

Visiting an ex-JOCV colleague

There is a restaurant named CAFE & BAR TAMER in Ohno district of Kashima city, Ibaraki prefecture. The owner of the restaurant, Mr. Toshikazu Kuwano is a former JOCV (Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer) in Sudan, who was a colleague volunteer of the author, being trained and dispatched at the same period. After graduating from high school, he worked for a power company and joined JOCV in 2012. In February 2016 after he returned home, he started the restaurant in Kashima city, his hometown.



He was working at the Miyakejima Island of the Izu Islands during his company employee days. There, he felt strongly the connections of local people, especially young people. When he asked why, they said because there was a restaurant where everyone gathered in the area, so they could get along naturally through chatting about various things there. This experience in the island raised his strong feeling towards the place where he was born, and he started to think that he would like to work for creating a connection in the region someday, although he had been away from the local community since his high school student days.

Returning from Sudan, he started the restaurant by renovating his parents' house which was vacant. It was the first time for him to manage a restaurant, so he encountered many setbacks, but some part of the management business was similar to his JOCV activities, such as finding out hidden needs of the area and gathering people by planning different events. He opens an English conversation classroom every Tuesday inviting an American acquaintance as a teacher, and offers the restaurant as a workshop place to friends who met during the JOCV days. Mr. Kuwano himself also organizes an opportunity to exchange views on the

future of the area while watching a documentary film on free trade with local farmers, and accepts students of the junior high school that he graduated from to have work experience.

He hopes the local people will pay more attention to various things from daily problems to what is going on overseas through the experience at the restaurant. In addition to information sharing, he believes spreading human relationships in the area is important through physically gathering and connecting people. Especially for young people, he wants to make the restaurant a place where they can realize there are many interesting things in their area without going to big cities. Under the idea of "Think Globally, Act Locally", he said that he would like to continue planning various events so as to involve and connect people in the area.



Event flyers in the area placed on the table at the entrance.

The restaurant serves tasty coffee and tea along with baked curry or homemade pizza, which are prepared originally with his wife. At first, they had a plan to provide the African cuisine which he used to eat in Sudan, but they were afraid such dishes could be less familiar to Japanese customers, so they decided to serve current style of dishes so that many people could easily come and enjoy. However, they do have a Sudanese dish such as lentil soup which he often enjoyed at a roadside food cart during the JOCV days. They hope the soup could bring a good chance to know about Sudan, and fortunately it is getting popular.



Lentil soup

By the way, the restaurant name "TAMER" is an Arabic name given him as a nickname by a language teacher of the JOCV training center before his dispatch. It means "person with wealth". He said it would be wonderful if they could make the greatest wealth of "people's connection" from this restaurant. There is not only one way to activate the area. However, the most important thing both in overseas work as well as in Japan is how to build a trusting relationship with local people. I thought through this visit that Mr. Kuwano's activity is something similar to ours, in which we work with project counterparts and train participants through day-to-day activities. (By Ioki, July 2017)

How to compose study tour for training <Part 2>

Procedure and points to be considered for composing a study tour

The second issue in this series describes the procedure and points to be considered for composing a study tour.

(1) Specify the purpose of the study tour

First of all, it is important to clarify what to learn. The proportion, number of participants and role of study tours are different in each training program. But in any training program, a study tour is one of the substantial elements to achieve the purpose of the training. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify what kind of role and purpose should be given to the study tour. It is particularly important for short-term training where the proportion of time given to study tours is relatively large. In addition to covering the purpose of the training, attention should also be paid to the interests of the participants.

(2) Decide the destination to visit in the study tour

Geographical conditions are to be carefully considered in deciding the tour destination, so as to visit multiple destinations efficiently covering the purpose of the training comprehensively. The season to visit must also be considered in case a certain crop is the target. Depending on conditions, the observing area will be decided first, and then contents of the training will be considered to be covered there.

(3) Decide on points of interest in the destinations

For example, suppose you are going to visit a production area to learn about a certain crop. The place to visit will vary depending on the purpose; if you learn about farming and cultivation in practice, you will visit farmers; similarly, a research station for basic cultivation techniques, an extension center for technical support and dissemination, and an agricultural cooperative for marketing and formation of a production area. In addition, the timing of the visits is also the important factor. Because of the schedule of whole training program, you may not be able to visit the site at the intended cultivation stage, and in case of the busy season the visit could obstruct the daily routine of the destination. However, if you visit the site in off-season, the impact of the visit could be less than you expect.

It is possible to visit multiple destinations and learn various things in a study tour, but it would not be a good way to show them independently without explaining the relationship between each of them. In order to encourage understanding on the part of the participants, it is necessary to strategically combine different destinations so that the participants will be able to compare various cases and/or find out the relationships between them.

(4) Determine the itinerary of the study tour

The tour itinerary should be prepared so as to visit the destinations efficiently and easily, since a tour is always accompanied with movement. It is also important to ensure schedules do not become

overcrowded at the same time. It will be effective to visit one place in half a day, to enhance understanding of the participants, unless destinations are highly related to each other, such as farmers and an agricultural cooperative. In addition, enough time should be given for questions and answers, because a study tour is limited opportunity to hear the voices of the sites directly. And from this point of view too, overcrowding the schedule should be avoided.

(5) Make an appointment with the destinations

When making an appointment for the visit, firstly the purpose of the study tour and expected contents to be learned need to be clearly explained. In addition, outline of the training course and background of the participants will also be described so that the recipient organization can host the visit in the best manner. Without having this kind of adjustment, the result may not get the intended knowledge or forcing an excessive burden on the hosts, even if an interesting observation destination has been selected. Before making an appointment and explaining the details by telephone, it is effective to send a simple document by FAX or e-mail. Those hosts which have established a relationship of trust for many years can be treasures in composing a high-quality study tour.

(6) Prepare materials for the study tour

Only limited organizations/visiting destinations in Japan prepare English materials. Printed matter is valuable teaching material which deepens understanding of the participants. It is useful to cover detailed information which cannot be conveyed during the tour, and one of the best tools to review what the participants learned later. Therefore, it is necessary to confirm the availability of materials in advance and translate them into English as much as possible, which will increase the level of understanding and satisfaction of the participants.

(7) Advance preparation of the study tour

The participants themselves should understand outline of the destination and purpose of the visit in advance, which is more important than that the host understands the participants. It is essential to read through related materials, and figure out overview of the visiting destination, purpose of the visit and points to be studied, which is useful to acquire necessary knowledge and information efficiently in a limited time. It is not too much to say that advance preparation for a study tour will assure more than half of the success of the tour. In order to compose a high-quality study tour, it is essential to clarify the purpose of the tour, and prepare it very carefully from the perspectives of both the participants and the hosts.



Participants prepare for the visit of the day before departure at a hotel lobby.

Toward sustainable forest conservation <Part 2>

Study and planning for forest conservation

It is required to manage forest resources by keeping a balance between utilization and conservation for sustainable management. This issue introduces preliminary studies about forest management project implemented in Malawi and Burkina Faso, mainly focusing on the case of Malawi. The outline of each study is shown in the table below.

In both countries, it was necessary to implement appropriate forest management in order to suppress decline of forest resources due to pressure on the forest by local residents, such as clearing for cultivation, cutting fuel wood, and overgrazing. However, the administrative side in charge of forest management also had problems such as a shortage of human resources and funds, therefore understanding and participation of local residents were essential for proper forest management.

First of all, the study team decided to examine "how to encourage participation and concern of local residents?" As an approach to encourage willingness to participate on the part of the residents, it was proposed that observing similar successful projects and publishing their success stories would be helpful. In the case of Malawi, we proposed a village promotion activity using a virtual character as an encouraging method of residents participation. The character was "Uncle Mishirere" derived from Middle Shire Rehabilitation. He could distribute seeds and seedlings to the residents, instruct construction of nurseries at schools, and train food processing at the women's association. If local specialty products can be produced, marketing of the products shall be considered as the Mishirere brand. This approach would be useful not only to enhance awareness of residents participation, but also to advertise their activities widely in public. Furthermore, we proposed training of extension workers and forestry officers, collaboration with

other organizations, activities involving school teachers and students, in terms of "capacity building". Regarding "ensuring sustainability", we emphasized the importance that residents will be able to realize benefits from income generation activities in both study cases.

In the preliminary study, it was required to propose potential activities to meet the needs and interests of local residents, which were obtained based on information gathered through a relatively short period of investigation. Therefore, it is often likely to suggest as many alternatives as possible, without studying details of implementation methodology of the proposed contents. Regarding the "Uncle Mishirere" mentioned above, it was discussed with the staff of counterpart organizations in the preliminary study, however it was not implemented as actual activities in the pilot project. What is the point to be considered carefully during the preliminary study, in order to propose feasible forest conservation activities as much as possible?

In general, priority needs and interests of residents are "utilization" of forests, and "conservation" is priority for the management side. So, even if a plan for forest conservation is formulated, realizing the plan is difficult without "benefits" for local people generated through implementation. Consequently, it is considered to be important to develop environment so that residents can have access to benefits. In the case of Malawi, the pilot project later pointed out that inadequate knowledge on forestation, ambiguous land ownership, insufficient ability to deal with various needs of residents were the major reasons why the progress of afforestation activities was retarded. As it was mentioned earlier, it is necessary to consider the balance between needs/interests of residents and forest conservation. In addition, it is also important to understand precisely during the preliminary study, whether residents can surely participate in project activities, so as to propose and implement a sustainable forest conservation project.

Title of the Study	Study on Community Revitalization and Afforestation in Middle Shire, Malawi	Study on Management of Forest Reserves in the Province of Comoe, Burkina Faso
Background and Objectives of the Study	The target area was located in the north of Blantyre City, the country's largest, with high population density. Due to the supply of fuel wood to the cities and expansion of cultivated land, they faced the decrease in forest area, farmland soil erosion and productivity decline. A preliminary study was conducted for pilot project implementation including technical support to residents to realize a village natural resource management plan formulated as part of countermeasures.	In the target area, forest was the important resource for residents as a source of fuel wood and non-timber forest products, however, degradation and reduction of forest resources became a problem due to shifting cultivation, overgrazing and field fires. A precious ecosystem was left in the province of Comoe, so a preliminary study was conducted to formulate a practical forest management plan to conserve and utilize the reserved forest in a sustainable manner.
Expected Major Activities of the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of various agroforestry technologies - Social Forestry/Afforestation (Fuel wood, Fruit trees, Fodder trees etc.) - Livelihood improvement activities (beekeeping, agricultural processing, and poultry) - Social infrastructure improvement (irrigation facilities such as irrigation ponds) - Organizing residents utilizing existing organizations - Capacity building (cooperation with other organizations, training of extension workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening functions of the Forest Department for forest management and training for forest officers - Implementation of income generation activities to promote residents' participation accompanied by conducting technical training - Strengthening existing residents' organizations and collaborating with other NPOs - Activities involving school teachers and children

Onion drying project in arid regions - Joint work between AAI and the drying machine maker Taikisangyo Co., Ltd- <Part 3>

Reaction from the project site

It was at the beginning of March 2016 when we received the news from Sudan, informing us that the shipment from Japan, Kobe Port had crossed the Indian Ocean, and had arrived at Port Sudan in the Red Sea.

Of course, that was the electric dryer made in Japan. This machinery was introduced experimentally to set up a small-scale dry onion plant operated by farmers and rural women groups using Japanese electric dryers, in order to replace the former factory for large-scale dry onion processing in Kassala, Sudan, which is currently out of service. The first issue of this series described the background behind the planning of this project conceived by volunteers including NOTA (National Organization for Technology Assimilation), and the second issue presented collaborative work with them and the progress of the project after introduction of the machinery for the production of dry onions. This issue illustrates the reactions of the farmers group, that is the final beneficiary of the introduced machinery, including their frank opinions and future issues based on them.

It took more days than expected to complete unfamiliar customs clearance, and after further 12-hour drive by road, the machinery was finally brought to Kassala, which everyone waited for patiently. The arrival of the drying equipment was a joyful moment after the long waiting. Excited eyes with expectations of the fellow farmers group were concentrated on the contents of a wooden box that had just arrived. The direct reaction that everyone showed when looking at the contents of the box was "compact". The appearance of the machinery was unexpectedly small, and it was too much different from the feeling that everyone envisioned, although the concept of a small-scale dry onion plant itself was received favorably. Since then, this preconception has always been around us through this project. However, when the electric dryers introduced actually began to operate, products of dry onion were produced, and the achievement became visible, this preconception gradually melted.

The real intention of the small-scale plant concept was using multiple numbers of electric dryers to flexibly accept fluctuating amounts of fresh onions to dry, according to farmers' demands. There were necessary steps in order to achieve farmers' understanding of this concept. First of all, demonstration activity showed profitability per electric dryer, and then proved effectiveness of adjusting processing amounts by using multiple

driers. We feel that their reactions have gradually changed, after the farmers group clearly realized the profitability obtained per electric dryer, and the whole concept was circulated among them. Under this feasibility study, seminars on small-scale dry onion processing were carried out three times in Kassala and Khartoum, which was useful to enhance farmers' awareness of the project and to share realistic images for the plant operation gradually. We were happy unexpectedly that international organizations, NGOs and private companies in addition to the farmers group showed interest in the concept and ideas of this project. It seemed that maturity and stable quality of the product shown as samples were also one of the attractive factors.

This project was adopted as a JICA dissemination and verification project in June 2017, and verification and demonstration in the field will be continued as a successor project. From now on, as a small-scale dry onion plant project, we are planning to introduce and operate more efficient electric dryers. More data accumulation, analysis and verification with higher precision will be required to stably produce high quality products.

Our future dream is to realize overseas export of processed agricultural products from Sudan using electric dryers imported from Japan. It will be necessary to show specific possibilities of product development to overseas markets. In addition, there are many other issues to be solved, such as various restrictions on commercial transactions between Japan and Sudan regarding introduction of equipment. The way to go is still far, but we will step forward to realize the dream by overcoming various challenges one by one.



Seminar held in Kassala



Exhibition of packaged dry onions



Final Seminar for the Federal Government