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Enhancing Human Resources and Intellectual Foundations for Development Cooperation, and Spreading Awareness

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

To implement effective and strategic development cooperation, it is essential to secure and foster human resources with advanced knowledge of development challenges, as well as public understanding and support.

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, the government has actively supported the identification, training and career development of talents who can play active roles on the global stage.²⁸ The most recently published figures (as of December 31, 2024) show that the number of Japanese staff has reached a record high of 979. As mentioned in the recommendations made by the Advisory Board for ODA, considering the development of global human resources, including those engaged in development cooperation, as an urgent issue, the government organizes seminars in and outside of Japan to explain the recruitment system of international organizations to a wide range of audiences, including students at secondary and higher educational institutions and professionals already employed. Recently, seminars mainly take place online, allowing incumbent Japanese staff of international organizations to remotely participate and share their experiences. Also, among other things, the government produces videos and holds seminars featuring senior officials and human resource experts from international organizations.

Moreover, the Government of Japan offers the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, supporting Japanese professionals who pursue careers in international organizations, including those engaged in the area of international development (see “Stories from the Field” on pages 36, 51, and 133 for examples of Japanese staff members at international organizations). MOFA has sent a cumulative total of over 2,000 JPOs. In FY2024, 41 JPOs were dispatched.

In addition, MOFA implements the “Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development.”²⁹

Through the Participatory Network for Expert Recruitment (PARTNER)³⁰ website, JICA centrally distributes information on international cooperation (such as recruitment and various training and seminar opportunities) undertaken by a wide range of actors such as ministries, agencies, JICA, NGOs, international organizations, companies, and universities. It also provides services such as human resources registration services and career counseling. Furthermore, JICA offers internships to university and graduate students who are interested in Japan’s international cooperation and are willing to play an active role as international cooperation personnel in various fields in the future. JICA also engages competent professionals with extensive work experience in developing countries through the Senior Advisor System while administering the Associate Experts Program and the Capacity Enhancement Training in support of human resources development.

Furthermore, the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development analyzes knowledge gained in the field of development cooperation, provides feedback on research results to JICA projects, and contributes to the realization of human security and



Ms. KAJI Aiko, Programme Manager (Migration Health) at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Viet Nam, provides flood response support (Photo: IOM)

²⁸ The website of the Recruitment Center for International Organizations (<https://www.mofa-irc.go.jp/>) (in Japanese only) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides information on vacancies in international organizations and other information related to careers in international organizations.

²⁹ See 40 on page 52.

³⁰ International Cooperation Career Information Website “PARTNER” <https://partner.jica.go.jp/> (in Japanese only)

the achievement of the SDGs by publishing reports and academic books on human security and organizing symposiums.

(2) Efforts on Information Disclosure and the Promotion of Public Understanding and Support

In today's globalized world, Japan and developing countries are in a relationship of mutual support. 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 defend Japan's national interests. Since ODA is funded from the public resources of the people of Japan, it is crucial to communicate the significance and efforts of development cooperation in an easily understandable manner, and to gain the recognition and support of a wide range of people in the country. 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 are becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, to promote collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including private companies, local governments, and NGOs, it is essential to raise awareness and get many people involved.

The Government of Japan undertakes various efforts in public relations and information dissemination on ODA.

■ Strengthening Public Relations and Information Dissemination

MOFA strives to conduct more effective ODA public relations, in cooperation with JICA. Domestically, MOFA focuses on publicizing its policies, using specific measures to reach young people and small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas that are not very familiar with ODA. The measures include posts on ODA websites, social media, and YouTube channels, as well as email newsletters, videos, public relations events, and ODA Delivery Lecture series. For example, interview articles titled "Series ODA NOW!" featuring small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) participating in ODA from across the country, and a series called "Go! ODA-Man," featuring well-known characters. These public relations activities are intended to communicate respective themes to the public in easily understandable

and accessible manners. 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 events on international cooperation in Japan called "Global Festa JAPAN" every year around the time of International Cooperation Day (October 6). In 2025, under the theme "Change the World With Your Step – Plus One for International Cooperation," events were held to communicate the significance of international cooperation and to help people feel closer to it, including stage programs and booth exhibitions (see "ODA Topics" on page 167 for details on the specific initiative). MOFA also puts efforts into International Cooperation Delivery Lectures where people can hear from those involved in international cooperation.

Overseas, Japan is committed to increasing the visibility of its cooperation. For example, Japanese embassies in developing countries, etc. have local media organizations report on ODA project sites, create public relations materials in local languages, and display Japan's national flag on equipment and facilities donated or built by Japan. Furthermore, ambassadors and Consuls-General of Japan themselves frequently post on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram to improve the understanding of local people about Japan's ODA.

In this White Paper on Development Cooperation published annually, MOFA aims to make its contents easy and interesting to read, by featuring many photos and stories from the field, and strives to ensure transparency on the implementation status of ODA with relevant statistical data. The White Paper is also published in both English and Japanese. As a result of these efforts, 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 is committed to continuously strengthening public relations even further.

■ Information Disclosure on Implementation and Evaluation of ODA

MOFA and JICA set up the "ODA Mieru-ka Site"³¹ (a website designed to visualize ODA) on the JICA website, and makes available to the public ODA project summaries, results, ex-ante/ex-post evaluations, and other related information.

Likewise, the MOFA website features new ODA projects and statistical materials, as well as the results of policy- and project-level ODA evaluations³² and other related information, for more effective implementation

³¹ ODA Mieru-ka Site <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/index.html?wovn=en>

³² ODA Evaluation <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/evaluation/index.html>

and the promotion of public understanding and support for ODA.

■ Promotion of Development Education

MOFA holds the ODA Delivery Lecture series, in which MOFA officials provide explanations on international cooperation, including ODA, at educational institutions, NGOs, and other organizations in Japan. Over the past 10 years, a total of 292 ODA Delivery Lectures have been organized with the involvement of approximately 30,000 participants, mainly students. Additionally, as a new initiative, MOFA has published lecture videos on YouTube.



ODA Delivery Lecture given by a MOFA official

In addition to face-to-face delivery lectures where JICA's 15 domestic offices introduce former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), local stakeholders in international cooperation, and JICA trainees visiting Japan as lecturers, JICA also holds online delivery lectures where JOCVs and JICA staff dispatched

to developing countries share their experiences and cross-cultural understanding. In FY2024, approximately 1,600 lectures were held and attended by approximately 140,000 participants. 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 manages the exhibition facility "JICA Global Plaza."



Online delivery lecture connecting with JOCVs dispatched to developing countries, held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan (Photo: JICA)

■ 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 organizes public lectures on international trends and Japan's efforts in international cooperation, providing opportunities for dialogue with the public interested in diplomacy and ODA.

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ODA Topics

ODA Public Relations
– Bringing ODA Closer to the Public –

● Communicating Japan's Development Cooperation

Many of you may have likely heard voices of doubt such as: “Why does Japan need to assist faraway developing countries when Japan itself is in a difficult economic situation?” or “Why should Japan support other countries struck by disasters when disasters frequently occur in Japan itself?”

Meanwhile, Japan imports much of its energy resources and food from abroad, and earns income by exporting automobiles and various other products. Japan and developing countries are in a relationship of mutual support, and building friendly relations with countries around the world is important for the Japanese economy. Furthermore, the international community faces global challenges such as climate change and infectious diseases, as well as multiple crises including challenges to a free and open international order, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine. These challenges may seem unrelated to the lives of individuals at first glance, but they are by no means events in a distant world or someone else's problem. It is necessary for the entire international community, including Japan, to cooperate and help each other in addressing these issues.

The promotion of development cooperation is premised on the understanding and support of the public. Therefore, it is extremely important to communicate the significance of development cooperation to the public, explaining: that it contributes to ensuring the stable supply of energy resources and food; that it is necessary to enhance trust in Japan within the international community; and that development cooperation benefits not only recipient countries but also Japan itself, serving as an important tool for strategically advancing Japan's foreign policy.

This column highlights several initiatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) to disseminate information and policies regarding the significance of Japan's development cooperation.

● Go! ODA-Man

ODA-Man, now in his eighth year as MOFA's ODA PR character, has continued to disseminate various video episodes to help people understand Japan's ODA, which is beneficial worldwide. In FY2025, three new episodes are scheduled for release: one showing the ODA-Man's team traveling through Bangkok, Thailand, and experiencing the results of ODA; another comparing before-and-after footage of ODA project sites while explaining the benefits that ODA brings to both developing countries and Japan; and one featuring interviews with former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) about their career development after returning to Japan.



Go!, ODA-Man

● Global FESTA JAPAN 2025

“Global FESTA JAPAN 2025,” a major international cooperation event, took place on September 27 and 28, 2025. Marking its 34th edition, the event was held under the theme “Your First Step Can Change the World – Plus One for International Cooperation.” Approximately 180 organizations working in the field of international cooperation, including NGOs, NPOs, international organizations, companies, universities, and foreign missions in Japan, set up exhibition booths at the event. It also featured live sessions with diverse guests, and experiential workshops. Counting those who attended the venue and those who watched the online stream, the event attracted approximately 30,000 participants.

MOFA organized a range of programs, starting with the opening ceremony, including an on-stage presentation introducing examples of career paths of JOCVs after their return to Japan; a



Then Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto and other participants at the opening ceremony



Live session: “Up Close with ODA: International Cooperation Forging a New Era”



A lively sub-stage filled with participants

stage program to learn about career development from people who realized their passion for fashion and coffee, as well as other interests as international cooperation work; a talk stage presenting new forms of international cooperation in which the public and private sectors flexibly collaborate human resources and funds, while also considering Japan's benefits; and a talk session introducing ODA railway projects, with experts and railway enthusiasts discussing railways that Japan received support for shortly after the war, as well as vehicles running overseas thanks to Japan's technical assistance. MOFA also held the award ceremony for its annual photo contest.*1 Under the theme "Your First Step Gives Someone Hope," the contest received many submissions conveying human connections and emotions. Award recipients were selected from 298 entries and received certificates from Ms. Obuchi, Chairperson of the JICA Parliamentary League, who served as head of the selection committee. Other activities included a joint presentation by various international organizations hosted by MOFA's Recruitment Center for International Organizations, and a session reporting on NGO activities in international cooperation, attended by officials from MOFA's Non-Governmental Organizations Cooperation Division of the International Cooperation Bureau and NGO representatives. For details, please refer to the event report*2 on the ODA section of the Ministry's website.

● ODA by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises from across Japan



The venue featured exhibits by foreign missions in Japan, international organizations, NGOs, and others. MOFA also ran a booth, clearly explaining how Japan's ODA contributes worldwide.

Companies participating in Japan's ODA projects for the peace, stability, and prosperity of Japan and the world, are spread throughout the country. MOFA has conducted interviews with Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are actively contributing to the world, and articles detailing their journey to project participation, achievements, and thoughts on ODA are published on MOFA's website by prefecture. By participating in ODA projects, many SMEs have built local business models in the field, gained trust from local government agencies, improved their recognition and expanded their partnerships, enhanced their creditworthiness with financial institutions, and further expanded their overseas operations.



Series ODA NOW



● ODA Email Newsletter, ODA Public Relations X (formerly Twitter)

Starting in FY2025, the ODA e-mail newsletter has been changed from a monthly publication to a quarterly issue. Each issue features a timely topic and is also available on the Ministry's website. In addition, it shares information about ODA on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). As of October 2025, the newsletter has approximately 10,000 subscribers, and MOFA's X followers exceed 13,000.



MOFA's ODA account on X



ODA email newsletter



MOFA's ODA account on Instagram

*1 Report on the MOFA Photo Contest "Your Step Forward Gives Someone Hope" https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/pagew_001313_00001.html (in Japanese only)

*2 Global Festa JAPAN 2025 event report https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/pagew_000001_00355.html (in Japanese only)