

「Relax, Be Yourself, and Enjoy the Communication from Your Heart」

Professor Shuichi Asanuma, Nagoya University



With Dr. Nzola M. Mahungu, who used to live next door in IITA¹ dormitory in 1980. Dr.Mahungu is currently Chief of IITA DR.Congo. Encountered at World Bank Headquarter in Washington DC in 2005, for the first time in 22 years. Surprise!

Please introduce yourself. What was your “first contact” with the World?

My first job, right after acquiring PhD from Nagoya University in 1979, was in Nigeria, working as a Researcher at IITA. My research interest then was to utilize nitrogen in the air through utilizing microorganisms for several beans. I believed such research could be useful to substitute the high price chemical fertilizer.

During my 4 years stay in Nigeria, I made many friends, almost forgetting that I am a Japanese from other side of the globe with different skin color. That was my first precious experience to learn naturally that direct communication with people makes one’s life more valuable.

After returning to Japan in 1983, I worked for several Universities/Institutes including Kumamoto from South to Sapporo in the North, and finally came back to Nagoya University in 2005 after 26 years since graduation.

My projects in Nagoya University included soil analysis and research on people’s awareness in the soil erosion area in Kenya. I also conducted several researches on “rice” in Africa. Development of the core researchers on rice in Africa was one of my important missions carried out in collaboration with JICA training programs. Supporting capacity development of people around the world became my life work. With all my achievement, I am now ready to retire from my current position as a professor.

What brought you into International Cooperation?

Co-researching experience with JICA training participants from Indonesia and Philippines, when I was in Sapporo and in Kumamoto. We researched about Rhizobia. This was my first “international

¹ International Institute of Tropical Agriculture

cooperation” experience. Later, I was dispatched to both countries as JICA Expert, which made me believe that “if I have some expertise within myself, I can work anywhere in the world”, wondering while listening to some pop music like Whitney Houston.

Since 1998, I was actively involved in international research activities in JIRCAS², including desertification prevention methods in Burkina Faso and researches on Tropical Islands such as Fiji and New Caledonia.



**Field work in Burkina Faso during rainy season. (July 1999).
Tried to use weeding-hoe in maize field, but, not easy!**

What is the Most Impressive Experiences or Projects in your career?

I have conducted JICA Group Training Program every year since 2005. I have good memories of a training program to promote GIS technology use in land management, for which I was involved for 8 years and which lasted for 13 years in total.

“Development of Core Researchers for Rice Promotion in Sub Saharan Africa” training program started in 2012 in collaboration with JICA Chubu and professors from Mie University. We are proud that the program was conducted under very positive atmosphere, and all the training participants were intelligent, passionate, and full of unique characters. We enjoyed hearing their progress (and some significant achievements!) after the training program concluding 3 years program. It showed that if we cooperate together, our power will be doubled or tripled to make a good progress.

I also remember inviting ex-JICA Volunteer in Tanzania and Latin America to my lecture. Their stories were vivid and convincing, and remain clearly in my memory.

With my career starting in Nigeria, I feel blessed to have made many friends in different countries since then, including Nigeria, DR Congo. and Burkina Faso, just to name few.



JICA Training Participants in the beautiful Maruyama Rice-Terrace in July 2014. With demonstration of use of hand weeding machine, participants analyzed its introduction to their own countries.

² Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences

What is your motto or the basic principle in your career life and in international cooperation?

Seeing is believing. Don't just sit on the desk. Visit the country you are doing the research. Talk to the people. Talk to the people respecting their views. There will be people you will like and people you may not. That's the same in any country including Japan.



In Bishope Ogez High School in Uganda, near Lake Edward, in August 2005. 4 girls in the senior grade were all very active, talking about their dreams to become scientist.

Please give your message to the citizens in Chubu Region.

Under this global world where all the countries are highly dependent on each other, future of Japan, future of our industrial exports or imports of agricultural products will be more and more dependent on the rest of the world. World Expo in Aichi, COP10、ESD³-we have organized several world class events recently, however, it is much more important to promote cultural exchanges with the world at the citizen level and individual level, and make friends!

【Message from JICA Staff】

Professor Asanuma is retiring from Nagoya University this March. “Agricultural Researches in Africa cannot be discussed without Asanuma Sensei”. He is the one who most loved entire African continents, contributed to their development through agricultural researches, and, a passionate educator.

His motto is GLOCAL. He has contributed to tackle global issues while always respecting the views and needs of local people, and continuously advised/educated JICA staff for our better cooperation. His passion, his hard work, his warm personality. There are many “Asanuma Admirers” in the world. With other renowned professors, he has established JISNAS (Japan Intellectual Support Network in Agricultural Sciences) in 2008 in order to promote network among agricultural researchers in Japan.

³ Education for Sustainable Development

We sincerely hope he will continue to work in the same field even after his retirement. (Masahiro TAWA, Deputy Director General of Rural Development Department of JICA)



In Madagascar in February 2015, with senior management of Ministry of Agriculture.