

A MEMOIR OF A JAPANESE DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER

IN SREBRENICA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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**A memoir of
a Japanese development practitioner**

in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Foreword

This book, “A memoir of a Japanese development practitioner in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina,” aims to synthesize practical knowledge of what really works for development projects within the challenging, post-conflict environment, by sharing the real experiences of a Japanese development practitioner who worked in Bosnia and Herzegovina for eight years.

The cruelty of the Bosnian conflict at the beginning of the 1990s is often characterized by the term “ethnic cleansing.” When the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) initiated project formulation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004, it was still too early to publicly talk about ethnic reconciliation in the country, especially in the city of Srebrenica where the massacre of thousands of Muslims had happened during the conflict. Hoping to make some contribution to, if not peacebuilding, then at least to rural development by restoring agriculture, JICA dispatched an expert, Mr. Yasumasa Oizumi, to Srebrenica in the summer of 2005. Together with a number of Japanese experts who joined him later, Mr. Oizumi promoted reconciliation between Serb and Bosniak (Muslim) residents by letting them work together to revitalize agriculture. To achieve this, he employed a unique approach - he entrusted the agricultural revitalization activities to NGOs founded by local residents. He also got the Srebrenica city government involved in these activities. The activities started in Skelani—one of the 19 local communities in the city of Srebrenica—and gradually expanded to the other communities. By 2013, the activities were spread throughout all 19 local communities of the city.

There was no ready-made solution or “blueprint” that would lead to the success of this project - it was indeed “a long voyage of discovery.”* As the project proceeded, Mr. Oizumi faced unexpected troubles, learned a number of lessons and through trial and error, co-created solutions with local residents. He took a step-by-step, iterative, and adaptive approach to manage the complexity of local contexts.

In recent years, international development scholars have increasingly recommended an adaptive approach to development projects in complex en-

* Hirschman, A. O. (1967) *Development Projects Observed*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. p. 35.

vironments, and it is important to learn from academia. Nevertheless, we also think that learning from real cases is practical and often more helpful. Experienced practitioners implicitly know that a blueprint approach never works for complex, evolving situations. Making their tacit knowledge explicit is challenging but worth it. This book shares the real experiences of a Japanese development practitioner and describes how Mr. Oizumi “muddled through” ethnic reconciliation in the most challenging context. The book is full of tacit knowledge acquired from his long experience in the development field. I am confident that readers of this book will enjoy it as a non-fiction story and find it useful as a textbook for development cooperation in conflict-affected areas.

Izumi Ohno
Director
Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute



Six Yugoslav republics and two autonomous provinces between 1945 and 1991
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslav_Wars



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina



Source: The authors

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Introduction

In July 2005, upon my return from the Agricultural Cooperatives project in the province of Benguet, the Philippines, a briefing session was held at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Immediately after the meeting, I was informed that my next assignment would be a project in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia). It was the first time I had ever heard of Srebrenica. I had not known that it was a state that came into being after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992. Looking at a map, I saw that it was a state located on the Balkan Peninsula. When I realized that its capital was Sarajevo, I remembered that Sarajevo had hosted the winter Olympic Games and wondered why a state that had hosted the Olympics needed any assistance? I searched for information about the country, but I found that there was really very little information, including its agriculture. This eastern European country was an unknown land to me because until then, I had mainly participated in agricultural and rural development projects in developing countries in Asia. Having worked with Asian communities, I wondered if I would be able to assist Europeans in a country near Austria and Italy. At the end of August, feeling a complicated mix of unease about the things I would be handling for the first time, such as peacebuilding, ethnic reconciliation, and rehabilitation after conflict, and simple joy at the prospect of working in Europe, I set out on a two-week survey trip to Bosnia.

Srebrenica, where I would work as a development practitioner, was ruled by the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries. It was the place where more than 8,000 Bosniaks (Muslims), descendants of Southern Slavs who had converted to Islam, were massacred in July 1995 by Serbs (Southern Slavs) mainly living in Republika Srpska¹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. It was not until I reached the city of Srebrenica that I knew that it was a place where such a tragedy had occurred.

In 1995, as a part of an agricultural promotion and improvement project, I had conducted vegetable and pineapple cultivation tests, and ran an agricultural product extension using the spaces in the palm fields in the Gampaha District of Sri Lanka. Since the 1960s, Sri Lanka had also experienced repeated conflicts between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In 1995, bombings and violent conflict occurred in many parts of the country, in-

¹ One of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina

cluding explosions at a national bank and oil stockpiling tanks. Whilst working in the country, I paid close attention to security and carried a heavy radio set with me. At the time, Japanese newspapers that arrived a week out of date were the only source of international news I had. So, I did not know anything about the conflict on the Balkan Peninsula. After working in Sri Lanka, I undertook a project for the improvement of the chemical monitoring system in the Philippines in 1996, a project for the improvement of an agricultural extension system in Indonesia in 1998, and a project for the development of agricultural cooperatives in the Philippines starting in 2001. All these projects focused on technical cooperation aimed at agricultural and rural development. The year 2005, when I was assigned to work on the Srebrenica project, marked a decade after the massacre.

In August 2005, I travelled to this unknown country for two weeks to get a sense of the local atmosphere rather than to conduct a survey. In those days, the road conditions around Srebrenica were so bad that I could not commute to Srebrenica from large cities, such as Tuzla. So, I had to live with the inconvenience of lodging on the second floor of a private house. In summer, Srebrenica was a place abundantly blessed with nature covered by the deep green of beech forests. This nature had no association whatsoever with the image of a massacre.

Our assistance project, which started in March 2006, was a long-term program that lasted for eight years until November 2013. Its results were larger than I had expected, and I believe that the project taught me many lessons. In this book, not only will I explain the JICA projects conducted over



Yasumasa Oizumi

the eight years in detail, I will also express my views on events in the local community that I experienced by settling in a small town named Skelani in Srebrenica for eight years. I will describe the lives of the local people and their ways of thinking, and our support for ethnic reconciliation and rehabilitation following the conflict.

I (Yasumasa Oizumi) was permanently stationed in Srebrenica to implement our assistance project from the winter of 2006 to September 2011; I then switched to the role of a shuttle-type expert. Maki Yamagishi was permanently stationed to work on the project from September 2011 until 2013 when the project ended.

Chapter 1: Assisting Two Ethnicities Equally

No hope for the future without trust among neighbors

One of the families we assisted included a young man who lost his father and brother in the massacre of 1995. This young man had had to run through the beech forest for 25 days to escape the massacre. He lived with his mother, a wife, and two small children, and he was at a loss as to what to do to get his old life back. At that time, he depended on immediate living commodities provided by donors. Private houses in Srebrenica had been reduced to a heap of rubble, and the fields and meadows, abandoned for ten years after the conflict, had turned into shrubbery. The most tragic scenes could be seen in an ordinary Balkan farming village where Bosniaks and Serbs coexisted. Affected by the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, the village was not only attacked by ethnicities from other regions but was also turned into a society in which neighbors were forced to kill each other. In July 1995, more than 8,000 Bosniaks were massacred and both Bosniaks and Serbs were forbidden from entering this area until 2000. Once allowed to return, the two ethnicities, who had experienced such a tragedy, came back to their villages and picked up their old lives. In Srebrenica in 2005, when JICA started assistance with the aim of affecting ethnic reconciliation and rehabilitation from conflict, their problem was not only a lack of funds but also that the two ethnicities had no idea how to get their lives back to where they were before; they needed to overcome mutual hatred, distrust, and sorrow with no hope. We worked on providing assistance in a situation where one wrong action could re-trigger a severe conflict.

The assistance we aimed to provide

Around 2005, donor assistance amounted to the supply of food and goods necessary for immediate livelihood. There was still little rehabilitation assistance for the foundations that would contribute to the future of the local people. In my view, the biggest factor for those people lacking energy to restart their lives was that they were so concerned and insecure about their future; they felt hopeless with devastated fields and meadows just in front of them. A one-year delay in assistance meant a one-year delay in

stabilizing living conditions and relieving the people of their anxiety. We began our assistance work with the aim of rehabilitating the agricultural and livestock industries essential to the people's economic self-reliance as soon as possible. Our work would include planting fruit seedlings in the fields, removing bushes from the meadows, plowing the fields and sowing grass seeds, restarting beekeeping by building new wooden beehives, and producing new vegetables. Three years later, the distrust between the two ethnicities gradually abated as a result of these activities. We subsequently opened a livestock market that required both ethnicities to participate. We supported the rehabilitation of drinking water and irrigation systems in the village and ultimately led to the setting up of a kindergarden to which families could entrust their beloved children without fear.

“We can live on this land again”

Our assistance work in Srebrenica was initially scheduled to last for two years starting from March 2006. However, it was extended twice and turned out to be an eight-year project lasting until November 2013. The project was evaluated for the following two features: The first was that the more than ten businesses that had been started amid the devastation caused by war led to benefits for the local people. The second was that the two ethnicities began to communicate through project activities, which contributed to reconciliation among the ethnicities. The mayor of Srebrenica said, “JICA showed the people in Srebrenica the path to life.” The chairman of the city council commented, “JICA changed people's mindsets.” These are valuable results. Yet what I think was truly wonderful was the fact that an old woman in the mountains said to me, “You made it possible for our children and grandchildren [to] live in this land again. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.” In the sections below, I will explain what JICA did to have earned such praise.

Why did atrocious killings occur?

“The natural environment (climate, rainfall, topography, and soil) of this area is very suitable for agriculture except in the wintertime. The combination of livestock-raising and farming is the base of the industry here.” I wrote these comments at the top of the summary of my preliminary survey report. I also wrote, “I cannot understand why atrocious killings and

a massacre on the largest scale occurred in an area dotted with villages, amidst beech forests blessed with moderate rainfall in a mild climate.” It was a while after I began to live in Skelani on the Drina River, that my question was partly answered. I began to understand how the massacre came about by delving into the history of the conflict, learning how people in Srebrenica think and about the troubles among them, and coming into contact with the behavior and words of refugees who temporarily returned to their homes in Srebrenica from many parts of Europe.

International public opinion is not always right

During the survey, rather than conducting fact-finding surveys or exchanging opinions with city government, local NGOs, and international organizations, I instead traveled to local communities as much as possible and focused on communicating with local people. In the city center of Srebrenica, I saw Serb homes as well as Bosniak homes and fields lying in ruins. Probably because much of the attention was placed on the massacre of July 1995, international organizations and world opinions portrayed the Bosniak people as the victims and the Serb people as the perpetrators in the conflict. Therefore, much of the assistance was given to the Bosniaks, and less was given to the Serbs. However, in Skelani, the second largest town in Srebrenica, which was inhabited by many Serbs, a cenotaph for the war victims stands by the Serb Orthodox Church. In this cenotaph, it is noted that about 320 people were killed in five of the local communities or *Mjesna Zajednica* (MZ²) that we first assisted. According to the inscription, many lost their lives in 1993.



A memorial cenotaph for Serb victims in Skelani

² *Mjesna Zajednica* (MZ) means “local community” in local language in Bosnia.

I came to think that assistance that only targeted the Bosniak people, in line with international public opinion, would never lead to ethnic reconciliation and would result in a further widening and deepening of the rift between the two ethnicities. In the mountainous area of Srebrenica, the two ethnicities were intermingled. Before the breakup of Yugoslavia, the two ethnicities had lived peacefully and invited each other to cooperate in farm work and religious rituals. However, the breakup of Yugoslavia had triggered an awareness of ethnic differences, which had been locked deep in their hearts. Through my communication with both ethnicities, I realized that the local people understood that they could not leave the constant feud between neighboring households to their children and grandchildren in an ethnically intermingled society. I felt strongly that it was a problem that they could not do anything about.

Shortcut to take their lives back

Before the conflict, Srebrenica was an agricultural area that produced summer vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumbers, and fruits such as apples, plums, raspberries, and strawberries. I considered that the most important job was to restart these practices in order to rehabilitate the lives of the people. Moreover, there were many natural environments so suitable for agriculture anywhere else in the world. Although local people had evacuated to other areas for almost ten years, it was impossible that they had lost their agricultural knowledge and skills. Rather, I believed that the only thing left to local people were their agricultural skills, and I was convinced that restoring agricultural practices would be the quickest and only way to rehabilitate the area. The conventional JICA assistance method of a phased approach involving detailed surveys, design, testing, and trial cultivation, training, demonstration, and extension would take a minimum of two to three years before the target population received any assistance. Thinking that the local population would be unable to wait this long given the damage they had suffered during the conflict, we decided to provide direct support to people with the help of local NGOs. Our plan for assistance was to provide the minimum necessary materials and knowhow for local people to restart their agricultural practices. On the final day of our survey in August, we held a seminar to explain JICA's assistance policies to all of the NGOs in Srebrenica. We explained our survey results and gave a brief outline of the project, then asked the NGOs to submit a proposal on how best to provide support to the local population.

We invited twelve NGOs to join the seminar, but only six of the NGOs with registered addresses in Skelani attended. This was probably because Skelani was still an inaccessible area to Bosniak people, so NGOs of Bosniak origin in Srebrenica were hesitant about approaching our office in Skelani. By the same token, NGOs in Skelani participated in projects only around Skelani and shied away from participating in projects around the city center of Srebrenica. However, around 2010, JICA began to extend its assistance to the entire area of Srebrenica and to interact with NGOs based in the city center of Srebrenica.

Around November the same year, proposals drafted by NGOs were submitted to me in Japan through the local consultants. All of these were requests for huge amounts of materials, such as farming equipment, processing equipment, greenhouses, and chicks. More specifically, the NGOs proposed spending: 115,000 euros on food processing plants; 70,000 euros to buy 107 fattened cattle; 100,000 euros on chicken farming and turkey breeding; 60,000 euros on assorted feed; 10,000 euros on raspberry (strawberry) irrigation; 20,000 euros for the joint use of farming equipment; 30,000 euros on vegetable production in greenhouses; and 30,000 euros on herb production and processing.

These requests seemed quite natural considering the local population had been receiving expensive donations such as residences, four-wheel drive tractors, and cultivators. All of those were given to individuals for free. At the seminar in August 2005, we explained that the principle behind JICA's assistance is to extract the most effort out of local people and provide only the minimum support for things that the local population could not handle themselves. We also explained that JICA intended to help local people directly through group activities in a way that would contribute to the development of the communities. Still, the NGOs failed to understand our principle. Based on the lists of unrealistic requests, I started to concretize viable projects in December of the same year.

Potential criticism of providing equal assistance to both ethnicities

We started our project by targeting five local communities (MZs), around Skelani from a total nineteen MZs in Srebrenica. These five MZs included Skelani, Kostolomci, Crvica, Krnjici, and Toplica (hereinafter referred to

as the 5 MZs) with a total of 2,030 families. After the conflict, the number of families in the 5 MZs had recovered gradually, from 401 in 2004 to 798 in 2010. No official survey of the number of families by ethnicity had been conducted. As we could not provide assistance without knowing the real numbers, we carried out an independent survey in the 5 MZs. In 2005, we found that there were 132 Bosniak families and 269 Serb families. Clearly, there were many Serb families in the 5 MZs, and Bosniak families accounted for just 33%.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the only international donor that had an office in Srebrenica at that time. They had an office in the attic of the city government building. Other donors were based in Sarajevo and provided assistance through local NGOs based in Srebrenica. I suppose this was because the area was unsafe, and basic living conditions were lacking in Srebrenica. Having lived in developing countries for many years, I felt comfortable living in a somewhat collapsed private house as electricity and running water were available.

It was in response to a request from the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina that JICA targeted the 5 MZs in the Skelani area. When JICA began its assistance, many donors had already provided assistance to MZs in the suburbs of the city of Srebrenica, where there were many Bosniak residents. In contrast, the 5 MZs around Skelani existed in an assistance vacuum. The reason for this was that Serbs accounted for 66% of the population in these areas.

Initially, I suspected that JICA was left holding the leftovers from other donors as it started assistance programs later than other donors due to its prioritizing of safety and security. Yet, this time it was certain that JICA beginning its assistance from the Skelani area was a factor in its success.

In those days, assistance was given across almost all of Bosnia. However, the symbolic place of the conflict was Srebrenica, not Sarajevo or Mostar. The massacre of more than 8,000 Bosniaks was known all over the world. If we delivered results in Srebrenica, we would, of course, attract much attention. One of my goals was not to let other donors defeat me. I did not think of cooperating with them at all. Provision of assistance was a competition with other donors, not a friendship club. Because JICA projects were carried out with Japanese taxpayer money, I took it for granted that Japan would also gain something in return. The return for our assis-

tance was not appreciation for the mere sake of formality, but a genuinely wholehearted appreciation from the beneficiaries of our assistance. An example of such appreciation is shown in the words of the old woman I mentioned earlier. To get these words from all of the residents of Srebrenica was one of the goals of our projects.

If we had had included the area around the city center of Srebrenica in the assistance target, we would have given assistance only to the Bosniak people. Just because the majority of the population around Skelani were Serbs and not Bosniaks, we were able to come up with the idea of equal assistance to both ethnicities. I also thought that any assistance that was biased towards either of the two ethnicities would run counter to ethnic reconciliation. I was concerned that we would be criticized if we paraded a slogan of equal assistance in Srebrenica, where assistance to the Bosniak people alone was taken for granted. But we were firmly set in our idea that we would not provide assistance when we knew it would not lead to ethnic reconciliation, even if we were criticized for this stance. I made up my mind that if we were criticized, I would simply return to Japan. With this in mind, I began to draw up detailed plans for projects with NGOs in Skelani.

In January 2006, we notified all NGOs that if they treated beneficiaries unequally, we would not cooperate with them. As a result, we hoped the number of beneficiaries would be the same for both ethnicities, as far as this was possible. After this declaration, we were never criticized for our equal assistance by local people or the government, and both realized that JICA was fair. Around 2010, when JICA's project produced tangible results and JICA's assistance became widely known, other donors also started giving aid to both ethnicities. Towards the end of our project, a Serb citizen said to me, "You said that you would provide equal assistance to both ethnicities. I didn't believe you. But you really did give help to both sides."

Unsolicited assistance

During the conflict, both ethnicities lost their houses. The meadows were reduced to wastelands. People lost some of their family members. The conflict did not begin in Srebrenica but was a product of a fire spread from other regions. Unequal assistance, where one ethnicity enjoys a lot of

assistance while the other receives nothing, made it impossible for people to reconcile with their neighbors. When I conveyed this point to local people who received assistance, they said: "We have never asked for assistance. Donors and NGOs provided one-sided assistance." I thought that although donors and city government were skeptical about giving unbalanced assistance, they were so concerned that an expression of their skepticism could retrigger the conflict. They simply could not say anything. The local people thought highly of us for providing them with assistance to rehabilitate their livelihoods, but I believed that local people were the most grateful to us for our equal assistance.

Local people in Srebrenica received much assistance from private and religious groups as well as from donors. At the time, there were people who came all the way from across Europe to villages in the mountains of Srebrenica during the summer vacation, loading trucks with everything from used furniture to spoons. I was impressed by their hard work because it was not something that could be done easily. Many of the goods were essential for local people who had lost everything, and this sometimes turned out to be of greater use than the donor assistance. When I asked a villager, who was given those items, if there was anything that he had bought himself, he answered, "Nothing."

Chapter 2: Srebrenica Just the Way It Was

The city of Srebrenica lay in ruins

The Municipal hall of Srebrenica was located in the city center of Srebrenica. The word Srebrenica means “silver mine.” People had mined silver, gold, and zinc from the era of the Roman Empire in the 300s A.D. until 1992. When I visited the city center for the first time, the old wounds of relentless ethnic conflict were still visible everywhere.

In Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an old high-rise apartment that was built during the era of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia stood on both sides of the main boulevard, which was referred to as “sniper alley.” The building was covered with so many bullet holes that it resembled a beehive. Yet aside from those bullet holes and a collapsed city library, everything gave me the impression of a peaceful and quiet city; the local people appeared to lead normal lives.

If you head northeast on national highways M18 and M19 from Sarajevo for about three hours and then head southeast on R454 from Hrnici, in approximately 40 minutes you will arrive at Bratunac. The cityscape along the roads was free from bullet holes and was surrounded by peaceful beech forests, farmland, and pastures. The town of Bratunac was a stronghold on the Serb side during the conflict, and many Serbs still lived in this area. If you drive 5 minutes south of this town, you will cross a stream. This stream was the boundary over which Bosniaks and Serbs



The cityscape of the city center of Srebrenica in August 2005



A supermarket in 2012, with city government in the back of the picture

confronted each other. If you continue driving, a minute later you will pass a commemorative cemetery in Potocari where approximately 8,000 massacred Bosniaks were buried, and an old battery factory where Bosniak residents were segregated in July 1995. If you pass by the hospital, where many local people died, a post office, and a gas station, you will reach the small city center of Srebrenica located between the mountains.

Skelani, where our project office was set up, was a small town on the Drina River, about 40 kilometers further west from the city center of Srebrenica. When the project started, only 20 kilometers of the road leading from the city center of Srebrenica was paved and the rest of the road to Skelani was an unpaved forest path. In 2007, the road was finally paved as both ethnicities had eagerly dreamed of.

Around 2006, Srebrenica was in a condition that could be described as nothing but ruins. Only a few houses had begun to be repaired, and there was a line of collapsed houses along the streets. When I drove on the streets at night, ruins stood out in the light of 4 or 5 naked electric bulbs, which was really frightening and terrible.

By 2013, there were no longer collapsed houses, and a supermarket had been opened. Local people of both ethnicities gathered at coffee shops enjoying *Rakia*, a Balkan fruit brandy, until late at night. In spring 2012, when flowerpots full of begonia and gerbera used for decorating the windows were sold, I felt a real sense of the city's rehabilitation. I thought that if people had the emotional stability to enjoy arranging flowers in the windows like a scene from a European street corner in summer, it showed that they had both mentally and physically begun to return to normal life after the conflict.

People's feelings destroyed by donors

After the massacre, local people were prevented from returning to the area until 2000. The time when we visited the area was five years after people had returned. At this stage, I saw the ruins of private houses that had been reduced to a heap of bricks and stones. Even in such a situation, local people sheltered themselves using plastic sheets provided by donors, they baked bread with donated flour, and they grew vegetables in the backyard.

The reality was that those people lived waiting for donors to visit their village and to provide living commodities and farming equipment and materials. When NGO staff and donors called on local residents from time to time, they were told stories about what the local people had experienced during the conflict. Donors listened to them with keen interest and explored the specifics of assistance. When we visited them, people in neighboring areas also gathered and expected us to give them something. After they learned that they would not receive any goods from us, they were disappointed and returned to their plastic tents. Of course, you cannot blame them. Even if they tried to make do by themselves, they had no funds, tools, or materials to repair their houses. Nevertheless, reconstruction work on Bosniak houses had gradually begun thanks to assistance from donors. Trouble arose over how assistance was distributed among people of the same ethnicity as well as between the different ethnicities. Some families received housing, while others were living under the plastic films. Rehabilitation gaps could be observed even among those of the same ethnicity. I still remember that a local resident said, "In this area, houses and meadows were destroyed during the conflict, and families were killed. After the conflict, people's feelings were destroyed by donors from other countries because they divided us with a rehabilitation gap."

From spring to fall, local people waited for assistance whilst living in Srebrenica; they then returned to refugee camps or evacuation sites in Sarajevo and Tuzla in November. Most of them were old married couples. In contrast, many young families had gotten jobs at their evacuation sites, which made it difficult for them to return home.



An abandoned post office in Kragljivoda, at the pass from the city center of Srebrenica to Skelani. This was the place where the two ethnicities confronted each other during the conflict



Old married couples in the village of Pribidoli, August 2005

The village of Pribidoli in Toplica MZ, where 30 families had lived before the conflict, saw the return of eight old married couples in August 2005. In the spring of 2006, we started to provide the community with assistance for strawberry cultivation and beekeeping, and we supplied them with fruit saplings. Although we were concerned about whether the return of local people would proceed smoothly, by September the following year, the number of returned families had increased to ten.

Something that deserves special mention here is the fact that many young families were starting to return to the area, and three second and third graders had begun to attend the elementary school in Toplica MZ at the beginning of the new term. The children walked along a two-kilometer forest path and then three kilometers more to the city center of Srebrenica. When I drove past them at around 8:00 in the morning, they stopped my car by waving their small hands. Sometimes I gave them a ride to school.

All of these things formed the scenery of the Bosniak people. In the meantime, many Serbs had been evacuated to Bajina Bašta, the Serbian area on the other side of Skelani, and now lived in apartment buildings and private houses. They travelled from Serbia to a mountain in Bosnia to do farm work every day. Probably knowing that they could not expect assistance, they repaired their houses gradually by themselves, plowed their small fields, and cultivated vegetables.

In her 2003 book, *War Hospital*, Sheri Fink³ describes the story of how the city of Srebrenica became an evacuation site for Bosniak residents and how the city fell to the Serb military. Fink focuses in particular, on the activities of doctors in a hospital in Srebrenica. The book includes a detailed record of gun fighting and looting in the villages of the region.

When I visited the villages that appeared in the book, I felt a more intense and real sense of the tragic events that had occurred in this region during the conflict. I slowly began to understand the gloomy expressions of the two ethnicities and how tough it is to live in a society when you are cautiously trying to avoid each other. I compared the people of Srebrenica, living with the fear and misery of ethnic issues, with the people living in poverty in a remote part of the Nepalese mountains, where substantial

³ Fink, S.L. (2000) *War hospital: a true story of surgery and survival*. New York: Public Affairs.

meals were not available every day and people could not go to hospital to have treatment. I contemplated which of them was more miserable - I am yet to come to a conclusion. I felt the grave significance and responsibility of the work in Srebrenica, and I wondered if I could do it. On the other hand, it was also true that I suddenly felt highly motivated and enthusiastic, thinking that this could be the culmination of my 30-year career in development cooperation.

The town of Skelani, the city of Bajina Bašta, and the Drina River

Skelani and Bajina Bašta were towns located on both banks on the Drina River - the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia. Bajina Bašta was a mid-size commercial town in Serbia with many hotels, shops, and markets, and a population of about 15,000 in 2011. This town was about a four-hour bus ride from the capital, Belgrade. There was an old railroad bridge connecting the two towns. During the years when Yugoslavia existed, Skelani was just a village behind the suburbs of Bajina Bašta, it had since become a small town inhabited by 100 families.

The town of Skelani was the second largest town in the region of Srebrenica. In fact, there were no other communities that could be described as towns. Around 2006, Skelani had an Orthodox church, mosques, a city government branch office, an elementary school (with around ten teachers and about 100 students), a police station (ten police officers), a post office, a telephone office, a power station, a coffee shop and two grocery stores. Excluding the police officers, only three town officials worked in



The town of Skelani with Bajina Bašta in the background

Skelani. In 2010, optical fiber cables were laid.

Until 1992, there were no borders between the two countries, and Skelani's farm products could be sold in Bajina Bašta. Once the borders went up, people were banned from freely passing through to sell their farm products. At the beginning of our engagement in the area, we bought apple and plum seedlings from Serbia to distribute to local people in Bosnia. However, because those items had to pass through customs in Zvornik, about 100 kilometers downstream from Skelani, they did not arrive until three days after they had been shipped.

The Drina River is fed from the Dinaric Alps in Montenegro. With a total length of 346 kilometers, the river runs along the border between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The river passes Visegrad, which is well-known for the novel *The Bridge Over The Drina* by Ivo Andric. It then flows through a deep valley on the border with Serbia, runs through the town of Skelani past the valley, empties into the Sava River, and then flows into the Danube. Currently, the river is tamed by the Bajina Bašta dam, which generates power upstream from Skelani. The river was once used for trade, and it is conceivable that Skelani also functioned as a wharf. In the garden of an old building that we used for our project office until 2008, the remains of a place of worship from the period of the Roman Empire were unearthed.



With local people in front of an office building on the verge of collapse



The Drina River

Life in a local residence in Skelani

On the edge of the Skelani community, 200 meters west of the Drina River, lived a family consisting of a 65 year-old grandmother, her 45 year-old son-in-law (an elementary school teacher), her daughter, who was aged around 40, two boys aged 15 and 12, a dairy cow, a pig, and 20 chickens. This family lived in a two-storied house on grazing land of about 20 acres with two livestock sheds. I rented the entire second floor of this house for exclusive use at a cost of roughly 350 euros per month.

It was in the dead of winter in December that I began to live there. The room had double windows, and I used a wood-burning stove in the living room and kitchen that could double as a large fireplace and a portable cooking stove for heating. The bedroom, the bathroom, and the lavatory were equipped with central heating by way of heat insulation pipes running from the wood-burning stove. It was comfortable in the evening, but it was cold in the morning when it was unheated. Nonetheless, I found this lifestyle with a fireplace comfortable, and I enjoyed boiling beef stew and kidney bean broth on Sundays.

Possibly because the house stood in close proximity to the Drina River, the temperature was only ten degrees below zero in January, the coldest of all the months. In contrast, many people lived in the mountains at approximately 800 meters above sea level, where more than a meter of snow did not melt until March, and the temperature was 20 degrees below zero in the early hours of the morning. During the winter months, people put livestock in their houses, and local residents made cheese and butter from milk and chatted with their neighbors. Families usually slept in the evening gathering around a wood-burning stove. In spring (March), wild yellow primroses and purple crocuses began to blossom gregariously in places with plenty of sunshine. Farmers scattered compost that accumulated in the cattle barns onto the fields where snow remained. The contrast between white snow and black compost was beautiful in the morning sunlight.

Full-scale farm work began in April, when farmers began to sow the seeds of feed corn, wheat, and barley for bread. They began to trim raspberry branches and cultivate vegetable seedlings, such as tomato, eggplant, and paprika. Sheep also grazed outside in the daytime, and people shored the sheep. In winter, people spun wool and knitted stockings and sweaters.

This is what grandmothers did for work in winter. In May, the temperature rose sharply. The mountains were covered with fresh green beech leaves, and apple and plum trees were in full bloom; this reminded me of scenes of the Japanese cherry blossoms at the height of their bloom. In July, the temperature rose to around 35 degrees, although probably because it was dry, it did not feel muggy. From June to July, however, chilly rainy days, like those during the rainy season in Japan, lasted for about a week at a time. In July, families worked on harvesting raspberries from the early hours of the morning, and beekeepers harvested the honey made from the nectar honeybees collected from false acacias as they came into full bloom. Summer work, such as making grass, chopping firewood, and making preserved foods from paprika and tomatoes, provided sustenance for over the winter period. Most homes used firewood for cooking and heating all year-round. This firewood was prepared by cutting beech trees in the mountains, though people had to gain permission to cut trees from the forestry office. An expensive mushroom called porcini, often used for Italian cooking, could be gathered in large amounts from July to September. While local people picked the mushrooms, they were careful to avoid land mines. After two hours of picking, they collected a large supermarket bag of mushrooms. They sliced the mushrooms, dried them, and sold them to dealers. This was a precious cash income. I also went to the beech forest to pick mushrooms with the grandmother who owned the house in that I lived. When she told me "This is a land mine," I had difficulty walking freely and tried hard to follow her footsteps. Children picked wild roadside raspberries and received pocket money from the drivers of cars that passed by. It was only from around 2010 that such peaceful scenery could be seen.

The leaves of beech trees began to fall around November. People harvested corn and wheat in the fields and finished all their outdoor farm work before the winter. In November, after raising pigs for a year, each family killed any pigs weighing more than 100 kilograms. As the pigs devoured corn, they would hit them over the head with a big hammer, knocking them unconscious, and drawing blood quickly. Around this time of year, I heard pigs scream from a distance in the early hours of the morning. Serb people cut the pigs into huge chunks, began a barbecue party just beside the pigs' heads, and hung around drinking Rakia. People made smoked meat, bacon, and salami. Each family had a smokehouse at home and had made bacon within a week. On the day when I heard the landlord's pig scream, I went out early in the morning and came back home late in the

evening. When I returned, I found barbecue food on the table. The truth was that I had gone out because I did not want to eat it.

A spirit-consoling service day

Every year on July 11, a spirit-consoling service is held at the collective cemetery for the victims of the Srebrenica massacre. The collected remains were submitted for DNA analysis. If they were identified, they were returned to their bereaved family and buried in the collective cemetery on the same day.

In 2009, the memorial service was held on a rainy 12-degree day. About 200 remains were buried that year and 600 remains had been buried the previous year. As the years passed, the number of burials decreased. In the same year, a new monument was erected with an inscription recording the official number of massacred people as 8,372. The phrase “This number may increase in the years ahead” was also inscribed on the monument.

The service is covered by television reporters from many countries every year. In one interview, a Bosniak resident said he did not want to breathe the same air as Serbs. The reporter gave out false information that the two ethnicities still did not enjoy drinking coffee together in Srebrenica. He reported that the two ethnicities lived with mutual hatred and that “reconciliation among ethnicities had yet to materialize.” I argued with the reporter about this but he refused to listen to me.



A spirit-consoling service in 2009

A Bosniak citizen who had returned to Srebrenica said he did not like July 11: "Hoping that both ethnicities will be able to resettle peacefully, we work hard to coexist together. Those who returned temporarily to Srebrenica criticize our efforts. They came back with luxury vehicles. How can refugees drive such luxury vehicles?"

I do not know whether those who settled in evacuation sites are happy or not. Economically speaking, they are a little better off than they would be if they were working in Bosnia. They are happier just because they can get jobs. When they return to their homes, many of them come back triumphantly in a luxury vehicle, most likely out of vanity. Yet they must have difficulty living in evacuation sites. The same year, I travelled outside of Bosnia with my daughter during the New Year holidays. At a gas station in Innsbruck, Austria, we met a young man who saw the number plate of our rental car and expressed his nostalgia: "Oh, this is a Bosnian plate number." He explained that he had been evacuated to Austria in 1992 and was now settled there and working as a gas station attendant. Imagining how difficult it must have been for him to get this job at a gas station, I could understand why coming back home was not an option for him. Yet, I speculated that deep down he wanted to return.

Men aged over 15 were killed

In 2005, I visited a young 32-year old Bosniak man in Skelani. He had returned to the area and was living with his mother, a wife, and two children. His father and brother had been killed in the massacre. Even then, ten years after the massacre, there was no information about the remains of his dead family members. Every year, his mother felt insecure when July 11 drew near. He was one of the few survivors among those who had been evacuated to Tuzla. I often called at his home overlooking the Drina River, and he talked a lot over Turkish coffee.

The village where the young man had lived at the time of conflict was situated in a remote corner of Skelani MZ near the dam. The skirmish between the two ethnicities began in many parts of the area around 1992. Although he was approximately 17 years old at that time, he participated in fighting in the mountains. Around May 1993, the situation became unfavorable for the Bosniaks. The young boy evacuated to Srebrenica with his parents and brother; this defined the start of their life as evacuees,

which would last until 1995. He survived his evacuation years thanks to assistance materials and bartering. He learned English through radio news and conversations with United Nations forces on the ground. In July 1995, immediately before the fall of Srebrenica, the rumor began to circulate that male adults aged 15 years and older would be massacred. He escaped to Tuzla, about 80 kilometers away, with his brother. At the time, Tuzla was a safe zone for the Bosniak people. It is said that 6,000 to 10,000 people joined this escape, but many were spotted by Serb soldiers and were made to return to Srebrenica; most were later shot to death in the mountains. Because the boy's father was ill, he could not escape and was forced to remain in Srebrenica. The boy also lost sight of his brother in the midst of his escape. The brother was caught by Serb soldiers and brought back to Srebrenica. Subsequently, both his brother and his father were killed on the mountain. His mother was transferred to Tuzla by bus together with other women and children. During the escape, the boy travelled two to three kilometers at night and hid during the day. It took him 25 days to reach his destination. To his regret, the remains of his father and brother have yet to be discovered and so he cannot bury them. He once said to me that although he would never forget the past, there was no use looking back. The future of his two children was everything to him. Even if the United Nations and the Serbs had said that they would guarantee their safety, those men could not have trusted them. They knew the massacre would occur.

Another young man, who was 14 years old in 1995, also told me his story. Fourteen years old was an age that would allow him to escape the massacre. But he was so well-built that he suspected he would be mistaken for someone older than his age and would be killed. He jumped from the window of a second-floor room where a group of men aged 14 and younger were being detained and joined the escape to Tuzla. Back in 1993, his father had crossed the Drina River and tried to reach the other side. He was shot dead and was immediately washed away by the river. Part of the remains of the father were identified in 2012 but he said that he could not bury the remains until all the body parts were found. During the conflict, the society was one in which if you did not kill, you would be killed. I guess that everyone was scared; we cannot imagine what it was like. I think everyone has their regrets. Those were probably the most agonizing memories of their lives.

Invisible victims

There were also many conflict victims who were not immediately recognizable as such. One example of this was a 22-year-old Serb woman in Skelani who we asked to undertake various project surveys. In 1992, she was five years old. She escaped from Sarajevo with her family, depended on relatives, and later reached Skelani. Looking at her, I realized that she was one of the true victims of war. Her parents' generation had joined in the bloodshed, but she was not to blame. If she had led a normal life, she could have celebrated the joys of youth in Sarajevo. Instead, she ran a small clothing store in Skelani. Since she could not raise funds for a computer system to enable her to collect value-added taxes, she closed the shop. She was the "Madonna" of Skelani youth. In 2018, she worked hard as an interpreter for an assistance group in Bratunac. Now she seems to be enjoying her life.

Chapter 3: Our Confidence-Building Started from Our Belief

Threatening letters

In the months between our August 2005 survey and the December 2005 survey, the Japanese Embassy and the JICA office in Sarajevo received what could only be described as threatening letters. The letters were sent by local people and politicians to our project site. They criticized that JICA project was problematic in terms of ethnic balance. The letter sent to the JICA office described the list of recipients of fattened cattle as biased and proposed a new recipient list naming about 50 people. It was quite natural that both the Embassy and JICA took a cautious attitude about the implementation of assistance projects. When I returned to Skelani, nobody said anything about the letters and seemed to be totally indifferent to them. Thinking it wise not to bring up the topic, I started making advance arrangements with NGOs, pretending to know nothing about the letters. After that, the letters stopped coming.

A year after the start of the project, local people came to praise us and said that JICA helped local residents to change their mindset. Local people continued to visit the project office in Skelani with requests. When they learned that they would not get the cultivators or cattle they wanted, they would seek to intimidate us by protesting at the Embassy. I did not mind at all, thinking them silly. The reason why I did not worry was that I was convinced that JICA had already been accepted by people in the area six months after the project had started.

Collaboration with city government

Many donors carried out projects mainly using NGOs in Srebrenica because city government had not yet properly recovered its function. The contact and consultations between city government and donors or NGOs was inadequate, and city government did not have a full grasp of the assistance programs. However, city government was forced to deal with trouble among local citizens, which was caused by the external assistance.

Although we also started our project through NGOs, we had close consultations with city government and the mayor understood our method of providing assistance to both ethnicities. Skelani and the city center of Srebrenica were 40 kilometers apart, which made it impossible for us to visit city government on a frequent basis. The manager of the branch office at Skelani was appointed by the mayor as JICA's partner. He was a good advisor to us throughout the project.

It was not until 2007, when the construction of an herb-processing plant was completed, that city government began to realize that JICA was different from other donors and changed its attitude. In 2011 the three city government officials were appointed as new JICA partners. The three officials were in charge of general affairs, agriculture, and livestock breeding. In addition, a group of officials called the "Unit" was formed, which led to the further strengthening of relationship between the Municipality of Srebrenica and JICA. The standard project implementation mechanism was finally set up in collaboration with city government. Project activities were primarily carried out by JICA and NGOs. City government officials gradually took up responsibilities in the implementation of the project. A sheep quality improvement project was implemented on the initiative of the officer in charge of livestock breeding. The officer in charge of general affairs dealt with trouble that arose among villagers about how to use cultivators. We also regularly reported the project progress to the mayor and exchanged opinions about the project.

Contribution of coordinators, an expert, and local staff

Two young Japanese project coordinators participated in the project. They both understood the aim of the project well and worked hard. It was the first time that the two coordinators had experienced farming, and upon seeing tomato seedlings, they wondered what they were. Despite this, the two built a greenhouse by themselves and learned to cultivate tomatoes and other vegetables according to instructions given to them by the grandfather of the home where they lived. When neighboring farmers harvested raspberries, the coordinators helped them pick from early in the morning. Such positive actions and curiosity are important. I was helped by good coordinators. The impact of a short-term expert who laid the foundations of a kindergarten in Srebrenica, is still strong. The interpreter, who also served as an assistant, and various drivers whom I worked with from the

start of our project, were of great service to me. I merely had to define the direction of the project to them and based on that, they did their jobs.

The interpreter had assisted me since the initial survey in 2005, made particularly great contributions to work in the area. The first time I visited Skelani, a local NGO had arranged for her to act as my interpreter. However, she was a woman of such a quiet nature that she did not actively work as an interpreter during the survey. Instead, another person did the interpreting work. I asked the original interpreter to keep a record of my conversations with local people. As she had still not submitted the record two days before I was about to leave Skelani, I wondered whether the work was too difficult for her. To my surprise, she delivered me five sheets of paper, every inch of which was covered with my conversations and little chats with local residents written in pencil. The record was accurate and concise. Her English writing was so easy to understand that I decided to recruit her as an interpreter. After the start of our project, she interpreted fluently and smoothly. The reason why she initially had difficulty interpreting when we met for the first time was that she could not understand my English due to my strong Japanese accent. Our project could not have succeeded without competent staff and I am really grateful for her services.

Working with hastily founded NGOs

Around 2005, there were six local NGOs in the Skelani area. Only one of them was entrusted by donors to undertake activities such as distributing food to people living in the mountains, holding cultural events, English conversation classes, and social dancing in the town of Skelani. Other NGOs were hastily founded after hearing that JICA's assistance would start, but they did not have any experience in project implementation.

NGOs there were not the organizations that were pursuing community service, as we had imagined, but were a group of people looking for business opportunities without having any funds or industry. In those days, NGOs were created by registering with city government and having NGO stamps made up; once this was confirmed, NGOs were able to receive business contracts from donors. JICA staff in the area were worried about whether we would be able to handle projects with inexperienced NGOs. Of course, we could not expect ideal project conditions right from the be-

ginning so close to the end of the conflict, and we had no other choice but to work in the given environment. Our jobs included fostering and nurturing NGOs.

One of the six NGOs that participated in our explanatory meeting, did not join our projects in the end. Arguably, the NGO had had money problems with other donors. The donors even brought their claims to court, but it was shameful that an assistance project resulted in a legal wrangle. Since the five NGOs did not have any experiences, they followed my instructions. When city government and local people recognized our project, the NGOs appeared to be proud of their work. During implementation of the projects, we always convened everyone to discuss issues and planning. These group discussions were not always straightforward. For example, in creating a common logo, the two ethnicities had fairly delicate discussions, and I was concerned that the negotiations might break down. I thought that it would be significant if they could have such discussions with the help of mediation from JICA. We worked with these five NGOs until 2013 together with another four NGOs that joined along the way. The eight years of our assistance were years of struggle and laughter with these NGOs.

Fostering NGOs

The annual activity budget for the local project was about 250,000 euros. Approximately 20% of the budget was allocated to management expenses, such as staff, office, car rental and fuel, and the rest was to be used for project activities. The proposals by the NGOs focused almost solely on increasing that sum of money. We strongly conveyed our aim of bringing out the maximum ability and efforts in local people and giving the minimum assistance. However, the NGOs totally forgot this. Our first job was to revise the proposals one by one and amend them into what we intended them to do. In December 2005, we had consultations, or more precisely negotiations, with NGOs in front of a wood-burning stove while boiling kidney beans and sausages, staple foods in the region. The negotiations were tough and lengthy.

Below I will introduce each of the nine NGOs.

(1) Family

The NGO Family was founded by five Bosniaks and five Serbs - drinking companions from Skelani who hastily founded an NGO after hearing of JICA's assistance in the area. Family was the only NGO that was made up of both ethnicities. The founders naively explained, "If donors learned that our NGO was founded by both ethnicities, they would be impressed, which would lead to greater chances for getting the project offers." We also expected that if we entrusted a project to this NGO, we would be acclaimed internationally. However, the founders did not understand the function of NGOs at all and founded Family simply to get cattle.

They proposed a project that would distribute 107 calves. They had drawn up a list of the beneficiaries of these calves, which included 6 Bosniak families, 11 Serb families, 8 returnee families, a mother-and-child family, and a family with a war-wounded person. The list shows that they had considered ways to impress donors. As we had no plans to donate expensive calves to the individuals, we thought up changes to their plan that would match our intentions. We understood that they needed the calves but as long as the grass fields that calves would feed from were covered with bracken, they could not ensure the calves would be fed. We therefore suggested providing support for the restoration of the grass on the fields and a grant for the farming equipment needed for producing grass. They accepted the proposal with unexpected flexibility.

(2) Orchid

There were two grocery stores in Skelani. The manager of one of those stores had founded the NGO Orchid, which was run by a Serb family.



Both ethnicities working on a plan

The NGO operations were handled by the manager's 25-year-old niece. Orchid proposed several ventures including a turkey breeding business, a mixed feed production business, opening of a livestock market, and receiving 10,000 hens to set up an egg production business. At that time, avian influenza raged around the world. Many wild birds had died of bird flu on the Rhine and Danube Rivers in Europe. In the summer of 2006, swans were found dead on the Drina River near the town of Bajina Bašta, and it was suspected that they had died of the flu. I explained to the NGO that it would be unsafe to undertake egg production and turkey breeding for some time and rejected their proposal. We decided to assist with their proposed feed production business. As we received many requests from villagers for assistance with strawberry and vegetable production, we entrusted this business to Orchid. Additionally, as city government had approached us to provide assistance for establishing a livestock market, I asked the NGO to investigate this possibility as well.

(3) Number 1

At the time, Number 1 was the only NGO that was contracted to undertake business with donors in Skelani. Its representative was an active and eloquent Serb woman. Her plans included communal use of farming equipment, chicken production, the transportation of milk in the region, greenhouse vegetable production, herb production and processing, and the production of dry prunes and Rakia. Her proposals seemed like a package-request for all the businesses she could come up with. Her written plan was two centimeters thick. The plan discouraged me from reading it and I wondered how to cut the costs to around 40,000 euros. Asked why she had drawn up a two centimeter-thick plan, she answered that she had taken a course on writing business requests held by a donor and that the instructor had advised her to draw a thick plan so the donor would be very happy.

Her explanations were concrete and persuasive, and she turned out to be a tough negotiator. Yet, I was hardhearted enough to reject chicken production due to the avian influenza. The communal use of farming equipment would be implemented by Family. The milk shipment business was rejected because there were only a few dairy cows and therefore it was unlikely to collect enough milk. The plan for greenhouse vegetable production was rejected because it could be combined with strawberry production by Orchid. As I proceeded to give her my explanations, I noticed that she was getting emotional, though I did not mind and continued. I then

incorporated herb production and processing, and dry prune production into the farm products-processing business. It also made heat-drying plants a joint business with the Japanese Embassy through our grassroots technical cooperation project. In addition, she suggested that the NGO secure, manage and operate a selling space for women in a public market in Bajina Bašta. Our argument-like negotiations continued for two days before we finally reached a settlement. Subsequently, my struggles with her lasted until the end of my assignment in Bosnia.

(4) River

The representative of the NGO River was a Serb man who had strong opinions about the last conflict. Together we spoke a lot about the future of Srebrenica, its problems, and the conflict. Once our discussions began, an hour often passed before we knew it. The NGO's plans included planting prune (plum) and apple seedlings, building raspberry irrigation systems, and producing Rakia. I found the idea of planting prune seedlings reasonable, but I wondered if JICA staff in the Tokyo office would understand the inclusion of brandy-making as part of the assistance items. In the end, we decided to provide assistance for the sale of Rakia as after all, the plan was to sell the brandy, not to enjoy drinking it. It often happened that local men who visited our office smelled of liquor. The amount of alcohol drunk in the town was large and so was the amount of alcohol sold. It was a precious source of cash income.

(5) Home

Home was founded by a male Bosniak farmer. The members of this NGO included Bosniak women who had lost their husbands. The village where the farmer lived was inhabited by only five families, all of which were headed by widows. There were two young men in the village, including



The members of NGO Home

him. The two men managed the fields and meadows owned by the five families. The farmer founded the NGO not because he wanted to undertake the work of an NGO but because he wanted to make sure that the five families in the village would get assistance. He proposed mushroom production using an old tunnel as the NGO's business.

In the winter of 2006, we selected businesses and gathered information with these five NGOs. We finished drawing up plans in February. When wild yellow primrose flowers began to blossom in March, we started full-scale project. Along the way, our project was joined by two NGOs engaged in the beekeeping business, an NGO planting meadows, and an NGO working in the kidney bean and blueberry industry. By the time our project ended in 2013, there were nine NGOs doing business with us.

In the section below, I will introduce the NGOs that joined midway through the project.

(6) Bees

Bees was an NGO represented by one of the first Bosniaks to return to Skelani after the conflict. He was also an activist who founded a beekeeping association, which had attracted about 200 members. When he returned from an evacuation site to his home in Skelani, a Serb was living in his home without his consent. The Serb had settled in the house amidst the confusion of the conflict. The Bosniak said to the Serb that he could stay until he decided where to go next and the Serb left two weeks later. There were many similar stories in Srebrenica, but there was no trouble among local people. Everyone patiently made concessions.

(7) Hometown

NGO Hometown was founded in the mountains of Osat MZ and was engaged in the beekeeping business. At the time, the NGO had been provided with woodworking equipment and materials by donors. Using these, they made wooden beehives that JICA would then provide to local people. They were keen on producing wooden beehives and selling honeybees.

(8) Garden

Garden was founded in Crvica MZ next to Skelani MZ. The NGO ran a raspberry planting business and the new kidney bean breed extension business. They also actively cooperated in other businesses.

(9) Aspiration

Aspiration was run by two Serb women who had an office on the second floor of the supermarket in the city center of Srebrenica. They started to participate in our project in 2010, through the meadow planting business. During the conflict, they had been evacuated from Sarajevo to Srebrenica.

For the eight years of the project, these NGOs were not discouraged by my severe demands and harsh criticism; in fact, they constantly complied with our requests. In conclusion, they were all good persons. I often wondered why such people began the war.

Living in Skelani

The reason why NGOs came to adopt our advice so flexibly was that I lived in Skelani with the local people and had discussions with them every day. That probably led them to think that JICA was serious about bringing about change. At the time, UNDP, with its office in the attic of city government, was the only donor that had a local office in Srebrenica. The local people had not expected a Japanese development organization to open an office and settle in Skelani. Back then, Srebrenica was still considered a dangerous place. JICA expressed concerns about the security situation, but I proved them wrong by living there. I lived in Skelani for eight years and never felt that the place was unsafe. Everyone was kind. When my car got stuck in the snow in the mountains, people came to rescue me. On other occasions, when I came back home, I found that someone had delivered one-kilogram of bacon and honey to my door; I never found out who had brought these gifts.

Column ① An athlete in Skelani who competed in an Olympic 800-meter race

When I was trudging along the banks of the Drina River in the early hours of the morning to reduce the fat around my waist due to metabolic syndrome, I spotted a young man running by like a streak of lightning. He was clearly not jogging for exercise. He was extraordinarily fast. Later on, he worked for the project as a driver. It was

then that I discovered he was an athlete who had competed in the 800-meter race at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004.

When I learned this fact, I was very surprised and happy. He had neither a coach of his own nor training equipment. He practiced alone and did not have a sponsor. He was not an athlete who enjoyed an injection of money from developed countries. He was aiming to participate in the Beijing Olympics while working as a driver. He had driven himself to the Athens Olympics in his father's old Volkswagen Golf. His best record was 1.47.80. The world record was 1.41.11 and the Japanese record was 1.46.18, which meant that although it was difficult for him to win a prize at the Olympics, he would still be a top-class athlete in Japan. In 2011, he married a woman who was an athlete herself. They subsequently had their first baby. I often wondered if it would be too early for him to participate in the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020.

This young man was the hero and role model of Srebrenica; he encouraged everyone. I found it very promising.

Chapter 4: Selection and Implementation of Businesses

1. Working with NGOs to support the resumption of agriculture

Our assistance started from an office in ruins

During the conflict, the building in which we rented the rooms for our office had been reduced to ruins. Prior to the conflict, it had been used as a bank. On April 10, 2006, we held a project kickoff ceremony in front of the office with the Minister for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Japanese Ambassador, the mayor, and people of both ethnicities all in attendance.

Selection of businesses

The people who worked at the project sites were called “experts.” These experts were understood to be technical specialists in fields such as rice farming, health, hygiene, and others. While dispatching experts to developing countries worked until 20 years ago, I believe that the technical specialists would not be able to handle current assistance projects. Nowadays, people can obtain adequate information and techniques on the Internet even in remote places in developing countries. The question is just whether or not they are willing to search for it. Assistance cannot be



The project kick-off ceremony held in front of the office



A moderator from Orchid

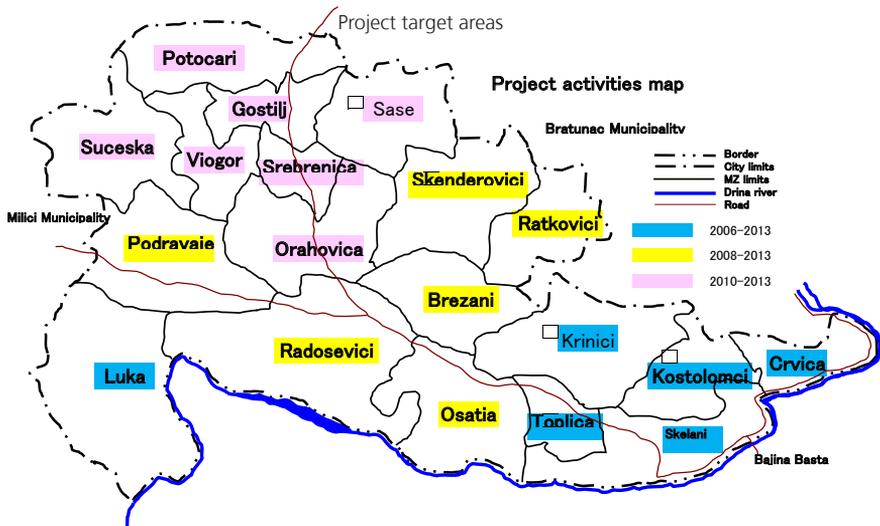
implemented using only specialized techniques, skills, theories, academic knowledge, and funds. In Srebrenica, we were also required to have an appropriate grasp of the conflict, the ability to observe society, and the capability to make circumstantial judgments.

The reasons why I could penetrate deep into the local society, despite not knowing the local language or even where Bosnia was before I took up the position, were that my interpreter was excellent and given my long years of experience. I was able to predict our activities and read what local people really thought fairly accurately.

After looking at the fields and villages and talking with the local people, I came up with the idea of producing vegetables in greenhouses, planting meadows, establishing a kindergarten, and repairing water supply facilities. I believe that experts nowadays are required to have these kinds of abilities in order to concretize project through their own observations in the field.

Starting the assistance project

Our assistance project covered a wide range of areas including agriculture, livestock breeding, water supply facilities, livestock markets, farm



Expansion of the target areas

product shops, and the opening of a kindergarten; in total the project spanned 16 types of businesses. In the section below, I will explain the following aspects of the project: (1) planting plum seedlings, (2) joint use of farming equipment, (3) greenhouse vegetable and strawberry production, (4) herb production and processing, (5) mushroom production using a tunnel, (6) beekeeping, (7) ensuring an accessible market, (8) raspberry production, (9) opening of the livestock market, (10) improvement in the quality of sheep, (11) meadow restoration, (12) repairing the irrigation and water supply systems, and (13) the opening of a kindergarten.

In March 2006, as the first activity of the first fiscal year of our assistance project, 3,000 fruit seedlings were planted in the MZ of Crvica. The following year, high-quality strawberries and tomatoes, which were as good as Japanese products, were harvested.

Looking at these results, local people came to think that economic rehabilitation through agriculture was promising. An atmosphere of communication between the Bosniaks and the Serbs was created through our project. As our assistance proceeded, city government and local people demanded the expansion of the target areas and even local people in distant MZs made direct requests to our office. The target areas were expanded from 5 MZs in 2005 to 12 MZs in 2008; by 2011, all 19 MZs across Srebrenica were part of the project.

(1) Planting plum seedlings

In March 2006, we started our full-scale assistance project. The planting of 3,000 plum (for making prunes) seedlings was carried out by the NGO River. I directed the representative of the NGO to draw up a list of beneficiaries putting the number of residents of both ethnicities on an equal footing. Although I expected a list with a harmonious ethnic balance, I was worried at the same time. My anxiety turned out to be true. The list that he drafted included 42 Serb families and no Bosniaks. Moreover, the addresses of all the beneficiaries were located around his parents' home. When I protested, he pretended to be ignorant of the fact that there was a rule against the ethnic balance.

Since the seedlings had already arrived, I reminded him about the rule and that before the seedlings would be planted again in fall of that year, he needed to make sure there would be a fair ethnic balance.

The list of beneficiaries drawn up by him in the fall included 127 Serb families (63%) and 76 Bosniak families (37%). Although the number of beneficiaries of both ethnicities was not equal, the percentage of families in the 5 MZs was 67% for Serb families and 33% for Bosniak families. Therefore, I judged that to some extent the list achieved a good ethnic balance. Other businesses faced the same difficulty of equal distribution in the 5 MZs where the number of Serb families was approximately twice that of Bosniak families. That is why I decided that if the ratio of beneficiaries was 1 to 2, we would call it equal in all of the businesses. In the initial stages of our project, when people were still distrustful towards us, we had to do everything in an equal way even if it was absurd.

The first fruit seedlings we bought came from Serbia through a dealer. The dealer went through the customs procedures and delivered the seedlings to Skelani. It was not until around 2010 that seedling production was resumed in Bosnia, but from then on, we bought the seedlings from a farmer in the Banja Luka area in Bosnia. In 2006 and 2007, some 400 families planted approximately 27,000 fruit seedlings (plum, apple, pear, and cherry). Subsequently, about 5,000 seedlings have been planted each year, and by 2013, 58,420 seedlings had been planted by a total of 835 families (about 27% of the total families in Srebrenica). That is, about 70 seedlings were planted per family. In 2010, the survival rate for fruit was 80%.

(2) Joint use of farming equipment

The joint use of farming equipment had been a troublesome business handled by the NGO Family. At the time, there were no farming equipment and tool workshops in the towns. We visited farming equipment factories in Bijeljina and Belgrade in search of tractors and hay packers, which arrived on the day before the project's opening ceremony. In 2006, 148 farm-



On-site training before planting plum seedlings



Plums being harvested

ers—56 Bosniak families and 92 Serb families—plowed the 23 hectares of fields by tractors. Twenty Bosniak families and six Serb families used the hay packers. For the use of the farming machinery, farmers only paid for fuel and operator costs.

Gradually, we obtained more farming equipment for grass production. Eventually, we had two tractors, a grass cutter, a hay collector, a grass packer, and a corn harvester. Around 2010, we acquired farming equipment for grass production, cutting, drying, and packing so that we could meet farmers' demands regardless of their ethnicities. Yet since the NGO was founded by both ethnicities, there was a tug-of-war between them over who would manage the farming equipment. Every time local residents claimed that the use of farming equipment was biased, we summoned NGO members for discussions. We also selected farming equipment operators from both ethnicities in an all-out effort to guarantee equality.

Fierce trouble among members of the same ethnicity

As we started the project in the area where Serbs were the majority, we were concerned that politicians and international organizations would criticize us for providing assistance more to Serbs than to Bosniaks. Thus, in August 2006, we conducted a survey on areas other than the 5 MZs and considered whether we should also target Bosniak majority MZs.

The original 5 MZs were concentrated on the Drina River, and we had not succeeded in visiting any MZs in the northern mountains. Therefore,



Packing the grasses by using agricultural machinery

when we had a spare moment outside of our work, we traveled around the area and subsequently decided to include a village, inhabited by Bosniaks and the farthest from the city center of Srebrenica as an additional target area. The project in this area began with the joint use of cultivators.

This time we did not entrust the business to NGOs but decided to carry it out as a joint project between JICA and city government. By that time city government understood the project and readily accepted our request for participation. The municipal official in charge of general affairs participated in the meeting in the village. The reason why city government joined the project was that although the village was inhabited by only 37 Bosniak families, it was divided into two communities that were often at odds. In this situation, city government participated as a watchdog preventing the communities from making trouble.

At the time of the conflict, Žepa, which was west beyond Srebrenica, was an evacuation site for the Bosniaks. The two towns were 40 kilometers apart, and Žepa was on the Drina River over a steep pass on a mountain trail. The evacuation site in Žepa was smaller than that in Srebrenica, and they themselves had not witnessed a massacre. The village clung to the steep slope of a mountain halfway between Srebrenica and Žepa. At the time, the village was known for its high-quality mutton.

Although we always payed close attention to ethnic balance when providing assistance, troubles did occur even among members of the same ethnicity. In fact, such trouble was fiercer than between the different ethnicities. In settlements where the two ethnicities coexisted, they controlled themselves and trouble rarely surfaced. They understood that if trouble arose, it could develop into full-blown conflict. When we explained the communal use of farming equipment in the village, the local people who were waiting for assistance began to make a fuss about not being able to participate in the communal use. Their dispute was so fierce that they came close to hitting each other with stones. During the dispute, a mountain road was blocked with a large tree, and we could not leave when we wished to.

Since we defined our assistance targets as those returnees who had registered residences in Srebrenica and mother-and-child families, some argued that we should disregard those residents who returned to Srebrenica from spring to fall for the sole purpose of obtaining assistance. Together

with the Skelani branch city officials, we often called upon the local people and had earnest discussions. Eventually, both the mayor, who had urged us not to give up, and the residents expressed their sincere gratitude to us for our actions.

On February 26, 2007, in the dead of winter, we handed over four cultivators. The roads had already been blocked by snow, and we could not contact the local people over winter. In September the following year, the leader of the MZ reported that 29 families had used the four cultivators and made a tillage profit of 75 euros. It was a relief that the families in Luka made a profit, even though it was a small sum, and that they succeeded in managing the business without trouble.

(3) Greenhouse vegetable and strawberry production

In the spring of 2006, a Serb farmer aged around 40 came to our office and asked us assistance for his strawberry production business. It seemed that he simply wanted strawberry seedlings of an Italian variety, which he could not purchase himself. So, I suggested that in return for giving him the seedlings, he would provide technical instructions to neighboring farmers through cooperation with the NGO Orchid. He readily accepted the proposal.

At the time I thought that strawberries did not match the image of rehabilitation assistance and that the activity would be misunderstood by JICA headquarters. I also worried about whether the local citizens could afford to buy strawberries and suspected that the market was so distant it would be difficult to find buyers. However, the climate in Skelani was suitable for cultivating strawberries and vegetables. In fact, many were sold in the



Tomatoes, strawberries, and green peppers being grown in a greenhouse

city of Bajina Bašta around June and July. The Serb farmer explained that he could also sell the products in Sarajevo and Zvornik. In my opinion, Sarajevo, which was a four-hour drive away, and Zvornik, a two-hour drive, were inconceivable for markets. Still, I decided to provide assistance for the venture thinking that if the strawberries did not sell well, they could at least be made into strawberry jam.

My first visit to the area was at the end of summer in 2005. I found that all of the summer, vegetables had been infected with viruses and had withered. In this area, rainy days, similar to those during the rainy season in Japan, lasted from mid-June to July, and vegetables were often affected by diseases. The long rains greatly affected the beekeeping business as well. To produce summer vegetables in the area, greenhouses were essential as shelter from the rain. I, therefore, decided to start the production of fruit and vegetables, including strawberries, in greenhouses. In 2006, six greenhouses were donated to six farmers, and a trial cultivation of strawberries and vegetables was introduced.

The greenhouses were goods imported from Serbia and cost 2,000 euros per unit. We had difficulty providing further grants to farmers, and local people were also unable to buy the expensive greenhouses. So, we asked a blacksmith in Skelani to make greenhouse frames on an experimental basis. This was the first experience the blacksmith had of building greenhouses. He immediately started measuring up the six greenhouses that we bought from Serbia. We were able to obtain water pipes and manufacturing tools but we had difficulty finding the tools needed to curve the pipe for roof. The blacksmith found a farmer living in the suburbs of Bajina Bašta who was engaged in greenhouse production. I visited the farmer together with the blacksmith and the head of the city government Skelani branch office for a study. While we were learning how to curve the pipes, we found the old tool we needed laying covered in dust. I told the farmer that I wanted to buy the tool and offered him 200 euros. The man agreed. The deal was done in an instant.

We opened the way to produce vegetables locally

After we obtained the tool from the farmer, the greenhouses became Skelani-made. We started manufacturing greenhouses at the end of 2006 and distributed them to farmers. We were able to lower the price to 700 euros

per unit. Both strawberries and tomatoes produced in greenhouse were of remarkably higher quality than vegetables produced in the open. Besides, tomatoes could be harvested until late September in the greenhouses. Our vegetables became so popular that from 2007 we were swamped with orders.

Since local citizens understood the lucrativeness of greenhouse cultivation, we began to distribute pipes on the condition that we would donate the greenhouse frames but they would have to buy the plastic films themselves. In this way, we contributed about 450 euros and local people contributed 250 euros per greenhouse. All in all, 145 greenhouses were built using this method. My motto for assistance was to get the best efforts out of local people and to provide assistance for the things that residents could not manage by themselves. Subsequently, in 2010, local people began to build greenhouse frames using timber available in the villages. Accordingly, we reversed the previously agreed roles. That is, if farmers built greenhouse frames, we would supply plastic films to them. By doing so, we gradually increased the responsibility of local people. Under this method, 111 greenhouses were built. By 2013, about 260 greenhouses were built throughout Srebrenica.

By 2008, local people had become confident that such high quality farm products would sell well in Sarajevo, and they began to ship them to a market in Sarajevo. On the first trip, we left Skelani at 4:00 a.m. and arrived in Sarajevo at 7:00 a.m. stopping twice for police checks on our way. Each time we passed a checkpoint, we explained that we were undertaking trial sales of farm products under JICA assistance. Once we arrived in Sarajevo, our strawberries and tomatoes quickly sold.



Preparation to ship strawberries



Shipped tomatoes at a market in Sarajevo

Column ② A voice of a greenhouse vegetable producer

“The greenhouse donated by JICA in 2006 gave me an opportunity to start vegetable and fruit production. Until then, my husband’s seasonal labor was the only income source for our household, and our life was tough. Currently, the greenhouse brings additional income and a decent life for my family. My main farm products are tomatoes, paprika [bell peppers], and strawberries. In winter, I grow spring onions and lettuces. A heating wire in the greenhouse, that I installed this year, allowed me to produce vegetable seedlings in winter and sell them to my neighbors. JICA’s assistance includes not only distributing goods but also providing follow-up support through lectures and on-site trainings on cultivation and a tour for opening up a market. I would like to express my wholehearted gratitude to JICA for its support.”

Column ③ A little touching story

When I visited a local resident in the mountains to investigate damage to this greenhouse, I found that the greenhouse belonged to an old man who had cultivated good tomatoes and paprika the previous summer. The plastic film of the greenhouse had been completely torn by a strong wind, and the framework was badly bent and twisted. The man said that he must give up. He added that he felt uneasy about JICA spending more money on him. He said, “I’m sorry, but I can’t afford to repair this greenhouse. If JICA has money to repair it, please spend it on to other poor people who can’t afford flour.”

Was it natural for refugees to be given assistance?

In September 2010, there were 150 greenhouses, but four of them had since gone missing. The missing greenhouses had been sold for 500 euros, and were carried to Sarajevo and Tuzla. I met the family who had sold the greenhouses.

An old woman said, “We are refugees. Our donor gives us nothing. We’re in dire need. You should give us something.”

I said, “We give you nothing? This house, the cultivator and the greenhouse, these were all donated to you.”

Her 20-year-old daughter, who was holding a small baby in her arms, said, “Then, what should we do?”

I said to the daughter, “This old woman lost her children in the conflict and receives an allowance every month. What will you do if the old woman dies?” I indicated that donor assistance would not last forever and they should take charge of their own lives despite the loss. They should be good models to their children.

Then, everyone chanted, “Well, what should we do?”

I said, “You should work hard using the benefits given to you by the donors.”

To the children watching us from a distance, I said that their generation would not receive any assistance nor allowance, so, they had to rely on themselves.

After talking to them, I felt a terrible sense of despair.

(4) Herb production and processing

Most of the mountains in the Srebrenica area were covered with beech forests full of plants that were made into herbal potions and medicines.



Harvesting mint



Sun-Drier

Number 1, one of the NGOs in the area, thought of extracting oil from dried herbs and making products out of it. I thought this would popularize the richness of Srebrenica and had high expectations for the herb-processing business.

We began with the drying business, which was technically easy. We provided a ton of heat-drying equipment to the NGO through a grassroots technical cooperation scheme run by the Japanese Embassy. At the same time, we considered providing equipment for local people to dry herbs in their garden. We produced five sets of drying equipment and used shrub flowers to dry the aroma tea and porcini mushrooms.

We sowed mint seeds in August 2006 and planted seedlings in a four-hectare field in October. In September of the following year, our harvest began. That year, 11 families harvested 16 tons of fresh mint, 3.8 tons of which was sold to dealers. We then worked day and night to heat dry 12 tons of leaves over 35 days, which we then sold. Our total sales added up to 7,500 euros. After subtracting the cost of purchases from farmers and the drying costs, we had a total of 675 euros left in cash. As drying equipment with a one-ton capacity required 35 days of operation, in 2008 we used some of the JICA budget to set up heat-drying equipment with a two-ton capacity; this saved us a lot of drying time with greater profitability.

In April 2008, we began to collect ramson (a type of garlic leaf) in the forest. We collected eight tons of the plant, which were dried and sold as medicinal herbs. In total, 800 kilograms of ramson were sold for 2,770 euros - a net profit of 425 euros. Later we started to grow lavender. In 2011, we introduced an oil extractor to make oil products. This equipment is still used to dry herbs, plums, rose hips, and the ramsons, and to extract



Collecting ramsons



A view of the whole processing facility

oil from lavender and mint.

The representative of Number 1 was a hard-working woman who exhibited products at trade fairs held in many parts of the country for sales promotion. However, in 2011, we stopped providing the NGO with assistance so as to make her more self-reliant. She felt she had been betrayed, which resulted in a worsening of our relationship. When we met on the street, we looked the other way. Despite the strained relationship, she made continued efforts to maintain her herb business. Using financial assistance from other international organizations, she built a wall and covered the drying facility entirely. The wall protected the drying facility from the temperature of the open air. She displayed the signs of international organizations on the wall outside, but, intentionally or unintentionally, the signs of Japan and JICA that were attached to the facility were no longer visible from outside.

I believed that this was her way of taking revenge against us. However, when my term of assignment ended and I left for Japan in November 2013, she delivered me a gift bag containing lavender fragrance and oil extracted in my absence. This was an expression of her gratitude in her own way. She often had clashes of opinions with me, but looking back, I now realize that she was indeed a significant figure.

(5) Mushroom production using an abandoned tunnel

The tunnel that we used for mushroom cultivation was originally made for a geological survey of a hydro-powered plant. The plant was constructed near the Bajina Bašta dam, which was located on the Drina River about five kilometers upstream from Skelani. Power generators were installed by diligent Japanese workers when Yugoslavia existed, and the



Exhibition of farm products from Skelani at an agricultural fair in Novi Sad, Serbia

Japanese-made generators were still in use. Thus, Japanese people enjoyed a good reputation in this area.

The tunnel, approximately 80 meters long from front to back, lay abandoned in the village of Peci where the representative of the NGO Home lived. He requested that we provide assistance for the cultivation of white mushrooms using the tunnel. He thought that the tunnel could be used as a source of income for the women of five households in the village. We were unsure whether the temperature and humidity were suitable for cultivating mushrooms and also if we would be able to obtain mushroom beds and find buyers in Bosnia. Nonetheless, we decided to gather information about mushrooms and repair the tunnel to a good condition. The first thing we undertook was an internet-based study on how to cultivate mushrooms. We then found a mushroom bed dealer in Brčko.

We brought in an electric cable and a set of shelves and built a small hut at the tunnel's entrance. The temperature was around 14 degrees all year and we did not need an air conditioner. Home installed 200 mushroom beds and began to harvest them around November, producing 1,500 packs by Christmas. They sold each 400g pack for 0.75 euros and earned 1,125 euros in total, resulting in a profit of 100 euros after subtracting mushroom bed and materials costs. Although it was a small sum, we were relieved at having gained a profit from our first planting of fungi. Subsequently, the women of the village of Peci continued to harvest mushrooms three times a year. The NGO representative carried the products to Sarajevo and Tuzla for sale.

The mushroom production went smoothly until the summer of 2009, when we faced unexpected trouble.



Harvesting mushroom

In Europe, July and August were summer vacation months when the refugees living in Europe returned temporarily to their homes in this area. One such returnee, a young man who lived abroad but was a former resident of Peci village before the conflict, returned to the village for summer vacation. He claimed that the steep slope two to three meters wide at the entrance to the tunnel was his property, and he would not let the tunnel to be used unless he was paid 1,500 euros a year. However, the tunnel itself was not owned by anybody. Previously, the NGO Home had obtained permission from the young man's father in Tuzla to use the property at the tunnel entrance. However, since then the son had inherited that piece of land, and he did not agree that his land is used by the NGO. Home representatives tried to persuade him to let the land be used, but he declined. In this instance, the trouble was not between ethnicities but between local people starting life in the village anew and refugees who had no intention to return. The young man left in a new model luxury vehicle and returned to Europe three weeks later.

This is how the tunnel mushroom production came to a halt, making it impossible for the widowed families involved in the business to generate an income. What this experience did prove, was the viability of mushroom production in the area. Luckily, a donor organization later decided to provide locals with a production facility.

2. Reproducing and fostering local resources

(6) Beekeeping

For two weeks in July, false acacias bloomed, and the entire area of Srebrenica was brimming with a sweet scent. Honeybees produced the most



The beekeeper

honey at this time of year. Before the conflict, every home had beehives for honey production.

In 2006, after the false acacias had bloomed, I went to see a beekeeper in Kostolomci MZ. He extracted 20 to 50 kilograms of honey from a wooden beehive. One kilogram of honey earned him 5 euros, and one beehive produced a profit of 100 to 250 euros. The beekeeper explained that owning 100 wooden beehives was enough to make a living. However, while people were interested in beekeeping, he pointed out they did not have the funds to restart. After weighing everything up, I decided that it would be worth providing people with the assistance needed to begin a beekeeping venture. I distributed four wooden beehives and a set of other necessary tools to those people who were interested. Over an eight-year period, a total of 2,216 wooden beehives were distributed to 510 families (about 17% of all families in the area).

Like raising livestock, it was necessary to check the beehives every day. Bees needed nourishment in the seasons when only a few flowers bloomed and protection in winter. In July, when the false acacia bloomed, the rain often prevented the bees from collecting pollen. During the eight years of my stay, only 2011 saw a good honey harvest. During the 2008 season, most families did not collect any honey. Although profitable, beekeeping was by no means a stable source of income.

While some 510 families started keeping bees, many of them were unable to continue the business and handed it over to others who were keen on beekeeping. This resulted in wooden beehives being taken over by earnest beekeepers. The beekeeping program was carried out by the NGOs Bees and Hometown, whose aim was to produce honey using a Srebreni-



Srebrenica brand Honey

ca brand. To ensure a source of pollen beyond the rainy days in July, some 960 species of long-term flowering plants were planted around Skelani.

I heard that NGO Bees later exhibited their products in an international competition in Europe and won the golden prize. The quality of Srebrenica honey was that good.

Local people rarely express their gratitude

On a chilly rainy afternoon on September 11, 2007, a young Serb man came to express his gratitude to us for providing him with assistance. Although his family had run a beekeeping business for generations prior to the conflict, they were unable to resume the business after the conflict. It was the first time a beneficiary had come all the way to our office to express his gratitude, which showed how happy he was to restart the beekeeping business. Usually when local people visited our office, they came to complain, so we hardly expected anyone would show their appreciation. This convinced me that our project had succeeded.

Between 1975 and 2013, I took part in nine JICA assistance projects in seven countries. I can only recall locals coming to the project office or to my house to express their gratitude on two occasions, one of which involved this young beekeeper. Of course, we worked hard for the nine assistance projects, but it was difficult to get results good enough to prompt local people to show their honest and true appreciation for the assistance.

Creation of a common logo

During the New Year holidays in 2007, we received a proposal from the



*Darove Drine
Skelani, Srebrenica*

NGO Number 1. The proposal included creating a logo under which products made in Skelani would be known elsewhere. At the time, the sale of strawberries, tomatoes, mushrooms, and herbs had already begun. So, we pooled our ideas and came up with a logo design representing Mt. Tara and the Drina River and including five lines showing our association with the five NGOs. “Darovi Drine” means a gift from the Drina River. While discussing the logo design, our conversations became entangled with ethnic awareness and events that had occurred during the conflict. Mt. Tara situated on the Serbian side, rose from the Drina River, and was cherished by both ethnicities.

At first, one of the NGOs proposed the name “Trace of Drina.” Another NGO objected to this name on the basis that the Drina River was a good phrase expressing a river loved by both ethnicities, but the word Trace meant old traces of the past. “My father was killed in this river,” the man said. “I don’t want to use the name that reminds me of the past.” Both ethnicities had sad memories related to the Drina River. Throughout history, many wars had been waged on the Drina River. In the end, we decided to use “Darovi Drine” which was free from emotional connotations.

We also discussed alphabetic characters, in particular whether we should use the Cyrillic or the Roman alphabet. I was at a loss as to which one to choose. Some argued that the city’s symbol itself was written with a Roman “S”. Based on this logic, we decided to use the Roman alphabet.

(7) Ensuring an accessible market

Even though it was easy to cultivate farm products in a good natural environment, the greatest concern that came out of the initial survey was how to ensure there was an accessible market for the products. If we carried



The city's symbol



Selling farm products at a market in Bajina Bašta

out the plan as scheduled, we would face a problem of excessive production. How would we sell vegetables and strawberries produced in 200 greenhouses? What about buyers for the dried herbs and mushrooms? How could we sell honey produced in 2,000 beehives? We had in mind that if the products were not sold, they could be stored for a long time or processed. However, neither the NGOs nor the farmers were at all worried. They were convinced that they would sell their products in Bajina Bašta, Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bijeljina. After all, the strawberries and tomatoes had sold in the fall of 2006.

Number 1 came to consult with us about securing selling spaces at a city-run Friday market in Bajina Bašta on the Serbian side of the border. The representative of the NGO elaborated that if she could secure the selling spaces, women in Skelani would be able to sell products little by little. We paid a fee of 870 euros to the city government for the use of two selling spaces in Bajina Bašta for one year.

On December 16, a Friday, five women from Skelani and Crvica MZ crossed the border carrying greenhouse vegetables and eggs. These were all sold. Since vegetables could be sold every week even if they were only produced in small amounts, the residents of 90 households (70% Serbs and 30% Bosniaks) used this business for the entire 2008.

In 2010, the women sold approximately 3,000 kilograms of fruit (strawberries, apples, and plums), 10,450 kilograms of vegetables (tomatoes, potatoes, and beans), 130 kilograms of dairy products (cheese and cream), 2,000 hen's eggs, 350 kilograms of honey, 500 kilograms of forest products (mushrooms), and 500 woolen textiles (socks and sweaters). The business could run all year round and brought precious cash income to the grand-



Planting raspberry seedlings

mothers of Skelani and Crvica MZ. People began to use their greenhouses to cultivate spring onions and spinach. Due to their good reputation, they received a package order for all of the vegetables in their greenhouse.

(8) Raspberry production

Raspberries were barely produced on the fields along the Drina River. In 2005, there was a raspberry freeze-processing and storage factory in Bratunac. The factory was in operation although it produced an exceedingly small amount of raspberry product.

In 2006, the NGO River asked that JICA provide them with equipment to irrigate the raspberry crops. At that time, I did not realize that raspberries were an important farming product of the region. However, after I saw raspberries being harvested in Bratunac on a mountain on the other side of the Drina River, I reconsidered their request. The raspberries were collected at processing factories then shipped to many destinations in Europe. However, at that time raspberry collection fell short. Farmers were only able to collect 50% of the processing capacity of the factories, which was insufficient to meet existing orders. At the time, the Srebrenica city government set up a Raspberry Committee and made raspberries one of the city's priority products. The following year, a Swedish company constructed a new freeze-processing factory in Potocari.

It was 2008 when we expanded our assistance target areas from five MZs to 12 MZs. The first planting of raspberry seedlings took place in November and 32 families planted about 3.2 hectares. Local people harvested raspberries for three weeks in July and all family members took part. This required meticulous labor and effort to pick carefully the soft fruit one by



A family harvesting raspberries



A raspberry freezer built by an ironmonger in Skelani

one and to arrange them on a thin tray.

In those days, there was still no shortage of labor. However, the short three-week harvesting period was a factor that made it difficult to expand production. In response, we introduced new varieties of raspberries alongside the conventional ones that could be harvested in August. By 2013, a total of 299 families had planted 433,600 seedlings; this corresponded to about 32 hectares of planting area. According to the Srebrenica city government, in the same year the entire raspberry production area in the city was 70.4 hectares - 45% of the total area were fields to which we gave assistance. The production amount increased from 50 tons in 2006 to 800 tons in 2017. After we started providing assistance, a raspberry freeze-processing factory was built in Skelani, and a new one was built in Bratunac. The production amount increased so significantly that four freeze-processing factories were operated in the region.

(9) Opening of a livestock market

Ever since I visited Srebrenica for the first time in 2005, the city government continuously asked if anything could be done about setting up a livestock market. The scenery of the area resembled the Alps in Switzerland with little flat land. So, breeding dairy cows and sheep had been the main industry before the conflict. When our project started, people raised sheep and sold them through negotiated transactions in which dealers came to the farmer's doorstep. For this reason, prices were unsatisfactory to farmers. Furthermore, people were prohibited from transporting sheep to prevent them from being infected with diseases.

Before the conflict, livestock markets were set up at several spots in the mountains. Once a month, people gathered on market days to buy and sell both livestock and farm and daily commodities. It was a place of exchange among the local people. As I thought that the opening of a market would provide both ethnicities with opportunities to trade and socialize, I asked the NGO Orchid to investigate potential locations. The NGO consulted with the city government and proposed a location in Toplica MZ at a halfway point between the city of Srebrenica and Skelani. This place used to be the largest market in the region before the conflict. We made this business a joint project between the city government, the Japanese Embassy, and JICA.

The leveling of ground for the site began in March 2007. In late April,

when the work was almost finished, the NGO received a letter from a religious group. The letter said that the market was too close to a graveyard and we lacked consideration for religious factors. We, therefore had to look for an alternative location.

In May, the mayor showed the NGO a new site, which he thought, would be suitable. We were surprised that the city government worked to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. This showed how much local people hoped that the livestock market would be set up.

Around November the same year, an infectious disease affecting sheep called Brucellosis swept across the region; all infected sheep had to be culled. Local people said that sheep that had been distributed by a donor in spring were the cause of the infection, but the truth was unclear. The opening of the livestock market and sheep quality improvement business (discussed below) were postponed until the disease abated. The building of the market was completed in December but was not opened until September 16, 2010, some two years later. On the day of the opening, about 150 sheep were brought to the market and three brokers from Sarajevo and Tuzla gathered to carry out the first dealings. All business negotiations were successfully completed, resulting in prices that were about 50% higher than those of the doorstep dealings. Local people not only traded livestock but also sold woolen knitted socks and jam. Subsequently, markets were held once a month, which enabled people to transfer their livestock in public and trade them at market prices. Unfortunately, the livestock sheds were crushed by a tremendous snowfall in January 2012, and the facility still remained closed when our assistance project ended in November 2013. This was a very disappointing outcome. I hope



Advertisement for the opening of a livestock market



The livestock market reopened for the first time in about 15 years

that the city government will one day reopen the livestock market.

(10) Improvement in the quality of sheep

Sheep bred in this region were meant for producing mutton rather than wool. However, due to the breed of the sheep, the quality of the meat was low. In response, we introduced male sheep from other regions to help improve the breed. The city government official in charge of livestock breeding handled this project. Initially, the project was scheduled for 2007, but it started in the winter of 2010 when the Brucellosis disease had abated.

We received information about an excellent breed being raised in large numbers around Bihać, a city in northwestern Bosnia near the Croatian border. After inspecting the breed, we decided to introduce sheep from that region into the stocks in our project areas. We rented a livestock transportation truck from a butcher in Srebrenica and carried the sheep to local people from one end of the country to the other.

The project was implemented in two instalments, with 198 sheep from the better breed being introduced to 100 families. Subsequently, the city government official in charge thought of a way to share that breed of sheep among several farmers. In 2010, the number of sheep was 9,600. According to a survey conducted by the city government, the number of sheep subsequently increased to 12,431 in 2013.

(11) Meadow restoration

The greatest concern for local people who had returned from their long years of exile was their future. Naturally, they needed immediate food and housing, but the lands around their houses were totally desolated.



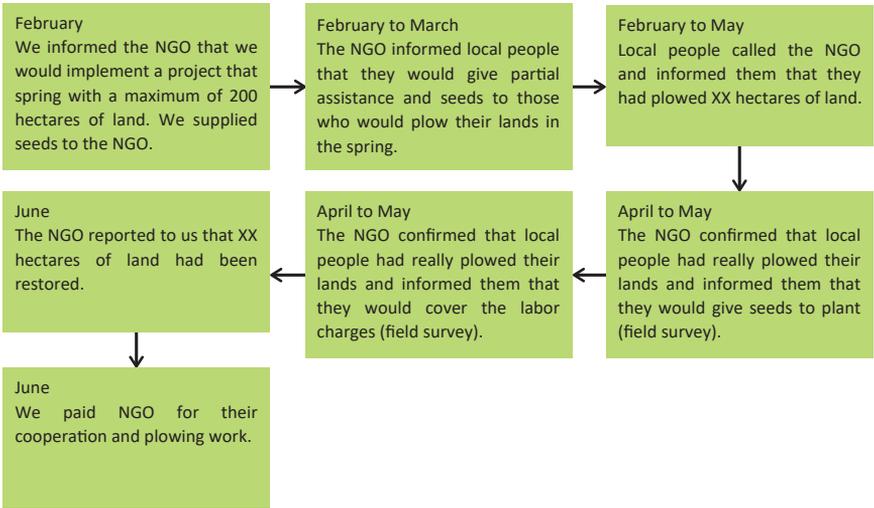
A sheep being handed over to a local resident

What used to be meadows were now covered in bracken and raspberry fields. People were quite at a loss as what to do. Bringing the landscape of Srebrenica back to its original condition was a necessary part of local people fully resuming their normal lives. It would help restore peace of mind to both ethnicities and eventually bring peace to the entire Srebrenica.

When I visited the region for the first time, I thought that it could not be regenerated unless the meadows covered with bracken were brought back to their original condition. I could not, however, think of a concrete idea for realizing this goal.

As a first attempt, I carried out test cultivation on two hectares of meadow owned by the leader of the NGO Family. After being abandoned for almost 10 years, the bracken-covered meadow suddenly began to grow bushes. At first, the bushes were cut and burned. The land was then plowed twice with a large tractor, and seeds containing a mixture of seven types of grasses were planted. Again, a tractor was used to cover the seeds with soil. This was in November 2006. The buds appeared the next spring and the meadow was restored.

There were still many challenges that needed to be tackled: How could the local people secure five to ten tons of seeds every year? Would local people be willing to restore the meadows by plowing the steep slopes in the mountains? How would we cover the entire area of Srebrenica? I



thought up ways to get local residents inspired to make the effort to plant seeds. What I knew was that the residents of Srebrenica possessed tractors and a labor force, but had no money. So, I decided that financial support would likely motivate them to restore the meadows.

After visiting several villages and having discussions with villagers, I came to think that if we provided assistance to cover part of the seed and fuel expenses, villagers would plant the seeds. I decided to provide 8 kilograms of seeds per an are and ten euros for fuel expenses per an are. Advertising fliers were put on utility poles in the spring of 2008. The following day, local residents contacted our office and the MZ representative. Initially, we directly inspected the fields and handed over the seeds. After the residents had plowed the land, we checked their planting process, and finally paid five euros to each of the residents. We secured Slovenian seeds, the most viable seeds in the region, through agriculture shops in Bratunac and Skelani. As more local people hoped to plant seeds, we could not single-handedly respond to their requests. Thankfully, around that time the NGO Aspiration, located in the urban area of Srebrenica, offered to participate in our project.

The original landscape restored

At the time of setting up the regeneration project, we had been evaluated highly for providing equal assistance to both ethnicities. For this project, I chose the NGO Aspiration, which seemed the most keen and earnest collaborator. Two women managed the NGO. They were originally from Sarajevo and had come to live and work in Srebrenica; I did not know the



The representative of the NGO Aspiration distributing grass seeds



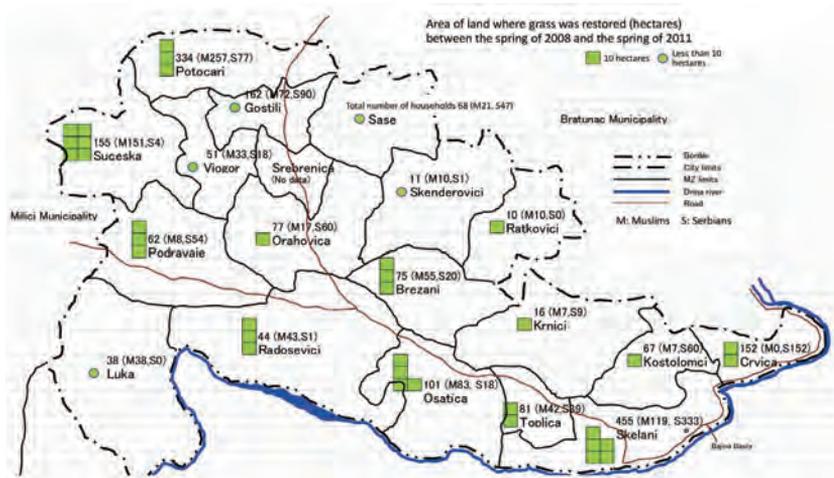
A restored meadow

reason for their relocation.

The two women visited the meadows of the local people and measured the size of the wastelands with a tape measure daily. After confirming the lands had been plowed, they handed over the seeds, checked the planting, and gave the farmer money to cover the cost of tractor fuel. Between April and May 2009, local people planted approximately 100 hectares of land (1 kilometer × 1 kilometer in area). We were surprised that they managed to do this in just two months. In the years between 2008 and 2011, Bosniaks restored more than twice as much meadow than Serbs did (290 hectares and 109 hectares, respectively). Overall, the project included 259 Bosniak families and 221 Serb families.

The restoration of meadows was also the starting point for the resumption of livestock breeding. Even if local people were granted houses and supplied with cultivators and greenhouses, they were unable to do anything with these if their farmlands were left in a state of devastation. If I compared this to the Japanese context, our project could be described as reinvigorating paddy fields that had been abandoned for 15 years. This activity was a primary business that lasted until the end of our assistance project.

Since we accepted as many requests from local residents as possible, a total of 1,700 families (55% of total families) were able to restore 1,067 hect-



The results of restoring the grass seen on a map (the spring of 2011)

ares of land, including meadows in the neighboring town of Milici. Many of Srebrenica's citizens owned meadows within the territory of Milici. The sloping lands are now dotted with large fields of restored grass. Seeing the landscape, I was convinced that the region could surely be restored to its original condition.

The landscape being brought back to its original state was the highlight of our project. A significant feature of our assistance was that the harder local people worked, the more assistance they could get. We left the business side of the project entirely in the hands of NGO Aspiration. The project partners including the city government, Aspiration, and local people enjoyed mutually beneficial relationships. Local people employed the medieval method of plowing a steep slope that could not be plowed by tractor or by horse. We were deeply touched by the scene of meadows being restored. We expected that the rehabilitation of livestock breeding programs and the restored landscape would make people and their hearts a little gentler.

3. Creating opportunities for ethnic reconciliation

(12) Repairing the irrigation and water supply systems

Before the conflict, outside of the urban areas of Srebrenica and Skelani, local people stored their collected spring water in water tanks of about one cubic meter in volume. With these small tanks, people supplied water to their homes. Most of this equipment was destroyed or abandoned during the conflicts. So, local people collected small quantities of water in buckets from sites near their houses to have water for daily use. This situation was quite unusual in 21st century Europe. People needed funds to



The engineer and local people working together



Same as the left

repair their water facilities, which could only be repaired through the consensus of users. In all regions before the conflict, both ethnicities would get water from the same supply, and repair work would be carried out in agreement with everyone. However, in 2008, it was too early for local people to suggest sharing the same water supply systems with the other ethnicity.

We presented the idea of repairing the water supply facility to the local residents. We were able to provide materials such as water supply piping, but given that the land in the area was a complex series of undulating slopes, we found it necessary to call in an expert in the construction of water supply systems. Thinking it difficult to get an engineer to the area, we consulted the city government branch office in Skelani. They knew of an engineer who studied civil engineering at the University of Sarajevo and at the time lived in Bajina Bašta. We chose him as the civil engineering project leader. His parents' house was located in Kostolomci MZ and his elder brother was engaged in flour milling by waterwheel. The bread baked with flour milled by him was popular for its good taste.

When looking at how we could provide assistance for the repairs, we first went with the engineer and the city government official to villages to discuss options with residents. We presented them with the conditions under which we would provide assistance: we would supply materials and an engineer to offer advice on construction, but all villagers would have to contribute the labor needed to carry out the repairs.

At first, the villages failed to reach an agreement and the negotiations between the two ethnicities broke down. However, three to four months



A grandmother set free from the daily work of drawing spring water with a bucket

later, they informed us that they actually wished to repair their water supply facilities. The repairs were undertaken based on the engineer's design and instructions. The facilities worked on a free-fall method using undulation in the same way it had been used before the conflict. In addition to securing irrigation water, it was necessary to pump water up from a spot at a low altitude to provide plentiful water to high ground at a spot where the previous water supply had dried up. Water would then be sent to each household using the free-fall method. Some repairs needed large-scale civil works, which included setting up of large tanks on high ground about 500 meters away from water sources. In villages that used electric pumps, local residents collected electricity charges themselves. Within the project, repair works were carried out in 29 villages. The engineer's knowledge and skills were surprising. Holding a map with contour lines in his hand, he decided on each water supply route. If my memory is correct, he took field measurements at two spots. This work made it possible to secure water for domestic use and for the irrigation of raspberry fields.

The water supply facilities could have been repaired both technically and economically by the local people themselves. The reason why those derelict facilities had been abandoned for such a long time was that no matter how peaceful local people appeared, the two ethnicities could not restore the sufficient relationship of trust needed to resolve the conflict through discussion. However, with JICA acting as a mediator, both ethnicities were able to agree on the repair plan. Many such problems existed among local people.

(13) Opening a kindergarten

Around June 2007, a local resident told the story of one of his experiences: while driving his tractor past the house of someone of another ethnicity, he saw a small boy who gestured as if to throw a stone at him. This made him think that even a preschool child had an awareness of ethnicity. If children were raised from their infancy in a society in which different ethnicities lived with uncomfortable feelings towards each other, ethnic awareness would probably be fostered unconsciously. Ethnic awareness was likely implanted in the minds of children who listened to their parents' criticisms of other ethnicities. The man supposed that the gesture of the boy throwing a stone was a sign of this, as a Japanese proverb says: "The child is the father of the man." As local people from the two ethnicities had more active exchange through business around 2008 than they had before, I hoped that ethnic awareness between them had gradually

weakened, although it was yet difficult to imagine it vanishing completely. With this in mind, I thought that it was the right time to set up a kindergarten.

If the awareness among local people had changed so much that they were not anxious leaving their beloved children in a kindergarten where children of both ethnicities enjoyed playing, it would prove that our assistance had contributed to ethnic reconciliation. When children were old enough to be enrolled in elementary school, ethnic awareness would usually have taken root. However, I guessed that if children began to enjoy playing together at the age of three or four, their ethnic awareness would be somewhat weakened when they grew up. Of course, the outcome would remain unclear until the children grew up. Still, I thought that this would be planting the seeds of ethnic reconciliation. I hoped to establish a kindergarten that would not be a preparatory school for Skelani Elementary School but would mainly allow children to play together and enjoy games, songs, handicraft, and painting lessons. The kindergarten was named "Friendship Kindergarten." When I explained the idea to the city government, to other kindergartens in Srebrenica, and to the principal of Skelani Elementary School, everyone understood. Japanese side showed a negative attitude toward the kindergarten plan. They were concerned that setting up a kindergarten in an unsafe area might prove problematic. Some even doubted whether the kindergarten was necessary for peacebuilding and argued that priority should be given to educating parents rather than educating the children. I did not receive any positive feedback. In July 2008, I investigated the number of preschool children in the area and conducted a questionnaire-based survey on opening a kindergarten with the mothers of the children in the area. The survey found that there were 50 pre-school children around Skelani. Among them, nine were Bosniak children. All the mothers liked the idea of setting up a kindergarten and said that they would bring their children to it.

Further developments with the kindergarten

The preparations for opening the kindergarten started in September 2009, but the regulations about establishing new kindergartens were so rigorous that it would have taken one to two years to go through all the necessary procedures. Therefore, I decided to make the Friendship Kindergarten a branch of the Srebrenica Kindergarten. This saved us the trouble of

going through the complicated procedures. We renovated a vacant classroom that used to be the storage area of Skelani Elementary School. As children's desks, chairs, games, toilets, and washrooms were completely unfamiliar to us, we prepared them little by little, using other kindergartens in the region as models. When I came back to Japan, I collected a full load of stuffed animals used by my daughter when she was a child and put them in a trunk. In August 2009, a Japanese expert on pre-school education was dispatched to prepare for the opening of the kindergarten and to manage the three teachers. The expert was an ex-member of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) with experience in pre-school education in the Maldives and Dubai. She was onsite for three months and her leadership was invaluable to the teachers who had no experience.

Up until the opening of the kindergarten, I had many worries and kept wondering whether any children would be enrolled, in particular if Bosniak children would join the many Serb children and if the parents could pay the monthly charge of 20 euros. On September 1, 2009, when the new kindergarten opened, 29 children, including eight Bosniak children, appeared at the kindergarten at 8am holding hands with their mothers. This scene convinced me that local people had accepted our assistance in Srebrenica.

For one of the kindergarten excursions taken in October 2009, children took a train ride across the border to Mokra Gora in Serbia. The following year, they went to a zoo in Belgrade. An ironmonger in Skelani paid all the expenses. We later introduced an electronic organ into the kindergarten, and a music teacher gave music education once a week. Santa Claus came in late December and a party was held. Children believing in Orthodox Christianity and those believing in Islam both welcomed Santa Claus.



Kindergarten admission ceremony



Kindergarten excursion

There was a concern that their parents might criticize us, but their mothers also joined the party and had fun. The mothers who took their children to and from kindergarten every day had conversations amongst themselves. Although they were often empty and idle conversations about their children or meals for the day, most importantly, the mothers of both ethnicities were not hesitant to communicate with each other. Children helped smooth the relationships between their parents.

The kindergarten was in Skelani, which was mostly inhabited by Serbs. In 2010, a year after Friendship Kindergarten had opened, the city government proposed the idea of setting up a kindergarten inside an elementary school in Potocari where majority Bosniaks lived. This elementary school was situated about 200 meters from the collective cemetery for the massacre victims. The opening of the kindergarten in Potocari, which made a striking contrast to Skelani in terms of ethnic balance, was significant for our assistance project as the project was aimed at realizing ethnic reconciliation. However, we were concerned about whether Serb children would be admitted to the kindergarten. According to a survey taken in June 2011, there were 44 preschoolers — 38 Bosniak children and six Serb children in the area. All Bosniak parents hoped to send their children to the kindergarten, while only three Serb parents hoped to send their children and the other three did not. As Potocari was close to Bratunac, where many Serbs lived, Serb children went to the kindergarten in Bratunac.

We knew that we could not expect to enroll many Serb children, but we began to prepare for that eventuality. On September 1, 2010, “Potocari Friendship Kindergarten” opened with an admission of 24 Bosniak children and one Serb child. We were relieved that we were able to enroll a single Serb child. Skelani Friendship Kindergarten, which opened three



A party with Santa Claus

years before, had 23 Serb children and two Bosniak children.

In November of the same year, 12 children from the Skelani Friendship Kindergarten, 22 children from the Potocari Friendship Kindergarten, and three children from the Srebrenica Kindergarten took part in a joint excursion. Seventy people, including mothers and teachers, chartered a bus and went to Visegrad. In selecting the destination, Serb parents had disagreed with going to Sarajevo, and Bosniak parents had disagreed with going to Belgrade. In the end, they decided on Visegrad, which was well known for the Nobel Prize-winning novel *The Bridge on The Drina*. The children had most likely hoped to visit the zoo in Sarajevo or in Belgrade. The trip also included a gathering for exchange with a local kindergarten in Visegrad.

In February the following year, we held a sports day with 178 participants. In the past, Skelani aspired for independence as the city of Skelani. At that time, Skelani (Serb residents) had no friendly relations with Srebrenica (Bosniak residents) nor Potocari (Bosniak residents). However, during the sports day we saw that the good atmosphere that had emerged through exchange at the kindergarten had spread to parents, teachers, and public officials as well. City council members even participated in the sports day with their children. The principal was enthusiastic about holding the sports day the following year, and every year thereafter.

The vision of opening the kindergarten was totally a dream when I visited this region for the first time. Back in those days, we started our activities very carefully, considering how to implement the assistance project without causing any trouble between the two ethnicities. Nobody could expect that three kindergartens would take part in a joint excursion and a sports



Children showing genuine expressions

day. The reason why we succeeded with the kindergarten project is that local residents had already begun to have exchanges and conversations through the businesses initiated through the project. These kindergartens could be described as the culmination of our assistance activities.

Chapter 5: Ethnic Reconciliation and the End of the Project

1. Greater results than we expected

In addition to the businesses introduced in the previous chapter, many others were introduced at the request of the local people, including growing buckwheat, hazelnut, chestnut, blackberry, blueberry, Japanese acacia, kidney beans, and potatoes, as well as Rakia distillation and the trimming and pruning of fruit trees. The scale of the businesses was never small. Even the kidney bean growing business, which was the smallest of all the businesses, had a total of 206 families who produced an average of 100 kilograms of kidney beans over four years. This corresponded to an annual income of around 175 euros per family. The kidney beans were a new species in the area and tasted good. Local people trimmed and pruned 5,000 plum, apple, and pear trees for four years to renew old fruit tree orchards, and in so doing, popularized trimming and pruning. Although these businesses were not small scale compared to a conventional assistance project, they were a little inconspicuous in our last project.

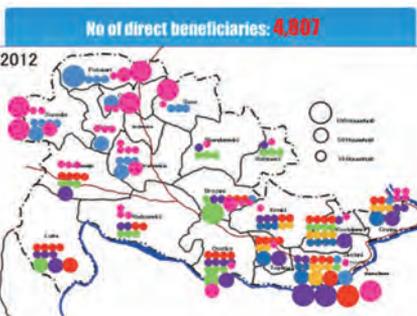
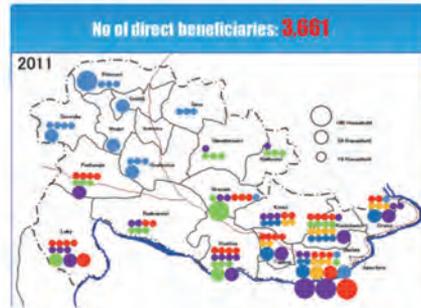
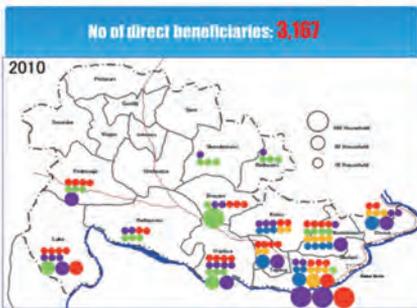
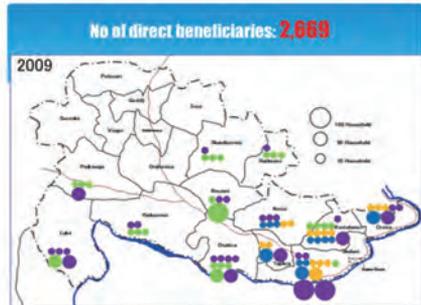
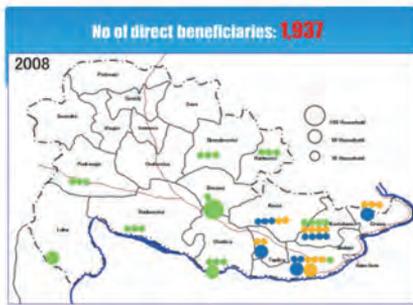
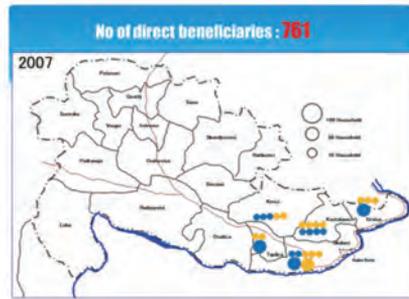
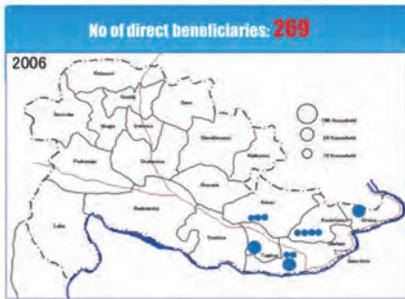
Our budget was not particularly large in comparison with other assistance projects. We therefore tried to avoid trial cultivations, exhibitions, and external trainings, which were usual in conventional assistance projects, as much as possible. Instead, we organized the project directly in local people's fields, tried new crops and held training using local farmers' land and asked experienced local farmers to act as lecturers. We held 199 training sessions and discussion meetings over eight years and drew a total of 3,450 participants. We tried to reduce office management expenses as much as possible. Because of our efforts to deliver directly as much financial support as possible to the local residents, we were able to get better results than we expected.

Details of the Business and Inputs

Business	Inputs	Business	Inputs
Planting plum seedlings	58,420 seedlings (835 families)	Joint use of farming equipment	Skelani: 2 Tractors, 1 Corn harvester, Grass cutter, 1 Grass mixer, 1 Grass Packing Machine Luka: 6 cultivators
Beekeeping	2,216 beehives (510 families)	Repairing the irrigation and water supply systems	29 locations
Raspberry production	399,600 seedlings (26.6 hectares, 299 families)	Bridge construction	2 locations
Blueberry production	4,200 seedlings, 38 families	The opening of a kindergarten	2 locations (162 children)
Greenhouse vegetable and strawberry production	256 greenhouses (256 families)	Planting chestnut seedlings	6,000 seedlings (940 families)
Meadow restoration	1,067 hectares (1,700 families)	Planting hazelnut seedlings	1,300 seedlings (350 families)
Producing vegetable seedlings	Three farmers	Opening of the livestock market	One location
Improvement in the quality of sheep	198 sheep (100 families)	Herb production and processing	One processing factory (48 families)

(1) Number of families who received assistance

The maps below illustrate the increase in the number of families who received assistance between 2006 and 2013. As far as we know, over the eight years a total of 5,188 families participated in businesses that benefited from our assistance. The total number of families in Srebrenica was 3,052 in 2011. This means that on average each family participated in 1.7 businesses. It should be noted that the 3,052 families included the number of families living in the urban area of Srebrenica, while the main target of our assistance were farming areas. If you set a modulus of 2,052 families in 18 MZs, a farming area excluding the urban area in Srebrenica, it can be assumed that each family participated in an average of 2.5 businesses. We do not have a record of the number of families by ethnicity or the number of beneficiaries. What these numbers do show, however, is that people of both ethnicities received some form of assistance.



(2) A significant increase in local people’s incomes

I divided the income structure into 12 MZs, the target areas from 2006 (see chart below) and six MZs, the target areas from 2011 (see chart below). The target areas identified in 2006 showed a significant increase in income between 2010 and 2013. By the end of the project, the fruit seedlings planted in 2006 had begun to fully bear fruit; the meadows had been brought back to their original condition, which led to an increase in milk production; and the number of sheep had begun to increase. These can all be considered to have helped raise income levels. It is conceivable that even now the results of our activities continue to help raise income levels in the 12 MZs and 6 MZs.

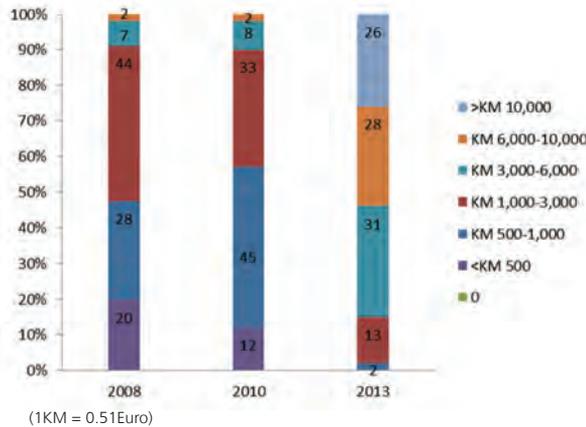


Chart. Distribution of the population with income range (12MZ)

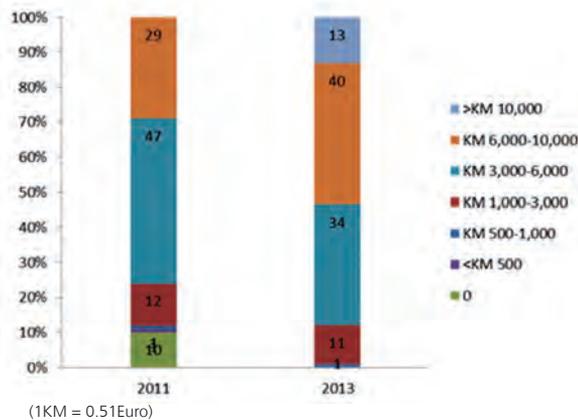


Chart. Distribution of the population with income range (6MZ)

(3) Breakdown of local people's income sources

Before I arrived, the main source of income for local people was farming and livestock breeding. Thus, it can be said that our assistance was appropriate. Interestingly, Serb and Bosniak residents showed distinct characteristics in both assistance activities and the selection of beneficiaries. Serbs tended to cultivate farm products, while Bosniaks tended to breed livestock.

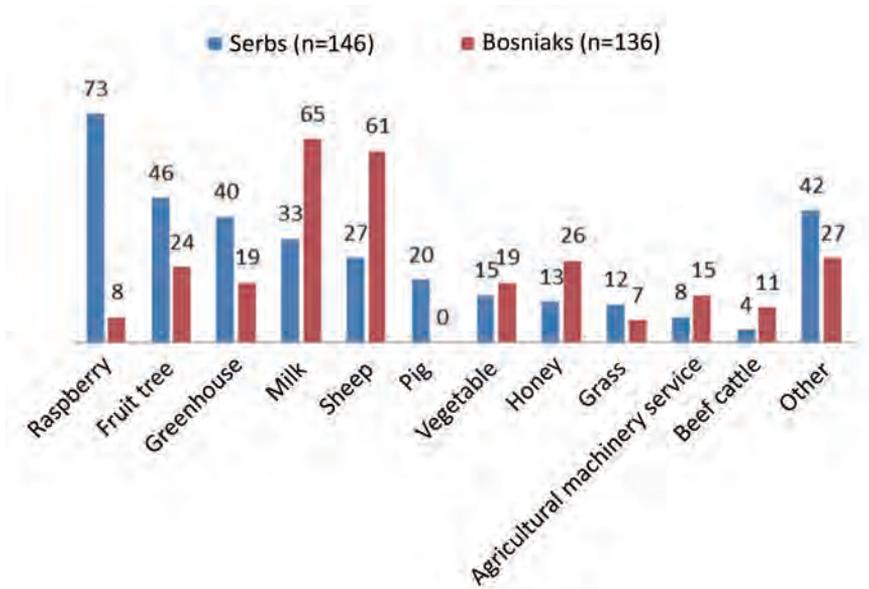


Chart. Major income source of the population at the end of the project (2013)

(4) What local people think necessary for achieving the coexistence of two ethnicities

When questioned about coexistence, local people did not think of anything beyond matters related to their economic activities, except for tourism and craftsmanship. Maybe they cannot afford to think about other things because their lives are still tough. Or, do they consider that in the first place, the conflict was triggered by external forces and that they just became involved in it? Is coexistence a matter for politicians and the international community, and none of their business?

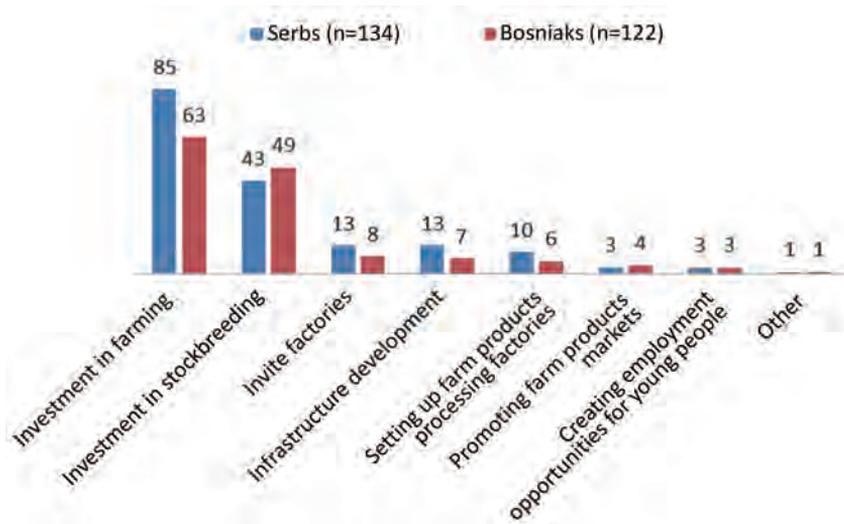


Chart. What local people thought necessary for coexistence of the two ethnicities at the end of the project (2013)

(5) Mental stability

We considered that it was important to enhance local people's mental stability in areas affected by conflict. So, we conducted a pilot survey to grasp the mental state of people in the project areas. We surveyed a random sample of 368 local residents aged 15 and older. The results are shown below. We questioned them in approximately nine categories, which were given grading assessments from 1 to 5, with Grade 5 showing the most positive and Grade 1 showing the most negative answers.

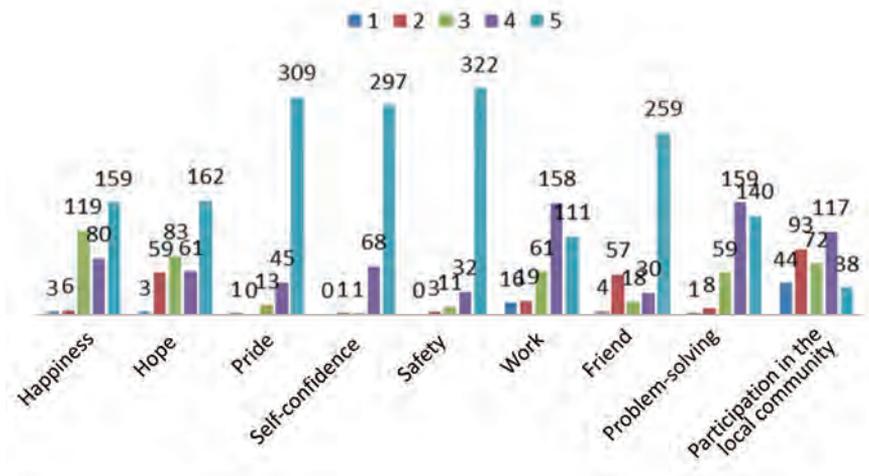


Chart. Results of the survey on mental stability at the end of the project (2013)

Many local people feel comparatively happy and embrace their hopes for the future. Is this because they experienced the tragic past, or are they optimistic people? An overwhelming number of people seem to be enormously proud of themselves and have self-confidence. I would speculate that this causes them to go to extremes when it comes to fighting. Just like we felt safe in Skelani, local residents also seem to feel that their local community is very safe. Many people are to some extent satisfied with their work (farming). This simply shows that their community seems to have reverted to a very peaceful and happy farming village.

(6) Number of returnees

The rush of Serbs returning to the area peaked in 1996 and the rush of Bosniaks returning peaked in 2002. If the Serb people were given little assistance, and assistance was biased towards the Bosniak people from around 2000, the fact that our project was able to start from Skelani where Serb residents were predominant, seems to have unintentionally contributed to stabilizing the region.

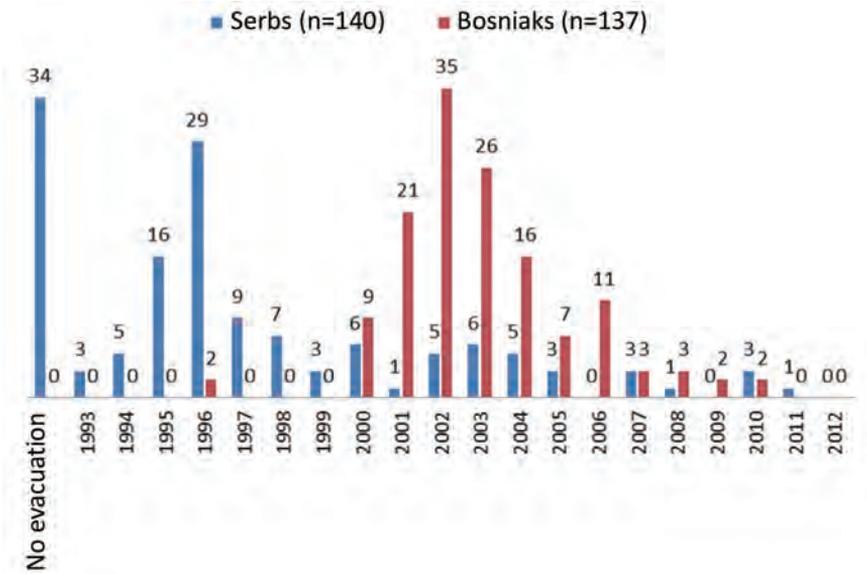


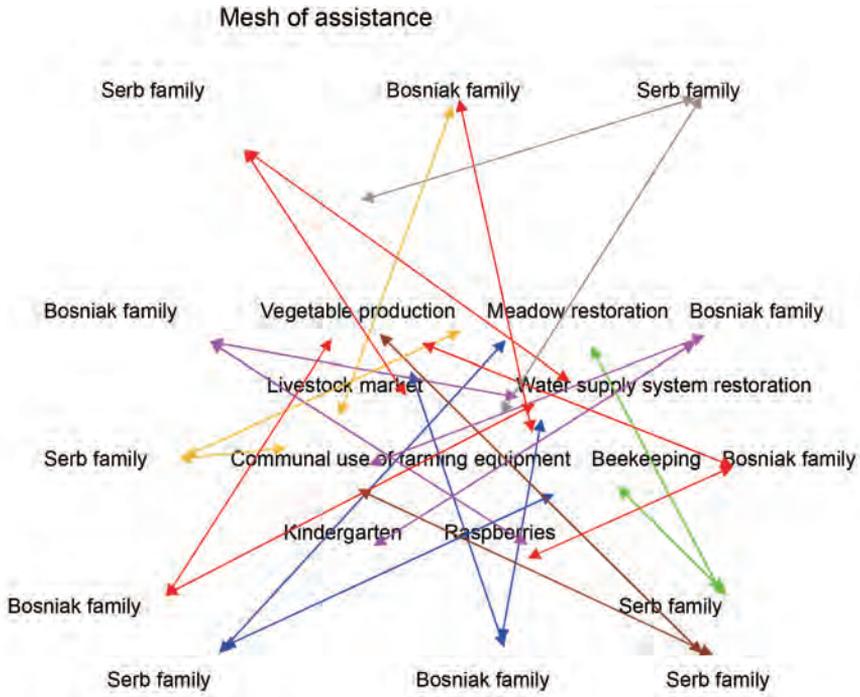
Chart. Number of returnees

2. What we realized and learned

The first step in our ethnic reconciliation project was to activate exchange and conversation among local people. The point was to organize many businesses in which people in a wider area could participate regardless of the scale of those businesses. This led to interaction between many people and provided many topics for daily discussions. Creating this mesh of exchange and conversation was the first step toward ethnic reconciliation.

In our project, a total of 16 businesses were carried out, and their beneficiaries added up to a total of more than 5,000 families. Through multiple businesses, families had many opportunities to have conversations and exchange. A fine mesh of conversation was created throughout the region. The conversations developed around topics ranging from business to daily life, and individuals had the opportunity to interact with each other beyond ethnic differences. At first, it is likely that their conversations were about businesses run by the same ethnicity. Later their conversations expanded to businesses run by both ethnicities and to the topics related to their village. I think that the reason why we succeeded in opening the new kindergarten and repairing water supply facilities in the village based on collaboration between both ethnicities was that we first expanded the grass restoration, fruit cultivation, greenhouse construction, and beekeeping businesses to all local residents in the entire region. This restored the original rural society that existed before the conflict. Without these foundations, our project would not have been accepted by both ethnicities.

The illustration below shows a mesh of conversation that was created through the project. This illustration was an image of what we sought to realize during the eight years of the project. Businesses were just a means of restoring conversation among local people within the framework of ethnic reconciliation and rehabilitation assistance.



An expert must be a master of development cooperation

Cooperation in the quest for ethnic reconciliation does not end with mere technical transfer and business development. The ultimate goal is to link the business results to ethnic reconciliation. An expert is required to be neutral and to be trusted by both ethnicities. Mutual trust is also necessary for conventional technical transfers. Yet, unless you can create a strong relationship of mutual trust when you are trying to achieve ethnic reconciliation, you cannot be directly engaged in ethnic issues. The expert is also absolutely required to understand how local people feel and to read their hearts. He or she must understand what local people think of assistance, businesses, Japan as a donor country, the expert himself or herself, and their own society from their viewpoint. If the expert can do this, he or she will get a rough picture of the appropriate assistance and the method of rendering it. If you merely try to provide assistance by depending on academic knowledge, materials, and information, you cannot get your project to proceed smoothly. The true expert must discern the appropriate assistance by having a sense of the field in which they are working.

Be both cushioning material and a magnet between both ethnicities

For the duration of the project, we acted as both cushioning material between the two ethnicities and a magnet drawing them close to each other. We created a mesh of conversation through businesses. Our equal assistance to both ethnicities and our efforts to activate businesses led them to work collaboratively. JICA's work and cooperation-oriented approach to the local community produced results. I believe that both ethnicities were drawn to each other by the magnet of these activities. Certainly, there was a lot of assistance given to this area after the conflict. However, while most assistance programs were meant to address ethnic reconciliation, they simply ended up injecting materials and funds, with no donor acting as magnet. This amounts to nothing more than throwing meat into a cage where both lions and tigers live together, in a way that enables only lions or tigers to eat it. This causes silent fighting, not reconciliation, in the cage. Assistance is not merely for technical transfer. Technical cooperation has the power to change human minds. There should be such philosophy behind the provision of assistance, although I cannot explain it well.

Don't think in a special way when you work on ethnic reconciliation

A poverty reduction project and an ethnic reconciliation and peacebuilding project have different goals. But, the methods of both projects are not so different. The basics of assistance are the same: you have no choice but to understand the wishes and ways of thinking of assistance recipients. You should always think from their viewpoint and take a serious and honest approach. There is one important thing that makes a difference: as you always deal with local people who have an intense sense of mutual distrust when undertaking ethnic integration and peacebuilding projects, one wrong action could easily develop into ethnic issues. In this sense, you always need to pay close attention to the change in the social situation.

Live in the field and make decisions based on your own judgment

Assistance starts from the expert looking at the real field situation through neutral eyes and making a judgment. An expert must draw up an assistance plan based on his own field experience. The expert must not blindly believe international public opinion or local people's opinions without studying them. Even the information provided by the assistance organization oriented to the local community or the city government is not always accurate. The assistance project seldom proceeds as scheduled, and you must act flexibly. We can provide appropriate assistance and immediately deal with ethnic problems that might occur throughout the project by being permanently stationed in the field and gaining a grasp of the field situation.

Be in the field: new discoveries are always out there

You should always observe the field situation and must not miss any changes in human behavior, life, farm products, and scenery. You can find ideas for implementing, managing, and operating the assistance project in these changes. If you are always in the field, local people respect you and your project.

Make the most of the local skills

You have to make the most of local materials, resources, and skills. Previously practiced skills remain with the local citizens both in developing countries and in a society that has been ravaged by conflict. Restoring locally produced products using local skills is the first step towards rehabilitation from conflict and eradicating poverty.

Provide the minimum assistance

Providing the minimum direct assistance to local people leads to enhancing skills and businesses. Even if you teach a person how to fish, he cannot catch a fish without having any tools. Local people can prepare earth-

worms, but unless you give them the minimum necessary materials such as a fishing rod, a thread, and a needle, they cannot fish. The same principle can be applied to assistance work. Unless people are granted support funds and materials, they cannot start a business. You need to provide some support as well as knowledge. In doing so, you must think of how much direct assistance will inspire them to act.

Get governmental organizations involved from the beginning

Immediately after a conflict, governmental organizations may have difficulty working as your partner since they are also affected by the conflict. However, it is vital that they are involved from the beginning to ensure the sustainability of the project. While it may be convenient to work only with NGOs in the short term, you cannot expect to sustain the results in the longer term.

Don't try to evade a problem but deal with it sincerely

If your project does not proceed smoothly or you create a problem, you have to deal with it sincerely and devotedly. To try to make an excuse runs counter to donor morals. Business always involves risks and sometimes fails. However, if you do not try to evade the problem but make the utmost effort to solve it, you will not face criticism from the local people. Instead, you will be appreciated for your effort to face up to the difficulty. The principle is to imagine how the assistance recipient feels. When I visited the region for the first time, I remember hearing a local citizen remark that he hated donors. Local people always observe our behavior and their evaluations tend to be correct. Donors often lack the usual social morals.

Deliver local people the hope and direction for living

Local people are very worried about the natural environment and their conflict-devastated society. If they only receive assistance funds, they can restore basic private living conditions rather easily. But, the improvement of private living condition does not necessarily lead to better public condition. They cannot regain a stable society without relieving their anxieties

about economic self-reliance and reconstructing confidence. You should present local people with a project that can make them feel reassured and confident that they can manage to restart their lives even if their pockets are not filled with money.

