

### 1. Visit to Roofings Group Factory

In Africa, the iron and steel industry has not yet come to occupy a large share of the economy. However, in Uganda, there is a steel manufacturing factory that has received support from the Japanese steel industry. In January, the author visited the Roofings Group factory in the Namanve Industrial Park on the outskirts of Kampala.

Roofings Group is a steel manufacturing group founded by the current chairman, Dr. Sikander Lalani. When he started the factory more than 30 years ago, he reportedly started with 16 employees in addition to the chairman. Today, it has grown into a large company employing over 3,000 people within the group. The factory visited this time started operations in 2013, with support from Yodoko (then Yodogawa Steel Works) for its establishment. Many Japanese engineers reportedly came to Uganda for technical guidance. Even now, the spirit of Japanese manufacturing is inherited, and the factory gives the impression of being well-managed with a strong emphasis on workplace safety, quality control, and environmental considerations, symbolized by "5S." Furthermore, the factory expansion and maintenance that had been underway for some time has been completed, and new facilities are scheduled to begin full operation in March 2026.



Production Facilities

Even now, the group's business model maintains cooperation with Japanese manufacturers and imports many materials from Japan. Their products are construction materials, including steel used for roofing. They also focus on painting and, reportedly sell steel as a material to

other product manufacturers. Their products are exported not only within Uganda but also to neighboring Tanzania, Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Kenya, Burundi, and Rwanda. The economic growth in the East African region is remarkable, with Uganda expected to grow by over 7%. As previously reported, Kampala city is experiencing a construction boom. The demand for steel products will likely increase rather than decrease. Business development in such fields is expected in the future.



Shearing Process



Painting Process

## 2. Initiatives for Uganda's Water Problems

One of the SDGs goals is "Safe toilets and water for everyone around the world" (Goal 6). Many Japanese stakeholders are working on various issues to solve water problems in Africa. Sunda Technology Global's activities were introduced in the August 2024 issue of this column. This month, the author visited two water-related activities in Uganda.

### (I) Initiatives by Koken Kogyo

Koken Kogyo is a top manufacturer of boring machine design, manufacturing, and sales, as well as an engineering company for water-related businesses. The company has already accumulated a track record in water facility construction, including drilling over 3,000 wells in Africa. In Uganda, they are developing a new water supply system utilizing electronic payments in cooperation with the Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment, local governments, and local residents.

In many regions of Uganda, tap water is supplied to villages, but distribution to individual households faces many challenges in facility management and fee collection, leading to slow adoption. Koken Kogyo, in collaboration with Sunda Technology International and others, is developing a business where water fees are charged to cards or tokens, and each household obtains water from public taps or wells.

This month, the author visited a project site in Kayunga, about two hours' drive from Kampala. Guided by Innocent Nabende, who studied in Japan and is fluent in Japanese, the author went to a water tap, where a local mother with a small child was just about to apply for the water system. Nabende calmly took out a token and a laptop from his backpack. He registered the token on the laptop and charged the water fee with cash for the time being. The registration took only a few minutes. The mother immediately used the token to draw water and carefully took it home. After that, she can charge the fee with electronic money from her mobile phone. If Sunda's system is used, all information such as when, where, and by whom how much water was used is managed by an app.

This allows for the maintenance and management of water taps, and if there is a problem, an engineer can quickly come to the rescue. Kiosk-type public water stands are also being introduced on a trial basis. These use cards similar to Japanese transportation cards. It was a facility like a small gas station using electronic payments. One public water tap is expected to cover 100 to 200 households. This initiative will provide the "last mile delivery" of tap water. It will surely contribute to the SDGs goals.



Collaboration with SUNDA system



Kiosk-type public water stand

## (II) Initiatives by Tsuji Plastic

Tsuji Plastic is a company headquartered in Higashiomi City, Shiga Prefecture, that has been involved in plastic injection molding since its establishment. After 2000, it launched a solar business division, starting with solar power generation. They have also turned their attention to Africa and have accumulated achievements in Niger and Senegal. A characteristic of the

company is its active utilization of people from the ABE Initiative. The ABE Initiative is a scholarship program established by the late Prime Minister Abe, aiming to foster industrial human resources in Africa and human resources who will serve as bridges connecting Japan and Africa in business. Students who have studied in Japan have a good understanding of both Japanese and African circumstances and have the potential to become good business partners. Tsuji Plastic is putting this into practice.

In Uganda, Tsuji Plastic is conducting a demonstration experiment of SUGOI, a water purification system for drinking water developed by the company. This product is off-grid, solar-compatible, and has the excellent function of filtering and generating approximately 1,000 liters of water per hour from turbid river water using a filtration filter. Membrane replacement is not required for a long time, and no chemicals are used. Uganda is blessed with abundant water resources, including the Nile River, which is a huge water source, and many wetlands. If this can be purified off-grid, it will be a water solution that suits the local situation.

The author visited a demonstration experiment being conducted near a lake in Nakasongola District. Currently, the experiment is going smoothly, and it was impressive to see local residents gathering around the system and diligently drawing water.



SUGOI Water Purification System



Water before filtration (left) and after filtration (right)

The initiatives of Koken Kogyo and Tsuji Plastic are projects utilizing subsidies from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and Shiga Prefecture, respectively, which support

the overseas expansion of Japanese companies. JICA invited water-related companies to Uganda this month and conducted a study tour. The participating companies are as follows. It was a tour that conveyed the high interest and seriousness of Japanese companies in addressing water issues in Africa.

Koken Kogyo Co., Ltd.

Terao Raitec Co., Ltd.

Okamoto Pump Co., Ltd.

Neos Co., Ltd.

Yokogawa Electric Corporation

Ebara Corporation

Optim Corporation

(In no particular order)

### **3. Activities of NGO Michibushinin**

This column has previously introduced Japanese NGOs active in Uganda (please refer to the February, June, July, and December 2025 (Reiwa 7) issues). This month, the author visited the activities of NGO Michibushinin in Nakasongola District, about two and a half hours' drive northwest of Kampala.

This project, which started in March last year, is a road repair project utilizing local residents and district government equipment, and a reforestation project for forests, 90% of which are said to have disappeared due to climate change. In Nakasongola District, floods and long droughts occur frequently, and many roads are impassable. The core of NGO Michibushinin's activities is to train local residents in road repair and to actually carry out repairs in cooperation with them. Approximately 250 meters of road were repaired. This improved access to schools, hospitals, markets, etc., for over 3,000 local residents. In addition, a reservoir was constructed using road drainage. This also contributed to reducing livestock mortality due to drought.

In addition, a prefectural nursery was developed in cooperation with the prefectural government. Tree planting led by local farmers is being carried out. By having the local government take the lead, a system for continuously supplying seedlings is being established. Michibushinin's activities focus on respecting the autonomy of local residents and nurturing sustainable projects by utilizing local resources. When the author visited, local residents and local government officials involved in the project enthusiastically explained the significance of the project and its future direction.

Yuka Iwamura, who is in charge of Michibushinin in Uganda, has long experience in Uganda. As mentioned above, many Japanese NGOs are active in Uganda, but she has also established an NGO liaison council to facilitate communication and cooperation among NGOs.



Prefectural Nursery



Handover Ceremony

#### **4. Laut photo's Family Photo Project**

Many Japanese individuals are fascinated by Uganda's rich nature and the people who live there, and they undertake various personal activities in Uganda. The author met Keiko Kaji of laut photo, one such Japanese person. Ms. Kaji runs a photo studio in Kobe. When she first visited Uganda last year, she was attracted by the simple lives of the people living in the rich agricultural areas. In Uganda, family bonds are irreplaceable. So, she came up with the idea of a project to photograph farming families and present the photos to them. In Uganda, there is not yet a custom of taking family photos and displaying them at home. From early February, she spent about 10 days visiting rural villages on the outskirts of Kampala to carry out the photo project.

Local people were initially curious about the Japanese person who came to their village with a camera and printer. As she explained the purpose of the project, they gradually opened up as they saw family photos they had never taken before. In the end, all the families who received their family photos were reportedly full of smiles.

Many rural areas in Uganda face numerous challenges, including poverty, education, and healthcare. In such circumstances, laut photo's initiative must have been a valuable project that strengthened family bonds.



Family Photo Project

### **5. Medical Equipment Maintenance at Regional Referral Hospitals in Soroti and Jinja**

Healthcare is one of the priority areas of Japanese assistance to Uganda. Through JICA, Japan has been supporting the improvement of medical facilities at regional referral hospitals in Uganda since the 2000s. Specifically, it has promoted the maintenance of facilities and equipment at regional referral hospitals in Mbarara and Masaka in the central region, Hoima and Fort Portal in the western region, and Gulu, Lira, and Arua in the northern region. This time, the maintenance of medical equipment at regional referral hospitals in Soroti and Jinja in the eastern region has been completed. This month, the author visited two regional referral hospitals and held a handover ceremony.

Regional referral hospitals, as public facilities, aim to provide specialized medical services to local residents, but the aging and shortage of medical equipment have made the appropriate provision of medical services a significant challenge. This maintenance is expected to improve the quantity and quality of medical services for local residents. At the handover ceremony, in addition to many medical professionals from the Ministry of Health, local government officials, residents, and JICA experts who have been cooperating in the health sector for many years joined in celebrating the maintenance and confirmed the effective utilization of the facilities and equipment in the future.



Handover Ceremony



Nurse explaining donated  
medical equipment

## 6. Emperor's Birthday Reception

On February 18, an Emperor's Birthday Reception was held at the Japanese Ambassador's residence, inviting Ugandan government officials, private sector individuals, and Japanese stakeholders. From the Ugandan government, Hon. Okello, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, attended as a guest and delivered a speech.



Venue



Shaking hands with Hon. Okello,  
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Japanese stakeholders, including those involved in water projects visiting Uganda under JICA's scheme, also participated (see 2 above). In addition, a Japanese car dealership operating in Uganda exhibited Japanese cars and other vehicles.



Water Project Stakeholders



Japanese Car Exhibition

On this occasion, the Ambassador's Commendation was presented to the following four organizations. Please refer to the Embassy's website for information on the activities of each organization.

- Uganda Judo Association
- Uganda Karate Association
- RICCI EVERYDAY
- COTS COTS LIMITED



Ambassador's Commendation Ceremony

This annual event was successfully held again this year. The number of participants from Uganda increased slightly this year and, I believe it was a good opportunity for everyone to deepen their exchanges.(End)