

Using *Human Security Today* Nos. 1 & 2 in the JICA Development Studies Program: Trialing Workshop-Style Classes at Universities in Japan

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The JICA Development Studies Program (JICA-DSP), launched in 2018, was formulated to harness Japan's development experience, draw from its lessons, and—in partnership with various university departments across Japan—transmit those lessons to students via workshops, lectures, multi-day events and course programs. Japan's evolution from the Meiji period to postwar recovery and the economic miracle has given it a wealth of development experience, both positive and negative, to share with other countries. Through the JICA-DSP, JICA international students, including potential future leaders of developing countries, are invited to come to Japan to learn about these modernization and development experiences alongside Japanese and other international students, so that successes may be replicated and missteps avoided.

As a public institution, JICA possesses a substantial amount of exceptional research, data, and expertise on human security. *Human Security Today* Nos. 1 & 2, exemplify this, but to date, they have been underutilized in our work. JICA is now one of the world's leading advocates of human security, and here at the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development, considerable research is being undertaken to improve human security across the globe. This is JICA's strength as an institution, and for the JICA-DSP, the challenge is how best to disseminate this

research on the theory and practice of human security through these outputs.

Recognizing this task, we are currently developing a series of materials based on *Human Security Today* (such as presentation slides and supplementary materials) to teach key aspects and concepts of human security across universities in Japan. These materials are designed to make important human security issues easy to understand by using real case studies and input from top experts in their fields. To date, we have piloted these materials in workshop-style classes with both undergraduates and postgraduates at the International University of Japan in Niigata, Kanagawa University, Kyoto University, and Rikkyo University in Tokyo. This has been delivered across several iterations, during which we have been able to experiment and refine our ideas.

Conveying Human Security Concepts and Ideas through Case Studies

Human security explanations can be overly conceptual and thus difficult to understand, and it is important to consider this when developing materials and lesson plans. Our approach has been to address this challenge by incorporating real-world examples of human security issues while maintaining a focus on individual concepts. By centering key concepts such as empowerment and protection—and grounding them in real

The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official positions of either JICA or the JICA Ogata Research Institute.

case studies from *Human Security Today* and student-led activities, such as group discussions—we hope to make these concepts more memorable and accessible to participants.

Each of the three sets of materials we have developed so far has made use of concepts from *Human Security Today* Nos. 1 & 2. Two have made use of the case studies, focusing on the materials by my esteemed colleagues, Dr. Atsushi Hanatani, on the impacts of COVID in Africa and Dr. Ako Muto on the implications of compounded crises in Syria. Our standard workshop format combines taught content and student-led content, with approximately half of the time spent on the latter and space for further discussion at the lecturer's discretion if participants seem particularly interested. The emphasis is on learning about human security through discussion and experiential learning.

Trialing Workshop-Style Classes Using *Human Security Today*

The workshop-style class at Rikkyo University¹ focused on the concept of empowerment in human security, using JICA's International Student Program and Knowledge Co-Creation Program² (KCCP) approach to exemplify it. KCCP is an approach that emphasizes the “co-creation” of responses to challenges based on mutual understanding and promotes a cooperative approach to learning rather than a one-sided model, while still drawing on Japan's development experiences. We incorporated the concept of downside risks in human security, as expressed in *Human Security Today* No. 1. We adapted this diagram to focus on the concepts of “innovation capacity” and “problem-solving capacity” and how both were important for ensuring human security. The terms innovation and problem-solving capacity refer to a country's capacity to both improve conditions through innovation and protect people from downside risks by resolving issues quickly, such as those caused by natural disasters.

To build on this, we developed materials showcasing the

narratives of two former JICA scholars³ who contributed to addressing different risks and developing innovative solutions to real problems, thereby grounding the concepts of innovation capacity and problem-solving capacity in real cases. One, Mugarura Amiri from Rwanda, whose story was published separately as part of the JICA-IUJ Collaborative Case Writing Series,⁴ worked to resolve the risks posed by lightning strikes in his country, while the other worked on energy security. Both participants' countries are badly impacted by these issues. In Rwanda, lightning strikes are a common occurrence, causing infrastructure damage, as well as human and livestock deaths. In the second participant's country, in southern Africa, power outages leading to loss of economic activity place severe pressure on the national economy. This has grave ramifications for human security, such as disruptions to vital public services, job losses stemming from economic instability, and even public safety when infrastructure, including street lighting and traffic signals, fails. By installing lightning protection devices, which capture lightning safely and predictably, and by seeking to develop sustainable alternative fuels using locally available waste materials, these two ex-participants showcase the power of innovation and problem-solving capacity as learned through their experiences in Japan.

Students were encouraged to reflect on these narratives in terms of both protection and empowerment, with the discussion focusing on what wider human security issues might be mitigated as a byproduct of these interventions. Participants discussed the wider issues caused by lightning strikes and regular power outages beyond their initial impacts, such as economic losses, increased crime, and disruption to public services.

The final activity tasked students with discussing what

¹ Guest lecture delivered for the “Human Security” course in the Master of Social Development and Administration (MSDA) Course, Graduate School of Social Design Studies, Rikkyo University, on May 26, 2025.

² For more details on KCCP, see: https://www.jica.go.jp/english/activities/schemes/tech_pro/acceptance_training/index.html.

³ These narratives were collected through questionnaire surveys and interviews conducted with former JICA scholars as part of the author's research project, “Making Japan's Business Africa's Business: Exploring the Impacts of the ABE Initiative.” The study focuses on alumni of the ABE Initiative (African Business Education Initiative for Youth), one of JICA's scholarship programs. At the time of writing, the research had collected survey responses from 292 alumni across 45 countries and conducted interviews with 74 alumni in Rwanda, South Africa, Kenya, and Egypt.

⁴ For more details on this case study, see: https://www.jica.go.jp/english/jica_ri/research/jica-dsp/sjp05jic0123/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2026/04/09/Case_20260409_01_1.pdf.

they thought they themselves could do to improve human security in their own countries. Using a handout and with the guidance of the facilitator, participants were asked to assess their skill sets and their capacity for innovation and problem-solving by reflecting on the skills, knowledge, and experience that they had acquired during their studies in Japan. Following this, they discussed the kinds of development issues in their home countries they felt they could help to resolve, and how those issues were related to human security. This was intended to increase their awareness of the kinds of contributions they could make after returning home by using their skills and knowledge from Japan to help improve human security.

Our approach to teaching human security proved effective. In the survey feedback from Rikkyo University, all participants gave a perfect score to the question of whether their understanding of human security had deepened. Some commented that the class had helped them realize how they could apply what they had learned in Japan upon returning home.

Toward the Development of Easily Understandable and Engaging Human Security Teaching Materials

We feel that our workshop at Rikkyo University was successful, and we view it as a positive starting point in the development of further materials to teach about human security in a way that is engaging from the perspective of students and intuitive and simple to use from the perspective of the facilitator. In developing future materials, we are fortunate that we can draw on the vast and high-quality research outputs of the JICA Ogata Research Institute—including *Human Security Today* No. 3—to ground the theory and concepts of human security in reality.

Our goal is to create materials that experts across the country and even globally can freely utilize and present in an engaging, interactive manner on key aspects of human



Workshop at Rikkyo University attended by students from eight countries

Photo by Kumiko Suzuki, Research Coordinator, JICA Ogata Research Institute

security. We stress the importance of a format that places student-led and experiential learning at the center. We sincerely hope that the development of these materials will contribute to promoting a better understanding of human security both within Japan and beyond, and we would like to express our thanks to those at Rikkyo University, the International University of Japan, and Kanagawa University who participated in and facilitated our trials of workshop-style classes.

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