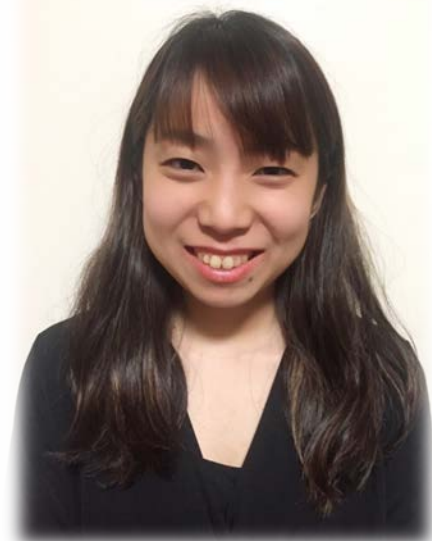


Luka Ishino Reflects on her Internship with JICA U.S.A.



My name is Luka Ishino, and I interned with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) U.S.A. Office from February 3 to March 6, 2020. I applied for the internship with three aspirations in mind: (1) understand the roles that actors such as the World Bank Group, UN Organizations, Development Finance Institutions, think tanks and NGOs play in creating global trends in international development; (2) figure out how global trends and U.S. development policies impact Japanese development practices; and (3) improve my data collection and analysis skills.

During the first week of my internship, JICA staffers provided me with an overview of JICA's activities and discussed the roles that the JICA U.S.A. Office and international organizations play in Washington D.C. They also provided me with background on U.S. foreign assistance policies, the U.S.-China relationship, as well as the changing realities of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Through these discussions, I was able to learn more about the characteristics that define Japanese foreign aid, such as its focus on respecting the intentions of partner governments and its large share of infrastructure development projects. Japan proportionally allocates more funding to infrastructure development compared to the U.S. government, which plays a leading role in humanitarian assistance and investments in health, with strong coordination from civil society actors. Furthermore, I also learned about trends in international financial flows for development, as well as the impact that diplomatic relations can have on foreign aid policies. In addition, I was given the opportunity to accompany JICA mission members from Tokyo to their meetings with organizations like the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB Invest, USAID and the Center for Global Development. These were truly eye-opening experiences for me to learn about how these organizations are coping with difficult challenges and are inventing in measures that help mobilize more private financing in aid projects.



Luka Ishino, current student at Keio University, interns with the JICA U.S.A. Office

From my second week, I also worked on conducting my own research on mobilizing additional finance to help achieve the SDGs. According to the World Investment Report that was published by UNCTAD in 2014, we will need annual investments of approximately \$3.3 trillion to \$4.5 trillion from now until 2030 to meet SDG targets. However, current annual investment is only \$1.4 trillion – resulting in a \$2.5 trillion investment gap. To fill the gap, we must mobilize private capital by leveraging public sector dollars. Through my research, I highlighted several challenges that we face in capitalizing private finance, and I also analyzed current public and private commitments by

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examining disaggregated data by region, income, sector and instruments. Moreover, I compared examples of blended finance models from the IFC and JICA's Private Sector Investment Finance to then share some suggestions on how JICA can expand its activities. Throughout conducting my research, my colleagues from JICA provided me with informative advice to not only help analyze and collect data, but also with formulating a coherent story to present my findings.

In addition to consulting with JICA U.S.A. staff, I was also very fortunate to be given many opportunities to speak with JICA secondees. They provided me with background on their organizations, explained the work they conduct, discussed the challenges for the sectors and regions in which they work in (health, education, energy, infrastructure, climate change, governance, as well as MENA, Africa, Central and South America), and also how their organizations address these challenges. Through these discussions, I was able to gain a better understanding of the different modes of bilateral and multilateral assistance, in addition to each organization's stances and beliefs. My discussions with the secondees were not only limited to aid trends, but rather they also gave me valuable advice on professional development and setting forth a career path. For example, one of the secondees told me, "The organization that you work for does not matter. What matters is the issue you are passionate about tackling." It made me realize that if I become specialized in an issue area, I will find a role that fits me best, regardless of the situation. Another secondee also told me that in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it's most important to be innovative and push boundaries by introducing ideas that can change the world through the use of the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). While in years past, development assistance required enormous investment from the global North to developing countries, the secondee explained that nowadays it is widely recognized that "co-creation" is necessary to create an enabling environment for emerging markets. Given stagnant ODA levels and rising questions regarding the efficiency of the traditional donor approach, he added that utilizing new approaches that partner with the private sector to de-risk opportunities that could yield high profitability is increasingly important. His conversation with me helped me realize that I should expand my horizons from not only following development assistance issues, but also simultaneously monitoring changes in global digital transformation. For these insights I am very grateful to have had the privilege of meeting and speaking with these inspiring people over the last month.

Although I was an intern at the JICA U.S.A. Office for only a limited time, I am confident this experience will serve as an important milestone in my life. The insight and perspectives I gained from this internship has deeply inspired and enriched me by broadening my perspectives. I once heard that the course of our lives will be largely dictated by what we have set in motion by the age of 35, so I very determined to keep challenging myself by making the most from what I have learned from this experience.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Takao Shimokawa, and to every member of the JICA U.S.A. Office. I feel grateful from the bottom of my heart for this valuable opportunity to work with the incredible people of JICA.