

December saw a continuous influx of visitors from various fields, and the author also had domestic business trips.

Here is the report.

1. "Fukuoka Method" Visit by the team of Professor Emeritus Matsufuji from Fukuoka University.

Regardless of the size of the city, as long as humans live in modern society, waste is generated. How to handle waste is an extremely difficult issue for administrative authorities and, Uganda is no exception. Waste management in the large city of Kampala is a headache. It is not possible to collect and process all waste through public services, and private companies are also involved in landfill operations at designated waste sites.

Last August, there was unseasonal heavy rain in the suburbs of Kampala. There was also a downpour at the Kitezi waste management site, not far from the center of Kampala and as a result, the piled-up waste collapsed, resulting in numerous deaths and missing persons after the waste falling into the surrounding residential area. I inspected the site immediately after the collapse accident, and the situation was extremely severe.

Japan has a waste management method known as the "Fukuoka Method." This is a method that utilizes the power of nature to decompose waste, with very low environmental impact. To utilize this excellent method, the embassy made a request, and it was approved as an urgent matter. The "Fukuoka Method" has long been supported by UN-Habitat, which has an office in Fukuoka. In Africa, it is the sixth implementation following Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, and others. This month, Professor Emeritus Koji Matsufuji, the inventor and implementer of the "Fukuoka Method," visited the site in Kitezi with his team. Heavy machinery was also brought in for on-site guidance. The project aims to repair 4.3 hectares (about 30% of the total) of the collapsed area to prevent damage from landslides and methane gas explosions.

Professor Matsufuji has long provided guidance on-site not only in Africa but also in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Waste management sites attract people who pick up garbage and it is not uncommon to cause friction with collection workers. The professor communicates directly with them, taking time to turn them into understanding and cooperative workers. Before starting the work, Professor Matsufuji visited Uganda and built relationships with Ugandan startups that form the materials needed for the method. The Ugandan startup had

already installed equipment at the site. Under the guidance of Professor Matsufuji's team, the collapse site quickly changed its appearance. Nearby residents who came to see the situation were truly amazed at the efficiency of the work. The goal is to transform the waste management site into a green space over about five years. The embassy intends to continue supporting this effort.



Scene immediately after the collapse last August



Guidance by Professor Matsufuji

2. Reconstruction of Uganda's Railway Network

In the 19th century, Uganda (East Africa) under colonial rule had the world's most advanced railway in operation at the time. In East Africa, in addition to railways, joint airlines, postal systems, and even a common currency were operated, as introduced in this column before (June issue this year).

Currently, the Ugandan government is advancing rehabilitation work on the railway network that was devastated by civil war and other factors. This month, the author traversed from Soroti in eastern Uganda to Tororo near the Kenyan border to inspect the current rehabilitation status. The part currently being renovated is the meter gauge track. The East African Railway entered from Kenya and traversed Uganda. The SGR (Standard Gauge Railway) extended to Kampala, and the meter gauge extended to the northwest, with Tororo as the branching point. The meter gauge section is over 350 kilometers long, with about 150 kilometers already restored. It is expected to be completed up to Gulu in the first half of next year.



Part where rehabilitation is completed



Some stations still have colonial-era station buildings and some parts reuse colonial-era sleepers. Infrastructure development is progressing rapidly, but the challenge is the operational system. Train schedules and the training of drivers and technicians are yet to come. In the restoration of the railway network in East Africa, Uganda is lagging behind Kenya and Tanzania. Connecting these three countries by rail and further extending to inland areas is key to East Africa's development.



Tororo Station: A key point entering Uganda from Kenya and further inland



Colonial-era station building

3. Inspection of the Kenya-Uganda Border

Following the railway inspection, the author visited Busia, a border town with Kenya.

The author has seen many borders during his tenure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Malaysia-Singapore border connected by two causeways. The US-Mexico border integrated mainly in manufacturing. The borders of the Mekong countries advancing regional integration amid development disparities. Having seen borders where many people and goods pass through, Busia was quite an active border among them. From Kenya to Uganda, 1,400 vehicles, mainly trucks, enter daily. Customs authorities managing the border have recently introduced truck scanners. They cooperate closely with Kenyan customs daily.

Streamlining customs operations is an important part of forming the East African Community. The East African Community has a system called the Single Customs Territory, which allows customs information on goods imported into any country in the East African Community to be shared electronically within the East African Community.

To handle the large flow of goods, IT has advanced considerably, but it is still insufficient. Furthermore, the development of domestic transportation networks after crossing the border is also important. I felt the need to advance multimodal transport, utilizing multiple transportation methods. Vehicles centered on trucks, the railway currently being developed, the use of Lake Victoria's water transport, and even air transport.

Improving connectivity is essential to advance the integration of the East African Community. The railway network and customs are important components. What was inspected this time is indispensable for the development of this region. Japan has previously supported economic integration important to the Japanese economy, such as ASEAN integration. Enhancing connectivity in this region, which could become an important market for Japan in the future, will greatly contribute to the development of the Japanese economy.



Vehicles lined up (Kenya side, average 5km) Electronic scanner checking cargo interior

4. Road Construction Connecting Yumbe and Manibe

This month, the author traveled to Yumbe in West Nile Province and Atali in the east. The author visited this region last June as well. Japan is renovating national roads in this region through JICA. The West Nile region was deeply affected by domestic turmoil in Uganda (General Idi Amin's coup and the civil war known as the Bush War). As mentioned in the railway section, during the civil war, transportation networks were severed to cut off mutual connections. The agreement to end the civil war was reached in 2002. Furthermore, from the late 2010s, the number of refugees entering Uganda increased sharply due to deteriorating security in neighboring South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yumbe District, the road renovation area, has a residential area accepting over 200,000 refugees. December in West Nile is the season transitioning from the rainy season to the dry season.

During the visit, it rained quite a bit in the morning. It feels a bit hotter as it is lower than Kampala, but the maximum temperature is still around 27 degrees. Morning and evening temperatures drop below 20 degrees, similar to Kampala. Relatively flat land continues, and vegetation is abundant. Unlike the capital Kampala region, where people and goods gather, West Nile is underdeveloped and still faces problems. This region is a key land point connecting Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The road renovation project also employs refugees living in this region. Infrastructure development in such regions is essential to advance the integration and marketization of East Africa as a whole. Improving railway and customs systems is meaningless unless they connect the whole. Therefore, advancing support that considers the development and future of the entire country is very meaningful.



Scene at the site



Design of the crested crane, a symbol of
Uganda

The site was inspected together with the Minister of Public Works and Transport, Katumba

Wamala, who is in charge of this project. Minister Wamala also conducted dialogues with residents on-site. They expressed gratitude for Japan's support while also voicing candid opinions that they want local residents to benefit more from the project. Japanese companies are actively involved in implementing support. They supervise and guide local contractors and workers to efficiently provide high-quality infrastructure development. Recently in Japan, there are issues of aging infrastructure and labor shortages. From those directing the site, I heard that implementing ODA projects helps transfer technology to Ugandan engineers and also contributes to maintaining and improving the precision of Japanese technology.



With Minister Wamala



Dialogue with residents

5. Activities of World Vision Japan

During the visit to West Nile, the author visited the project site of the Japanese NGO (World Vision Japan) conducting educational environment improvement projects in the Rhino Camp refugee settlement. Rhino is home to over 200,000 refugees, with nearly 2,000 refugees continuing to flow in monthly. World Vision Japan is supporting school building and human development with a three-year plan to address educational challenges. The environment for primary education in refugee settlements is harsh, as is the case throughout Uganda.

The number of students per school exceeds 1,000, with the largest having 5,000 students attending. Support has been provided to select eight primary schools from these. Classrooms are crowded with over 100 students and, it was said that the large number of students makes it suffocating, not to mention the absolute shortage of teachers. Moreover, Uganda's curriculum is strict, and when elementary school reaches the middle grades, the curriculum is tightly organized from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. World Vision Japan is first physically renovating school buildings and toilets and also training teachers. We also supported the provision of basic teaching materials. I don't think educational issues can be improved overnight. Children may

not improve overall unless not only schools but also home environments are improved. However, the children at the schools we visited seemed to be firmly acquiring what they had learned. It will be a long-term effort, but human resource development, which can be said to be the foundation of nation-building, is also an important field.



Provided teaching materials with
Japanese staff member Mr. Kotoku



Opening



With faculty and students



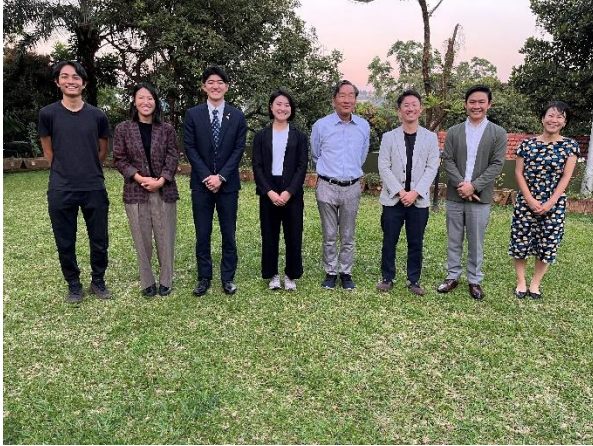
Welcome scene

6. The circle of startup support in Uganda: Collaboration with Toronto Metropolitan University DMZ.

My previous post was in Toronto, Canada. Toronto is so active in IT research and startup support that it is called the "Silicon Valley of the North." Toronto Metropolitan University also has a startup support organization called DMZ. DMZ has also collaborated extensively with Japanese startups, and when I was the Consul General in Toronto, we had many collaborations. DMZ is also keen on collaborating with startups in the Middle East and Africa.

This month, Yumiko Namiki, the head of the DMZ Japan office, visited Uganda. As introduced in this column, Japanese entrepreneurs are already active in Uganda and are

looking to further development. Ugandan engineers are also gradually being trained. AI is also a promising field. Enthusiastic discussions were held, including with JICA experts. I think it was a good networking opportunity .



Ms. Namiki and start-up team in Uganda

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