

Trends

The NINJA Business Plan Competition



In 2020, JICA launched “Project NINJA (NINJA: Next Innovation with Japan),” a platform for entrepreneurship support, with the aim of fostering entrepreneurs who can solve social issues

using the power of business, and create high-quality jobs to assist nation-building in developing countries. As part of the project, a business plan competition for businesses emerging during the COVID-19 outbreak was launched for 19 African countries. The NINJA Project is JICA's first attempt to provide comprehensive and tailored support to entrepreneurs at every stage of their business development. The support provided includes: developing an entrepreneur's inspiration or idea into a prototype; registering a company; promoting the business model through contests; and even matching the company with overseas businesses.

From his base in Ethiopia, JICA Expert FUWA Naonobu is engaged in supporting entrepreneurs. He explains, “We hope we can build a win-win relationship where new ideas create competition and

synergy between existing industries and entrepreneurs. To achieve this, it is vital to grasp what is needed now and what should be done to achieve it.” A total of 2,713 companies applied for the NINJA Business Plan Competition. The number of applicants exceeded expectations, even though strict requirements had been instituted to limit the number of applications. On February 26 this year, 10 companies that passed the rigorous screening made presentations online. The 10 businesses selected through the screening process prioritized social issues in Africa, such as logistics and healthcare. FUWA is excited about the results, “We selected companies that have only just started up and that we feel have great potential. We hope to match them with Japanese companies in the future.”

JICA Launches a COVID-19 Webinar Series



With no end in sight to the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan has set the goal of “leaving no one's health behind” in order to overcome the challenges faced in these uncertain times. JICA is taking a holistic approach to addressing the pandemic and health security in low-and-middle income partner countries by focusing on prevention, precaution and treatment. Adopting this approach will help to protect the lives of vulnerable people more rapidly, and help build

societies more resilient against infectious diseases. In the absence of a definitive solution, it is very important to share the latest research and field experience with the world. The JICA COVID-19 Webinar Series - Sharing Japan's Experience - invites Japan's leading experts in the field to share their latest knowledge and experience with the world.

Held January 21, 2021, the first seminar in the series featured Dr GU Yoshiaki discussing the difficulties of nosocomial (hospital-associated) infection control for SARS-CoV-2 in hospitals. He described the steps needed to prevent transmission in hospitals based on his expertise as a member of the Infection Control Team of the Tokyo Center for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention (iCDC). The webinar was joined by more than 400 participants from 39 countries around the world, and concluded with a fruitful

Q&A session. In the second seminar in the series, held January 27, Professor OSHITANI Hitoshi explained the epidemiological differences between SARS and COVID-19 and covered the early findings of COVID-19 cases in Japan and details of Japan's approach to containing the infection, such as the 3Cs retrospective contact tracing, and the cluster approach. About 700 participants from 60 countries around the world joined in the webinar. Once again there was a wide-ranging Q&A where Professor OSHITANI emphasized the importance of early detection and early response for proper contact tracing in resource-limited settings.

The JICA COVID-19 Webinar Series continues throughout the year with a wide range of topics. The webinar recordings will be soon available on the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute website.