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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 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) actively recruits, trains and supports Japanese nationals who can play active roles on the global stage.³² 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 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 resources 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 page 50 for the activities of a Japanese staff member at an international organization, and “Stories from the Field” on page 150 for an introduction of a staff member of an international organization sponsored under the JPO Programme). MOFA has sent a cumulative total of over 1,900 JPOs, 64 of whom were sent in FY2022. In addition, MOFA implements the “Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development.”³³

Through the Participatory Network for Expert Recruitment (PARTNER)³⁴ 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 graduate students and others who conduct research closely related to development cooperation and are willing to play an active role in this field 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.

The JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development analyzes and synthesizes knowledge gained in the field of development cooperation, provides comprehensive feedback to JICA projects, and makes recommendations on the utilization of technology in the digital transformation field, thereby contributing to the realization of human security, the achievement of the SDGs, and the development of human resources.



Ms. KAWAI Natsuki, Nutrition Officer at UNICEF Senegal, a Japanese staff member working as a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) since 2023, inspecting nutrition monitoring activities for local children in the area supported by UNICEF in the Louga region of northern Senegal (Photo: UNICEF Senegal)

³² 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.

³³ See ³⁹ on page 46.

³⁴ International Cooperation Career Information Website “PARTNER” <https://partner.jica.go.jp/> (in Japanese only)

The Path to International Cooperation that Started with Agricultural Science

“Hunger and satiety” – it was this contradiction that I awoke to during my junior high and high school years that made me want to pursue international cooperation. I can eat whatever I want and as much as I want, but there are people in the world who die of hunger. Faced with this reality, I felt that it was my mission to help those suffering from hunger, having grown up in a privileged environment.

In order to eat, we must produce food. For this reason, I studied agronomy (crop science) at university and graduate school. While studying at the graduate school, I had the opportunity to study abroad for a year at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines, where I conducted research aimed at establishing rice cultivation techniques to adapt to droughts, which were becoming more severe due to the effects of climate change. With the cooperation of farmers, we assessed the technology in the actual rice fields of 30 farmers and had the opportunity to hear about their situation and challenges. What I realized during this experience was the obvious fact that meaningful agricultural technology would vary greatly depending on the environment and farmer’s situation, and that neither technology dissemination nor international cooperation could be carried out uniformly. This field experience continues to be a great source of inspiration for me even today as I am involved in international cooperation.



The author (second from the right) conducting an interview with farmers in the Philippines while conducting research at IRRI

Assigned to work at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme

When I was dispatched to FAO under the JPO Programme, I was in my third year after graduation, working on the implementation of JICA rural development projects at a consulting firm specializing in development cooperation. The main reason I applied for FAO as my first choice was that FAO’s goal of achieving food security for all people was in line with the world I aspired to. Currently, I am in charge of designing and implementing climate investment projects for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors in the African region, leveraging funds from the Green Climate Fund (GCF),*1 of which Japan



With team members of the FAO (Author is second from the left in the front row)

is a major donor country. Weather-dependent agriculture and the many poor people who work in it are highly vulnerable to climate change. FAO works to support the agricultural activities of the most vulnerable communities, so that smallholder farmers can adapt to climate change, depending on the situation and priorities of each developing country. For example, FAO proposes projects that strengthen farmers’ capacity and promote improved technologies, along with those projects that reduce deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable agricultural practices. In the design and implementation of climate investment projects, I spend exciting days working with colleagues of different nationalities and expertise not only from the headquarters but also from regional offices and many country offices.

Aiming for a World Without Hunger While Cherishing My Own Life

“You cannot help others unless you are happy.” These are the words of my high school teacher that I still remember. I am currently assigned in Rome away from home, raising my child on my own. Thanks to my considerate supervisor and the support of those around me, even when there are difficult times, I am able to pursue the balance between my career and parenting, cherishing my family and myself.

Working at an international organization felt like a world that was out of my reach. However, as a result of my consistent efforts toward my goal of realizing the world I aspire to without missing any opportunities or connection with others, I am now where I am today. There are many ways to get involved in international cooperation, yet one of the fascinating aspects of working at the UN is using networks around the world and working with people with diverse backgrounds. Moving forward, I will continue to take steps toward eradicating hunger through supporting sustainable and resilient agriculture.

KATO Hoshie
FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

*1 See the glossary on page 67.

(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.

A. 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, email newsletters, videos, public relations events, and ODA Delivery Lecture series. For example, MOFA has created a TV drama under the theme of disaster risk reduction, featuring TV personality and author Mr. MATAYOSHI Naoki, and documentary videos titled "Japanese Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty," with freelance announcer Ms. NAKANO Minako as the presenter. These public relations activities are intended to communicate respective themes to the public in easily understandable and accessible manners by featuring well-known personalities. 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) (see "ODA Topics" on page 152 for details on the specific

initiative). MOFA also puts efforts into public relations through International Cooperation Delivery Lectures, in which former JOCVs and JICA-related workers share their experiences as lecturers, and through ODA field visits for officials of local public entities, mobilizing JICA's 15 offices across Japan.

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 the 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.

B. Information Disclosure on Implementation and Evaluation of ODA

The Government of Japan set up the "ODA Mieruka Site"³⁵ (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 the results of policy- and program-level ODA evaluations³⁶ and other related information, in addition to new ODA projects and statistical materials, for more effective implementation and the promotion of public understanding and support for ODA.

C. 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 eight years, a total of 224 ODA Delivery Lectures have been organized with the involvement of approximately 24,000 participants, mainly students. JICA also promotes cooperation with ex-JOCVs and local boards of education, and holds International Cooperation Delivery

³⁵ ODA Mieruka Site <https://www.jica.go.jp/oda/> (in Japanese only)

³⁶ ODA evaluations <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/evaluation/index.html>

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 2022, 84% 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. This positive public opinion in Japan can be attributed to the growing awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has also been brought about, amid the compound crises the international community faces, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, by the broader understanding of the need for all countries to cooperate and help each other in addressing global issues such as disasters and infectious diseases, of the importance of development cooperation for ensuring a stable supply of energy resources and for increasing trust in Japan in the international community, and of the importance of development cooperation as a means for strategically advancing Japan's foreign policy.

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

● Revision of the Development Cooperation Charter and Dissemination of the Significance of ODA

In June 2023, the Development Cooperation Charter was revised for the first time in eight years, against the backdrop of major changes in the situation since its formulation in 2015. In line with this, from the perspective of disseminating the significance and achievements of ODA to a wide range of people, MOFA prepared new materials that focused on the benefits of ODA to Japan and posted them on the ministry's ODA website as the "Significance of Japan's Development Cooperation."*2 MOFA also prepared a series of good examples of ODA that have also benefitted Japan under the following themes:*3 "Connections through the ocean," "Support for Japanese companies' overseas expansion," and "Strengthening trust in Japan from the international community through ODA and its benefits for Japan's national interests." They were delivered through the ODA email newsletter in three installments.

From October to December, Mr. Kusakabe, Ambassador for Civil Society, from the International Cooperation Bureau, MOFA, appeared in a public relations program of the Japan Platform



(Japanese only)

Mr. Kusakabe, Ambassador for Civil Society, from MOFA (on the right) appearing in a talk show with current university students as part of information dissemination efforts for the younger generations (Photo: JPF)

(JPF)*4 on YouTube, an online video sharing service, to disseminate information targeting the younger generations. He talked about the significance and initiatives of Japan's development cooperation in a talk show with current university students (11 episodes).*5

● TV Dramas/Documentaries

MOFA also works on producing 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 series, "The First Step" with the cooperation of Yoshimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd. The series is navigated by TV personality and author Mr. MATAYOSHI Naoki and is set at MOFA's International Cooperation Bureau, as well as at international cooperation sites. In 2023, MOFA produced its second episode "First Step 2: Sekai wo Tsunagu Yuuki no Kotoba"*6 that depicts the growth of the characters under the theme of disaster risk reduction cooperation utilizing Japan's experience and knowledge acquired through repeated natural disasters. In this production, the concept of "Build Back Better," which was proposed by Japan at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai City in 2015 and became a universal term in the field of disaster risk reduction, is used as a keyword. In 2022, MOFA produced the first episode "The First Step: Sekai wo Tsunagu Ainoshirushi,"*7 which transmits stories of parent-child affections and the growth of characters, revolving around the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, Japan's initiative introduced to the world through ODA. Both episodes are being broadcast and transmitted.

In addition, amid the occurrence of events around the world that shake the world order, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine, MOFA produced documentary videos titled "Japanese



A scene in which the main character YOSHIZAWA Mizuki (on the right) hands the Maternal and Child Health Handbook to Lien in the first TV drama "First Step: Sekai wo Tsunagu Ainoshirushi" (Japanese only)



The second episode of the TV drama series "The First Step 2: Sekai wo Tsunagu Yuuki no Kotoba" (Japanese only), set in MOFA's International Cooperation Bureau and showing scenes of actual international cooperation

Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty,”^{*8} narrated by freelance newscaster Ms. NAKANO Minako. With the diplomatically important “Women, Peace and Security (WPS)” agenda in mind, those videos focus dynamically on women on various topics. In the field of NGOs, the video features conflict prevention initiatives in countries in civil war or other crises, such as South Sudan. As for the efforts of government agencies, it focuses on the JICA Japan Disaster Relief Team, which utilizes the international standard medical record Minimum Data Set (MDS), devised in the Philippines and developed in Japan, in such areas as supporting displaced Ukrainians in Moldova. Regarding the field of international organizations, humanitarian aid efforts for women and the poor in Afghanistan are featured.



The documentary video “Japanese Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty”

● Global Festa JAPAN 2023

In 2023, the 32nd international cooperation event “Global Festa JAPAN 2023” was held on September 30 and October 1, with approximately 39,000 participants, which was more than the previous year. With the theme “International Cooperation to Build the World – The More Friends the Better!,” the number of participating organizations was increased by about 30 from the previous year, in the hope of increasing the number of people who would participate in international cooperation to create a better world. More than 130 organizations involved in international cooperation, including NGOs, international organizations, companies, universities, and foreign embassies in Tokyo, exhibited and reported their activities, sold goods, and held stage programs with various guests and hands-on workshops.

At Global Festa, MOFA carried out stage programs, including the opening ceremony, with the theme of utilizing ODA for overseas expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises that do not usually have much contact with ODA. It was followed by panel discussions featuring social entrepreneurs and people involved in startups on the theme of young people’s challenges to address social issues, and the production announcement of documentary videos entitled “Japanese Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty.” MOFA also held an award presentation ceremony



A panel discussion with the theme “Let’s talk with young people about ODA! Young people’s challenge to solve social issues,” a stage program at Global Festa JAPAN 2023

for its photo contest, which has become customary.^{*9} This year’s contest, with the theme of “Building the future with friends,” received many entries that convey the feeling of “love, friendship, and growth.” The award-winning works were selected from a record 422 entries, focusing on heartwarming works such as family love, friendship, and natural scenery that we want to preserve for the future. Other

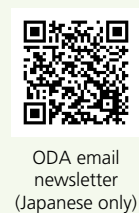
programs included a special lecture by Mr. IKEGAMI Akira and Ms. MASUDA Yuriya entitled “Plain Explanation of ODA found in the international community!” For the sub-stage programs, an international organization career seminar was held by MOFA’s Recruitment Center for International Organizations, followed by activity reports from NGOs working on international cooperation, attended by MOFA officials from the Non-Governmental Organizations Cooperation Division of the International Cooperation Bureau and staff members from NGOs. The results are available in the event report^{*10} on the ODA website.



A view of the Lobby Gallery, where exhibits of foreign embassies stationed in Japan, international organizations, and other participants were held. MOFA also had a booth to provide an easy-to-understand explanation of how Japan’s ODA contributes to the world.

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

MOFA publishes an ODA email newsletter once a month, the content of which is also available on the ministry’s website. In addition, MOFA disseminates information about ODA on the social media X (formerly Twitter). As of December 2023, the number of email newsletter subscribers is approximately 20,000, and the number of followers on X is over 12,000.



- *1 The FY2022 Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy took place from October to November 2022. 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 (Cabinet Office Public Opinion Survey: <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/r04/r04-gaiko/index.html> (in Japanese only)).
- *2 Significance of Japan’s Development Cooperation https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/about/oda/page24_000194.html (in Japanese only)
- *3 ODA email newsletter No. 465–No. 467, ODA that enriches the world and Japan (Cases 1 to 3 regarding benefits to Japan) <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/mail/bn.html> (in Japanese only)
- *4 See the glossary on page 137.
- *5 JPF public relations program, MOFA vs. Current university students. No. 38–No. 48 <https://www.youtube.com/@milakarma> (in Japanese only)
- *6 The First Step 2: Sekai wo Tsunagu Yuuki no Kotoba https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sanka/page22_001633.html (in Japanese only)
- *7 The First Step: Sekai wo Tsunagu Ainoshirushi https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sanka/page22_001443.html (in Japanese only)
- *8 Japanese Women Delivering Hope in a World of Uncertainty https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pgx1_EPVo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpzi-gQ_RkY
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvuO3xbNRZs>
- *9 Report on the MOFA Photo Contest “Building the future with friends” https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/page23_001395.html (in Japanese only)
See also Special Photograph Collection (1) on page viii for the photographs submitted to the contest.
- *10 Global Festa JAPAN 2023 event report https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/event/page22_001739.html (in Japanese only)

Lectures conducted by JICA trainees staying in Japan. In FY2022, approximately 1,700 lectures were held and attended by approximately 150,000 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.”



ODA Delivery Lecture given by a MOFA official

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 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.