

## Tanzania can develop dramatically and build a world exemplar Nation of the 21st Century with “People’s Self-Help Efforts” and “Government-Community Collaboration”

This article is to introduce to Tanzanian citizens one of the important cooperation activities between the two nations of Tanzania and Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), namely Improved O&OD.

### What is “Improved O&OD”?

For more than 10 years, JICA, Japan’s bilateral aid agency, has been closely cooperating with the Government of Tanzania (GoT), trying to develop a dynamic and sustainable style of local development and service delivery through an innovative local government administration with “Government-Community Collaboration”. This methodology is called “Improved O&OD”.

“O&OD” is an abbreviation of “Opportunities and Obstacles to Development” and this idea was originally established by GoT in 2001 to promote participatory local

development planning.

Since 2009, the President’s Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) and JICA have been implementing the cooperation project to improve this “O&OD” mechanism to more effectively nurture “Self-Help Efforts” of the communities and deepen collaborative relationship between Local Government and communities. This so-called “Improved O&OD” concept is based on the great unique advantage of the Country inherited from the founder of the nation, the late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere.

### The World Unique Advantage of Tanzania

JICA found with great appreciation that in Tanzania, there are a lot of communities where people organize themselves to improve their lives and develop their own communities without waiting for the Government

to come and do for them. Many of the basic facilities in communities, such as primary/secondary schools, dispensaries, Kitongoji roads, irrigation schemes, water supply systems, etc., are constructed by community people themselves.

And we learned that it is a precious heritage from Mwalimu Nyerere, who believed: “Development is the participation of people in a mutual learning experience involving themselves, their local resources, external change agents, and outside resources. People cannot be developed but they can only develop themselves by participating in activities, which affect their well-being. People are not being developed when they are herded like animals into new ventures.”

However, it is a pity that nowadays many people seem to have discontinued this outstanding practice of development.

“Improved O&OD” aims at recalling and reviving this dormant virtue of the Nation.

### Japan developed the Nation in a similar way

This valuable practice of Tanzania reminds us of our own experience of development in Japan.

At the beginning of the development and nation building of Japan in late 19th and early 20th Century, the Government was still poor, and the very limited resources had to be concentrated on national strategic development, especially industrialization and militarization, to avoid being colonized by then-European superpowers.

While the Government did not have adequate resources to attend the needs of the people, each community tried to overcome poverty and improve their lives through “Self-Help Efforts” of the people

themselves together with the local leaders, and collaboration amongst themselves. Local Governments played an important role to accompany such efforts of the people, encourage and support them. The Central Government also tried to provide maximum support to create an enabling environment for the Local Governments to carry out this task.

As seen above, Japan’s development was not attained by the Government’s efforts alone, but it was basically each citizen, communities and groups (small companies) who made efforts to develop themselves. The Government appreciated, accompanied, encouraged and nurtured such people’s efforts.

### Government cannot do everything alone

Just like the Japanese Government at that time, the GoT is facing a similar challenge of limited resources in terms of budget as well as staff inadequacy to pursue huge and diversified tasks. It is almost impossible for the Government to do everything all alone.

It was based on such analysis that PO-RALG and JICA perceived the most effective way of development in this Country is to take full advantage of its great virtue of “People’s Self-Help Efforts” to complement the Government’s efforts towards national/local development and improvement of people’s livelihood.

For that sake, the “Improved O&OD” Project considered that the key is to build an appropriate capacity of the Ward Extension Officers (Agriculture, Community Development, Education, Health, Livestock, etc.) who are in the frontline to accompany community people and collaborate with them. They are expected to be a bridge between people and the Government.

### Training the Ward Extension Staff to facilitate community people

The Project established an innovative mechanism to train such extension officers in a very practical way. It will enable them to facilitate the community so that people can confirm their felt needs, organize them and carry out activities by themselves whenever possible instead of waiting for the Government to do for them. Such trained extension officers are called “Ward Facilitators” (WFs). WFs, after having been trained, visit the Villag-

es and Vitongoji frequently. With their facilitation, community people implement their priority projects by themselves within their capacity. The following are some examples of what has been happening in such villages (It is a pity that we can show only two cases among dozens.):

### Villages are changing dramatically with Improved O&OD

**Maseyu Village:** Pre-Primary School in all 5 Vitongoji and Completion of an Unfinished Dispensary

If you drive from Morogoro to Dar es Salaam, you will find Maseyu Village along the highway within a 30 minutes’ drive. The villagers’ long worry was to send their children to pre-primary school far away located across the dangerous highway. After a tragic accident of a boy killed by a snake on his way back from school, the villagers stood up and decided

to construct their own pre-primary school in their respective Vitongoji. WF played a crucial role to facilitate them to decide, agree and organize themselves to realize their dream. After two years, all the 5 Vitongoji have constructed their own pre-primary schools which reduced time to commute and risks of accident, and also raised enrolment rate dramatically. Not only did they construct, but they also looked for someone who can teach within or around their community and paid their salary.

Morogoro District Council (DC) recognized such precious efforts of Maseyu people with high appreciation. These schools now have been registered by the Government and teachers have been assigned official-

ly. Being convinced with this experience of accomplishing pre-primary

school construction, the villagers decided to complete the unfinished dispensary that has been abandoned for years. It took almost another 7 years. But they continued without giving up, advancing little by little, and finally completed it recently. Morogoro DC supported them by providing material for roofing, and now assigning medical staff. The dispensary started its services in July 2018.

People have strong confidence to WFs and Local Government, and they proudly say that their village is the BEST in Tanzania. Furthermore, the Village Executive Officer (VEO) won the election and became a District Councillor, leading the development of the area.

### Mang’ula B & Mshikamano: Beautiful Mindset Change of the Villagers

Mang’ula B Village is located in

Kilombelo District on the way from Mikumi to Ifakara. Facing the gate of Udzungwa National Park, it is considered as a Semi-Urban village with a lot of movement and migration of people. Thus, it was one of the most difficult villages for the WFs to organize their “Self-Help Efforts”.

“We had never trusted the Government Officers before.” A woman of this village told us and continued; “They seldom visit us, and when they come, they command things that we don’t want. But these WFs were different. We found them always accompanying us in our activities, listen to us, and they are a part of the community now. We consider them as part of our family.” (Similar scenery can be seen in the photo) “I didn’t contribute my land before when TASAF came to construct roads and demanded it. But this time I did, because it was ourselves who decided to make this road together with WFs.”

Mang’ula B village is now one of the best villages in the Project. People are united. They trust the WFs and Village Leaders. The Village Chairperson, Hamisi was elected, since he was a very active group leader of such activities.

They constructed 14km of road in the village, and built a bridge so that their children can go to school crossing the river safely (see the photo), set bee hives to avoid elephants to enter and disturb farms, etc. They

also decided to construct some business spaces to rent so that the village can have additional revenue sources to support more activities.

“I had never attended a village assembly before.” One of the women’s group leaders told us; “I had never thought it was for us. It was for the leaders. But now I do attend, because having been working in our group activities, I felt that I need to participate in decision making of the village that affect us.”

She is now attending village meetings, not because “she has to”, but because “she wants to”.

### We have a DREAM

It is our sincere dream that Tanzania will have such beautiful villages throughout the Country, full of vitality and ownership towards their own development, based on strong patriotism, pride and love to their own community. We do believe that it is very possible in this Country, developing close collaborative relationship between the communities and the Local Governments, together with strong support from the Central Government to ensure an enabling environment for it.

By doing so, the Government can provide good services to the people with minimum cost while concentrating its limited resources on vigorous and dynamic national economic development, just like how

[Improved O&OD has been approved by the Government as part of National Planning and Implementation system in October 2019, and it will be introduced to all the 26 Regional Secretariat and 185 LGAs through Initial Orientation Workshops to the concerned officers from January 2020].



A Ward Facilitator (Left) accompanies a hamlet group representative (Right) while engaging in the field watering. (Mughunga ward, Singida District).



Villagers in Mang’ula B construct community road in 2015.



Construction of Community Bridge continues for finishing in 2019.



Villagers in Mshikamano started to construct Community Bridge in 2016 and now utilize the bridge for economic activity and receipt of the education in nearby village.