

I was assigned to Uganda in March 2024. This will be my first assignment in Africa since being posted to Egypt after training in the UK. TICAD 9 was held in Yokohama. From Uganda, Vice President Alupo represented the delegation of over 30 people, including three ministers, in place of the elderly President Museveni. Many events were held by NGOs, private companies, and JICA experts involved with Uganda. I believe TICAD has left a significant footprint in raising interest within Japan.

The Japanese Embassy in Uganda is a relatively young mission, having become independent from Kenya in 1997. Uganda gained independence from the UK in 1962. President Museveni came to power in 1986 after the civil war period known as the Bush War in the 1980s, and the current constitution was enacted in 1996. Under President Museveni, domestic politics stabilized, allowing Japan to expand economic cooperation. Currently, Uganda is implementing aid using a variety of means, such as grant aid, technical cooperation, support through UN agencies, collaboration with NGOs, human security and grassroots grant aid, and the Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, which can be described as a department store of ODA.

The Uganda JICA office is much larger in scale than the embassy, including Overseas Cooperation Volunteers. The needs for aid in Africa are becoming more advanced and diverse, and Uganda is no exception. I have been visited by local government officials from the northern Karamoja region, known as a poverty area. In addition to traditional poverty measures, education, and medical support, the mental concerns of young people are also becoming a major issue. Many young people are becoming mentally unstable as they cannot envision their future after leaving school, and support for this was also requested. The challenges faced by Japanese society are also becoming challenges in Africa. I was surprised by the speed of social change in that, construction of luxury apartments and office buildings is progressing everywhere. Even in the past year, the number has visibly increased.

Used Japanese cars, which fill the streets, are beginning to stand out as if they were new. The old signs in the city have been replaced with electronic boards. I believe that the tools Japan can utilize are those that can respond meticulously to the complex and advanced support needs. Many of the ODA projects currently being implemented by the embassy and JICA were conceived and decided by predecessors 5 or 10 years ago. It is very fortunate that many projects are being implemented that provide timely support by gaining insight into Uganda's future. The speed of development is accelerating further, which is the current situation in Uganda. For example, in the absence of developed public transportation, the main means of transportation for citizens are Indian-made motorcycles called "boda-boda" and shared taxis of used Japanese minibuses called "matatus."

JICA has been responsible for a significant portion of infrastructure development, including roads in Kampala city. However, it was difficult to predict such an increase in motorcycles and taxis. The amount of resources allocated to aid is limited, and Japan is no exception. At the same time, the problems of aid-receiving countries are becoming more complex and advanced, and the speed of change is faster than we can imagine. Although my life in Uganda has been less than a year and a half, based on the above considerations, I believe the challenges facing Japan's ODA are as follows:

- ① Speeding up and simplifying the ODA decision-making process: It is important to keep up with the speed of local changes.
- ② Reviewing long-term projects: It is important to continuously review projects in line with economic and social changes.
- ③ Further utilization of the expertise of JICA-dispatched experts:

Instead of only advising the partner country's government, share knowledge with us through the embassy and other channels to benefit our country's policies. Efficiently utilizing limited resources and accurately responding to Africa's rapidly changing needs is essential for enhancing Japan's diplomatic power.



Uganda city filled with luxury apartments under construction,
motorcycles, and Japanese cars

*Photographed in April 2025. The cosmetics billboard in the photo has been replaced with an advertisement for luxury apartments as of August.

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