

I am Yoichi Mine, Executive Director of JICA's Ogata Sadako Research Institute. My institute is named after possibly the most famous Japanese woman in the world, Madam Ogata Sadako. She served as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for years before assuming the presidency of JICA. She was also a political scientist and established the JICA research institute in 2008.

At the institute, I coordinated a project on conflict prevention in Africa. I clearly remember that Madam Ogata gave fundamental, principled advice to our team. That is, whether it is policy-making or research, we should always start from the urgent needs arising on the ground. She told us to get closer to the most destitute people and seek solutions from this interface.

In 2003, together with the Indian economist Amartya Sen, Madam Ogata elaborated on the concept of human security and submitted a report to Kofi Annan. Human security is to shift the referent object of security from states to people. Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science, would have called it a paradigm shift.

Human security is an agenda that seeks to strengthen people's power to choose by grounding security practices in lived realities of people. It is also an agenda that protects the life, livelihood and dignity of each and every person from multiple risks, including armed conflict, forced migration, disasters induced by climate change, pandemics, and economic crises.

This is a figure I often show on this kind of occasion. The process of human development, which is to expand the range of people's choices, is not always plain sailing. Just like in our own lives, which involve ups and downs like sudden sickness and accidents, our society also goes through ruptures and regressions, which may include violent conflict.

In times of crisis, it is critically important to continue educational activities both in and out of schools. Education protects and empowers children and youth, and this process should not be interrupted. In coordination with other donors and UN agencies, JICA has accepted young Syrian refugees as graduate students, and in Ukraine, used IT technology to keep school education running. We also supported the education sector in conflict-ridden Afghanistan, but we now face serious challenges.

In such emergencies, the quality of relationships between the givers and receivers of assistance is called into question. In this connection, it is noteworthy that dignity is added to life and livelihood as another core value of human security. Promoting civil liberties and socio-economic rights is indispensable but not enough. The third element, dignity, is a powerful moral demand that goes beyond a set of legal entitlements.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that people are born equal in dignity and rights. Historically speaking, it is Immanuel Kant who substantiated the notion of human dignity. Every human being has intrinsic value and should be treated as an end, never as a means only. As such, one ought to express respect for self and others. As individuals are embedded in a web of culture, the practice of dignity involves respect for the cultures and religions of others.

In times of compounded crises, there arises an urgent need to guarantee people's right to education. However, aid should not be a one-sided charity. There is an absolute need for vulnerable people, including children, to have confidence in their potential and for external actors to respect local agency. We are obliged to listen to people's voices at the grassroots level and build policy frameworks from the bottom up.

I look forward to a lively discussion today. Thank you.