwhile, taking safety into account, the hospital was equipped with infrastructure, such as electricity, air conditioning, water facilities, and others, that would meet the same standards as those of Japanese hospitals. Furthermore, the new hospital also introduced the latest medical equipment and facilities, and adopted the Japanese-style of consultations and examinations such as outpatient reception systems using ID cards.

"The Japanese style of hospital operation takes hygiene-related aspects into

consideration in its design, including the separation of patients and medical staff movement lanes. Whereas there had been sanitation issues in the old hospital such as dirty items and



A Japanese staff member taking the role of a patient in a training exercise (Photo: SAMSL)

clean supplies being placed together, the introduction of the Japanese-style movement lanes has enabled appropriate management of these issues," said Mr. Kobayashi.

There was a big struggle to change the mindsets and behaviors of the local staff, accustomed to protocols and operational practices that had been in place for many years. "It is difficult to get people to understand unexperienced new routines through verbal explanations alone. However, when we work together with the local staff and they experience the success of new methods that bring about a good result, they would tell their colleagues in their workplaces about the advantages of these methods. By developing leaders among local staff continuously, we expect that these leaders will play a central role and that levels among the local staff as a whole will be gradually improved," said pharmacist Ms. ISHII Kasumi.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction period had to be extended and the official opening of the new hospital was delayed, but it had a pre-opening in October 2019. After that, it began operation as a Government-designated COVID-19 hospital in June 2020 based on the strong requests of the Government of Bangladesh. The hospital made a significant contribution to the treatment of COVID-19 patients, accepting over 1,600 patients by the end of September 2021, 1,500 of whom were discharged healthily.

\*1 The hospital's name at the time. With the inauguration of the SAMSL project, it opened under the new name of "SHIP INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL."

\*2 Bangladesh's new earthquake-resistance standards (draft version), revision work on which was carried out with JICA assistance in 2015.



Tests taking place using cutting-edge medical devices: an angiography device (left) and endoscope (right) (Photo: SAMSL)

## Stories from the Field

### Voices of Japanese Personnel Working in International Organizations

—Realizing the dream by doing my best each day  
(Introducing the careers of Japanese personnel)—

8

#### Longing for a job that is international and helpful to the people in junior and senior high school days

From my junior and senior high school days, I had always had a vague longing to work for an international organization to help people by traveling all around the world, and I wanted to be like that in the future. This was in the 1990s, a time when the work of Japanese staff members of international organizations was being covered in the media, including former UN High Commissioner for Refugees OGATA Sadako.

However, I had rarely left my hometown of Hokkaido, let alone traveled outside Japan, and for someone like me “the world” seemed a tremendously long way away. Although there was only so much a local Japanese junior and senior high school student could do, I studied hard including English in order to enter university and engaged in social contribution activities through the Girl Scout troop I belonged to. Participating in an English speech contest and Girl Scout exchange camp in Alaska were highly valuable experiences.

#### The fascination of multilingual and multicultural environments: Encounters with Africa and the world

I went to International Christian University and conducted research into the use of multiple languages, focusing on young people in Kenya, as my graduation thesis. I stayed in Kenya during my summer vacation, interacting with students of the same age and traveling to the surrounding countries. Through this experience, I was completely fascinated by the rich culture and the positive-thinking people I met, and returned to Japan with a strong determination to work in a multilingual and multicultural environment and to obtain a job opportunity in the African continent.

#### A long and winding path: From working in a company, via overseas graduate study, and becoming a JICA project formulation advisor in Senegal

After graduating from university, I studied French, which is essential for working in Africa, while gaining work experience in a company, believing “Perseverance prevails” in Tokyo. Afterwards, I resigned from my company and went to France, to continue studying French, and then went to graduate school. I took development studies so as to continue research into “multilingualism and multiculturalism” and “migration and migrants,” at graduate school and also served as an intern and carried out my graduation research in Mali in West Africa. After that, I worked as a trading company employee and then as a JICA project formulation advisor, over a total of six and a half years in Dakar, the capital of Senegal in West Africa, during which time I also experienced childbirth.



The author during her internship in Mali

#### Working as a JPO and then becoming an IOM staff member

I applied for the position of a Junior Professional Officer (JPO),\*1 just before reaching the age limit. (I had just had my second child, and the



The author giving a speech at a workshop

term of my position as a JICA project formulation advisor in Senegal was coming to an end.) I was hired and, in the following year, I took up a new post at the Morocco office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the only UN organization that specializes in handling issues connected with the global migration. After completing the JPO mission, I was hired as a staff member affiliated to the same office. As of this writing, I have worked in this office for five years in total.

At the IOM, I am in charge of implementing projects for “migration and development” and “governance,” as well as monitoring and evaluating projects overall in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. Specifically, we have various projects, including for supporting the national policy formulation and promoting multicultural coexistence, to ensure that migration contributes to the development of both host and outflow countries. Although there are a lot of on-site work and a series of processes for managing projects within deadlines and limited budget, I am able to fully utilize my past working experience.

#### Messages to readers: It is fine to take the long way around, sending an encouraging message for women

It may seem like a detour as I became a staff member of an international organization approximately 10 years later after leaving Japan, yet I do not have any regret at all. I had learned both efficiency-oriented ways of work and process-oriented ones at the Japanese company and JICA respectively, and have therefore been able to be of immediate help and contributed to the organization. I can say that doing my best each day, in a given environment, helped me to find the next stage in my journey and brought me to my current destination. And this is not the goal.

I have a message for women. There are many women playing an active role in international organizations. I would be lying if I said having and raising children never made it harder for me to further my career. However, international organizations are most certainly working environments where these issues are widely understood, and there are numerous women in managerial positions. (In fact, all of my previous superiors have been women!) I was able to have and raise two children while working. Indeed, having a family is actually what helps me to stay positive each day, even when I face difficulties in my job.

FUNAKAWA Natsuko

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Morocco

\*1 See page 140 for details on JPO Programme.