

(1) Efforts for Information Disclosure and Promoting Public Understanding and Support

The Government of Japan makes various efforts for public relations and information dissemination regarding ODA.

A. Strengthening Public Relations and Information Dissemination

In today's globalized world, Japan and developing countries are in a relationship of supporting each other. Japan's ODA is of great significance as a critical effort by Japan to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world, including developing countries, and thereby secure Japan's national interests. Since ODA is funded by the taxes paid by the people of Japan, it is crucial to communicate the significance and efforts of development cooperation in an easy-to-understand manner, and to gain the understanding and support of a wide range of people in Japan. It is also important that Japan's efforts be properly understood overseas in order to enhance friendly bilateral relationships and Japan's credibility in the international community. From these perspectives, ODA public relations become increasingly important.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) makes efforts for more effective ODA public relations, in cooperation with JICA. MOFA focuses on publicizing its policies, using specific measures to reach young people and small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas that do not have much contact with ODA. The measures include posts on ODA websites and social media, YouTube videos, ODA email newsletters, ODA-related videos, public relations events, and ODA Delivery Lectures in educational institutions in Japan. One example is "Go! ODA Man," an animated video series that introduces Japan's ODA efforts. Other recent examples include a TV drama focused on spreading awareness of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, featuring TV personality and author Mr. MATAYOSHI Naoki, and streaming a

documentary video on the themes of safety and security of marine traffic, and quality infrastructure, with actor Mr. YOSHIHARA Mitsuo as a reporter. These publicity activities intend to communicate respective themes to the public in easier-to-understand and friendlier manners by featuring high-profile performers (see "ODA Topics" on page 149 for details). In addition, Japanese embassies in developing countries, etc. help local media to cover ODA project sites. Japan's national flag is displayed on donated equipment or facilities built by Japan to increase the visibility of Japan's cooperation. Furthermore, ambassadors and Consuls-General of Japan frequently post on Twitter and Instagram by themselves to enhance the understanding of local people about Japan's ODA.

In the White Paper on Development Cooperation published annually, MOFA works to make its contents easy and fun to read by including many photos and reports from the field, and strives to ensure transparency on the implementation status of ODA by including the relevant statistical data.

JICA also puts efforts into public relations through International Cooperation Delivery Lectures in which ex-Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) share their experiences as lecturers, as well as on-site ODA experience learning for officials of local public entities using its 15 offices across Japan.

As a joint public relations effort not only by MOFA and JICA but also by other parties involved in development cooperation in Japan, MOFA, together with JICA and the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), holds one of the largest international cooperation events in Japan called "Global Festa JAPAN" every year around the time of International Cooperation Day (October 6). In 2022, in order to facilitate participation from overseas and various areas in Japan, the event was held in a hybrid format both in-person at the Tokyo International Forum and online on Saturday, October 1, and Sunday,



TV drama "The First Step: Sekai wo Tsunagu Ainoshirushi (Japanese only)," set in MOFA's International Cooperation Bureau and showing scenes of actual international cooperation



Top page of the MOFA's ODA Twitter account

ODA
Topics

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ODA Public Relations

—In Order to Make ODA Feel Closer and More Familiar—

● Information dissemination about development cooperation

According to a public opinion survey*1 conducted by Japan's Cabinet Office in 2021, 87.4% of respondents answered that in development cooperation in the future "Japan should more actively promote development cooperation" or "The current level of development cooperation is appropriate," indicating a positive evaluation for development cooperation. Aside from the growing public awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this positive public opinion about development cooperation in Japan shows the acknowledgment of Japanese people about how "No one is safe until everyone is safe" through the worldwide spread of COVID-19, as well as their broad understanding of the fact that the growth of developing countries will eventually have a favorable impact on the Japanese economy and the stability of their daily lives.

This column introduces MOFA's various initiatives for information dissemination and public policy communication on the significance of Japan's development cooperation.

● TV dramas/Documentaries

MOFA works on a new initiative to produce public relations contents that make use of high-profile performers in order to deliver its message to a broader range of the public.

One of the initiatives is the production of a TV drama, "The First Step: Sekai wo Tsunagu Ainoshirushi,"*2 with the cooperation of Yoshimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd. The drama takes place at MOFA's International Cooperation Bureau, as well as at actual international cooperation sites, and features TV personality and author Mr. MATAYOSHI Naoki. This drama transmits stories of love, hope, and courage through parent-child affections and the growth of characters, revolving around the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, which was introduced to the world through ODA.

MOFA also produced the documentary video, "Efforts for a free and open ocean,"*3 which closely covered scenes of ODA related to the ocean, with actor Mr. YOSHIHARA Mitsuo acting as a reporter. Bearing in mind the diplomatically important concept of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)," this video vividly shows various forms of Japanese cooperation in the safety and security of marine traffic, including the preparation of nautical charts by the Japan Coast Guard, support for capacity development related to Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), and to law enforcement/rescue operations at sea, as well as Japan's support for quality infrastructure in coastal development to achieve connectivity.



The documentary video, "Efforts for a free and open ocean," which closely covers scenes of ODA related to the ocean

● Go! ODA-Man

ODA-Man, who has marked its fifth year as MOFA's ODA PR character (see also "Strengthening Public Relations and Information Dissemination" on page 148), has also released a variety of videos*4 to inform people about the contribution of Japan's ODA to the world. These videos are well-received. In 2022, seizing the opportunity of the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8), ODA-Man released three videos about Japanese development cooperation for Africa: "ODA for Africa's Rice Cultivation," "ODA for ICT Development in Africa," and "ODA for the Grand Egyptian Museum."



Go! ODA-Man

● Global Festa JAPAN 2022

In October 2022, the international cooperation event Global Festa JAPAN 2022*5 was organized. At this 31st Global Festa JAPAN, under the theme of "Connecting the world. Creating the future together. Everyone participating in international cooperation," the number of participating organizations was more than doubled from the previous year so that a greater number of people would learn about countries and regions, with extensive exhibition booths, including through securing space, particularly for foreign missions in Japan, as well as allowing the booths to sell products.

At the Global Festa, MOFA sponsored stage programs on the theme of utilizing ODA for the overseas expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises, which usually do not come into much contact with ODA, and held panel discussions on the theme of the participation of the younger generation in future international cooperation. MOFA also held an award presentation ceremony for its photo contest, which has become customary. There was a record number of 256 entries for the 2022 photo contest, in which professional photographer Mr. AOKI Hiroshi together with Mr. YONEYAMA Kazuhisa of Leica Camera Japan Co., Ltd. served as judges and selected the winning works. The results are available in the event report*6 on the ODA website.

*1 The FY2021 Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy took place from September to November 2021. The Cabinet Office entrusted it to a survey organization, which implemented a mail survey of 3,000 Japanese nationals aged 18 and over across Japan (<https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/r03/r03-gaiko/index.html> (in Japanese only)).

*2 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sanka/page22_001443.html (in Japanese only)

*3 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sanka/page22_001603.html (in Japanese only)

*4 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/page22_001008.html (in Japanese only)

*5 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/page24_000157.html (in Japanese only)

*6 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/page23_001348.html (in Japanese only)



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. Yoshikawa greeting an audience

October 2, with approximately 22,000 participants, exceeding the previous year.

As a result of these efforts, despite the impact of COVID-19, public response to various public relations tools has steadily increased, as shown by the number of participants in Global Festa JAPAN, the number of ODA Delivery Lectures, and the number of views of posted ODA-related videos. Japan continuously promotes efforts to strengthen public relations even further.

B. Information Disclosure on Implementation and Evaluation of ODA

The Government of Japan set up the “ODA Mieru-ka Site”¹⁷ (a website for visualization of ODA) on the JICA website, and posts ODA project summaries, results and ex-ante/ex-post evaluations, and other related information.

Likewise, the MOFA website publishes the results of policy and program level ODA evaluations¹⁸ and other related information, in addition to new ODA projects, and statistical materials, in order to promote more effective implementation and public understanding and support for ODA.

C. Promotion of Development Education

MOFA holds the “ODA Delivery Lecture” to explain ODA and other international cooperation at educational institutions, NGOs, and other organizations in Japan. Over the past seven years, a total of 190 ODA Delivery Lectures were held with the participation of approximately 20,000 students and others. JICA also promotes cooperation with ex-JOCVs and local boards of education, and holds International Cooperation Delivery Lectures by JICA trainees staying in Japan. In FY2021, approximately 1,800 lectures were held and attended by approximately 150,000 participants, which exceeded the previous fiscal year. Other efforts to promote understanding and participation in international cooperation include “Visit JICA,” in which students can

visit JICA offices in Japan, and the “JICA Essay Contest on International Cooperation for Junior and Senior High School Students.” JICA also runs the exhibition facility “JICA Global Plaza.”

D. Promotion of Discussion and Dialogue

The Government of Japan holds information sessions for NGOs, companies, business associations, and others on how to utilize ODA in respective activities. In addition, the Government of Japan provides opportunities for dialogue with the public interested in diplomacy and ODA, including by holding lectures on international trends and Japan’s efforts in international cooperation.

(2) Enhancing Human Resources and Intellectual Foundations for Development Cooperation

The Government of Japan has set a target of 1,000 Japanese working for UN-related agencies by 2025. To this end, in collaboration with universities and Japan offices of international organizations, MOFA actively recruits, trains and supports Japanese nationals who can play active roles on the global stage.¹⁹ Based on the recommendations made by the Advisory Board for ODA to “foster global human resources, including those responsible for development cooperation,” the government holds seminars in and outside of Japan to explain the recruitment system of international organizations for students at secondary and higher educational institutions and persons already employed. Recently, seminars are mainly conducted online, which enables incumbent Japanese UN staff to remotely participate and share their experiences with specific examples. The government also produces YouTube videos and holds seminars featuring senior officials or human resource experts from international organizations, among other efforts.

Moreover, the Government of Japan offers the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, striving to nurture human resources to be active in international organizations, including in the area of international development cooperation (see page 9 for the



ODA Delivery Lecture given by a MOFA official

¹⁷ ODA Mieru-ka Site: <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/> (in Japanese only)

¹⁸ ODA evaluations: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/evaluation/index.html>

¹⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Recruitment Center for International Organizations website (<https://www.mofa-irc.go.jp/>) (in Japanese only) provides information on vacancies in international organizations and a variety of information on working in international organizations.



Ms. YAMAGUCHI Kaho, Emergency and Stabilization Programme Officer of IOM, a Japanese staff member working for IOM Kenya Country Office since 2020 under the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, packing leaf mold in the assistance project to enhance agricultural resilience against drought for local residents in Turkana County, Kenya (Photo: IOM)

activities of a Japanese staff member at international organizations, and “Stories from the Field” on page 152 for a career introduction of a staff member of an international organization after working as a JPO). MOFA has dispatched a cumulative total of over 1,900 JPOs, 56 of whom were sent in FY2021. In addition, MOFA implements the “Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development”²⁰ (see “Human Resources Development

for Peacebuilding and Development” on page 49 for details).

Through the Participatory Network for Expert Recruitment (PARTNER)²¹ website, JICA centrally distributes information on international cooperation (such as recruitment and various training and seminar opportunities) led by a wide range of actors such as ministries, agencies, JICA, NGOs, international organizations, companies, and universities. It also provides activities such as human resources registration services and career counseling. Furthermore, JICA offers internships to graduate students and other individuals who conduct research closely related to development cooperation and are willing to play an active role in this field in the future. JICA secures human resources with competencies and abundant work experience in developing countries through the Senior Advisor System, as well as offers the Associate Experts Program and the Capacity Enhancement Training for human resources development.

The JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development²² analyzes and synthesizes knowledge gained in the field of development cooperation and provides feedback to JICA projects, thereby contributing to the realization of human security and the achievement of the SDGs, as well as to the development of human resources.

²⁰ Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development: https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/peace_b/j_ikusei_shokai.html (in Japanese only)

²¹ International Cooperation Career Information Website “PARTNER”: <https://partner.jica.go.jp/> (in Japanese only)

²² On April 1, 2020, the JICA Research Institute changed its name to the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development in order to carry on and enhance the philosophy of the late OGATA Sadako, who spearheaded the establishment of the JICA Research Institute, and to strengthen its intellectual contributions to world peace and development.



Stories from the Field

Voices of Japanese Personnel Working in International Organizations

—Supporting Socially Vulnerable People in Viet Nam—

“I want to work across different countries” and “I want to study abroad.” Those were my vague thoughts when I was a junior high school student who was raised being told that “women do not need to go to university,” in a rural Japanese town where traditional ideas persisted.

With the understanding and support of my parents for advancing to higher education, I entered Yokohama City University and majored in International Relations. While there was opposition to my plan, with people saying “What will you do after studying abroad?” I was determined to go, and graduated from the Department of Political Science at Indiana University in the United States. Afterwards, I received a scholarship from the Institute of Developing Economies Advanced School (IDEAS) in Japan and obtained an MSc in Demography from the London School of Economics. Later, I also obtained an MBA from the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom to further improve my skills.

My career at the UN started as the Junior Professional Officer (JPO)*¹ at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Zambia. At that time, I was still young at 26 years old. During the JPO interview, I was asked, “What can you offer to the UN without work experience?” I remember that I responded, “Inexperience and freshness are my value.” I now regret that I was young enough to have a smart mouth. After that, I was employed as a regular staff member of UNFPA and worked at the Headquarters in New York. After serving as the Deputy Representative in South Africa, and as the Representative in Mongolia, I am currently the UNFPA Representative in Viet Nam. My career and experience include secondment to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Mozambique and UNDP Malawi as Deputy Resident Representative, and being in charge of peacebuilding and the Democratic Republic of the Congo at JICA.

Working in Viet Nam is nothing but happiness for me. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN and with the slogan “Leave No One Behind” as our



The author holding a baby at an obstetrics and gynecology clinic supported by UNFPA in an ethnic minority area

motto, my job is to protect socially vulnerable people who tend to be left behind in the process of national growth. For example, there are many cases in Viet Nam where pregnant women who live in minority ethnic areas end up dying from childbirth at home without having pre-natal checkups and appropriate medical care due to a lack of access to hospitals. Furthermore, domestic violence against women is a serious issue in Viet Nam, where the male-dominated society is deeply rooted. Elderly people are also vulnerable and often live in poverty because of weak social protection systems. We listen to the views of such vulnerable people and provide financial and technical support, while receiving funding from the Government of Japan in recent years. Furthermore, utilizing the neutral position of the UN, we propose policy recommendations based on international perspectives and evidence, and are closely involved in national decision-making processes to assist the Government of Viet Nam in adopting the appropriate policies.

The UN has many highly qualified and experienced professionals. I am who I am today thanks to the support of my seniors and other colleagues. In addition, the UN offers a good welfare program and understands and promotes pursuing one's career while parenting, so that the staff can achieve a good work-life balance.

Under the recent unstable state of the world, I feel that the expectations from international society for Japan as a developed country in Asia are increasing day by day. Now that we have an easy access to the world, I sincerely hope that the younger generation of Japan will take an interest in foreign countries and venture out into the world.

KITAHARA Naomi
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Public announcement of the opening of a domestic violence victim hotline supported by the Government of Japan set up in front of the UN building in Viet Nam

*1 See page 150 for details on JPOs.