
5 Years from the Agreement. What's Happening in the Community?

Japanese NGOs' fact-finding on ProSAVANA, an agricultural development program implemented in Mozambique by Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Presenters:

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Commentators:

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Moderator:

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On October 29th, 2014, Japanese NGOs' field research result presentation regarding ProSAVANA was held at the Members' Hall of the House of Representatives in Japan. The event was organized by the following Japanese NGOs: Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC), Africa Japan Forum (AJF), OXFAM Japan, and Concerned Citizen Group with the Development of Mozambique-Japan. 6 Japanese Diet members from 4 political parties of both the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors also joined as supporting members of the event, as they have serious concerns about Japanese government's policy on its Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Mozambique.

Prior to this event, the NGOs dispatched 5 personnel to Mozambique, each one's schedule varies from July 22nd to the end of August this year, to conduct field research with Mozambican farmers and civil groups. The aim of the trip was to listen to the voices of local farmers by attending the Second People's Triangular Conference on ProSAVANA and interviewing, and to find out issues around ProSAVANA which have not been disclosed enough to the eyes of the Japanese civil society. NGOs had done their initial field research in Mozambique back in December 2013, and their fact-finding this time was also to see what has been happening since then. Joint research with JICA, Japan International Cooperation Agency, was also included in

the duration of the schedule.

The meeting room was packed with over 100 people, most of whom were NGO members, researchers, academics, development consultants, including some Diet members and those from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event was reported by several Japanese news media.

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To start the event, basic information of ProSAVANA was given to the audience; first launched in 2009 by the government of Japan, Brazil, and Mozambique based upon Brazil's Cerrado 'experiences' (PRODECER: Japan-Brazil Cooperation Program for Agricultural Development of Cerrado), implemented by public-private partnership, targeted the area along the line of Nacala corridor, expecting large-scale produce of soy and maize in vast "uncultivated" tropical savannah area to export, and so forth.

After they gave basic information about the areas they visited-- Niassa, Nampla, and Zambezia, where more than 4 million people live and most of whom are small-scale farmers – they shared witness talk of local farmers whose land were plundered or threatened to be taken by international corporates. During the interview with ProSAVANA's focal point at IIAM (National Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique), it was found clear that the research target of the Brazilian institution (EMBRAPA) had been "production system for large-scale farming that could be applied to the region along the Nacala Corridor".

Other evidences related to the ProSAVANA program include:(1) local farmers' removal from their farmland and workers human rights abuse by the agribusiness company funded by the ProSAVANA; (2) controversial methods/process of selecting and newly forming "local beneficiaries" of ProSAVANA program; (3)a farmers' forum being included as a "local beneficiaries" of ProSAVANA without their recognition; (4) inadequate method of "support of farmers associations" to local reality. The teams also found out that one of the ProSAVANA's projects explained as the Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) described in the leaked ProSAVANA's Master Plan report 2 was implemented as ProSAVANA's PEM although the authenticity of the report and presence of QIPs was denied.

A remark of the provincial representative of the local farmers unions at the Second People's Triangular Conference on ProSAVANA (July 24, 2014, Maputo) was also shared. The farmer pointed out the skepticism of local farmers towards ProSAVANA and repeated intimidations by local government and provincial governor mentioning "those who are against ProSAVANA will be imprisoned".

During the event, the contents of a Brazilian TV program on an agribusiness channel, an interview of a coordinator of FGV-projetos (the ProSAVANA's Brazilian consultation institution), shown at the conference was also shared. On the program, the Brazilian coordinator emphasized: (1) Mozambique has vast uncultivated land with better soil but without disease or locusts seen in the Cerrado and strategically more prosperous locations being close to Asia; (2) ProSAVANA is a replica of PRODECER; (3) "Nacala Corridor Fund" initiated and run by FGV-projetos, whose purpose is to invite corporation around the world to invest in Nacala corridor area.

Many other witness talk and evidences were presented at the event. And then, several key questions were raised and shared by the NGOs to the audience.

1. JICA and Japanese Foreign Ministry repeatedly say that the project is to support small scale and family farmers. However, the initial targets and direction of ProSAVANA prioritizing external investors and large-scale production of grain for exports has been continuing by ProSAVANA related institutions and even within the ProSAVANA scheme. Thus, it is no longer triangular cooperation, but there are two ProSAVANAs: Brazilian ProSAVANA still focusing on large-scale grain production and investment and Japanese ProSAVANA shifting their focus on small-scale farmers.
2. Northern Mozambique, the targeted area, is fertile enough. Since late 1980s, local farmers have been actively forming their own associations, and these are making a lot of progress in the sense of production, marketing, protection of their land rights. They are connected to other social movements even outside of the country, and contributing a lot to the society. Thus, many local farmers and their associations find it awkward towards the approach and "models" of the ProSAVANA's project (PEM), which "outsiders" such as JICA's consultants impose local women to create "new associations" as means of "supporting poor farmers".
3. During the interviews accompanied by JICA, several different local governmental officials clearly said that there were no land-grabbing cases in the region, more agribusiness investments were welcome. But the fact is that there are so many cases of land-grabbing in the region, and it is gaining speed under the context of global tendency of land accumulation and Nacala Corridor Economic Development that the Japanese Prime Minister Abe promised 700million Japanese Yen.
4. According to JICA's explanation, if Japan withdraws from ProSAVANA program, global tendency of land-grabbing and damaging development will accelerate. However, such explanation has no ground, as Japanese government itself explains that public-private partnership has nature to attract investments, but is simply their excuse in order to carry on ProSAVANA program.
5. The local government and company are giving pressure to local farmers and civil society

organization that conducted this joint research due to JICA's request of "fact-finding" actions regarding some of the claims in the above. Under current deteriorating democratic governance of the country, this kind of request easily causes abuses of power to local people, and its total dependence on local government for information gathering should be questioned.

6. Thus, as an initiator and a member of this triangular program, Japanese government has full responsibility for protecting Mozambican local farmers not only of their physical safety but also of their right to own, to work, and to make decision.

The presentations by those who visited Mozambique to conduct research ended by emphasizing the importance of suspending ProSAVANA for wiping the slate clean which was a request of more than 20 Mozambican organizations, unions and networks expressed in the "Open Letter" to the leaders of 3 countries in May 2013. The policy recommendations signed by 4 Japanese NGOs organizing the event were read out, and the following is formally requested besides suspending the program: (1) complying with JICA's Environmental Social Considerations Guidelines; (2) grasping and improving governance; (3) improving transparency and information sharing; then (4) drastically reconsidering the program, with local farmers, farmers associations and civil society organizations.

After the fact-finding presentations, three experts shared their comments based on their specialties.

“Aspect of global trend”

- Global trend is shifting from development to investment. In fact, an investment agreement was made between Japan and Mozambique.
- Before TICAD V, implementing proactive and lucrative agribusiness in Mozambique was discussed.
- Issues of land ownership and contracted-farming exist.
- Project that requires a great amount of social cost fails. It has historically been proven.

“Consumer and taxpayer’s perspectives”

- Risks of GMO soy and maize has been attracting much attention from Japanese consumers. The idea of large-scale produce of non-GMO soy in Mozambique by sacrificing farmers’ land and work was even more shocking to many Japanese consumers.
- “Good/safe food” should include the food making process where farmers’ work and life are not exploited.
- Government’s ODA is funded by our tax. Tax should be used for good but not for exploiting farmers’ life.

“Risk and ODA Charter, accountability, consistency in policy”

- Risk management is highly important than ever when implementing ODA. When implementing a large-scale development programs, such as ProSAVANA, anticipation and prevention of various types of risks should be considered. However, JICA and Government do not have adequate measures.
- Poor accountability to both Mozambican and Japanese citizens. Majority of local farmers contacted do not have enough information to make decision on what is presented in front of them. Majority of Japanese citizens, taxpayers, hardly know about ProSAVANA either.
- Lacking consistency in ODA policy. Three years ago, at the Aid Effectiveness Conference in Busan, Japanese government introduced ProSAVANA, a Triangular Program, as a successful example, and explained as a joint large-scale agricultural development program with Brazil. I attended to the conference, and heard this. Now, its aim has been said to be changed to support small-scale farmers. However, what is visible in Mozambique is its continuous focus on large scale agriculture.
- Mere provision of technical support does not help small-scale and/or family farmers. Having a comprehensive approach, such as provision of legal support, keeping environment in good condition, and consideration of political situation, rather helps them.
- ODA Charter has been released by the Japanese government. The issues pointed out above, risk, accountability, and constituency, are hardly mentioned in the Charter but are rather worsened. As citizens, our positive participation to the public comment regarding this Charter is highly recommended.

From the floor, a JICA staff commented as follows.

- From the presentations, audience today might have had a wrong idea towards JICA at some level. Our program has not invited any large-scale investors. The corporate reported in the presentation said that they had not grabbed land. However, JICA will continue investigating what has really being going on in Mozambique.
- Relating to the issue above, we understood that catching adequate information and understand them, as well as to share those information with partners and civil society are important.
- We hope to exchange dialogue with civil society of Japan and Mozambique.
- The Japanese government respects the ownership of the Mozambique government just like in any ODA programs. We also understood at some level that we have responsibility for good governance of the country we are assisting.
- Lastly, we felt that JICA was welcomed by the local farmers as they kindly prepared bamboo mattresses on the road as we came to their village.

At the end of the event, three Diet members also shared their views.

Michihiro ISHIBASHI who has visited Mozambique as a members of ODA Special Committee at the House of Councillors and requesting the Japanese government to respond faithfully to "Open Letter" submitted by farmers emphasized importance of monitoring the entire process of ProSAVANA since this is a symbolic case of recently appeared new approach of Japanese ODA, and affects current discussions of ODA charter. He has promised that he would continue to following up this case and also to contribute to disclosure of information and documents related to ProSAVANA.

Eri TOKUNAGA who is a leading board member of Agriculture Committee at the House of Councillors emphasized that this year was "International Year of Family Farming (IYFF)", and importance of protecting rights of small-scale family farmers in Japan and in Africa-Mozambique. She shared deep concerns on current global and domestic tendency of sacrificing local farmers for profit of corporates, and promised to continue her attentions on this issue.

Naoto SAKAGUCHI who was UN electoral officer for the first multinational elections right after the war in Cabo Delgado Province/Mozambique in 1994 emphasized importance of democratic and fair elections and state system for fair and just development. As a member of Foreign Affairs Committee at the House of Representatives, he shared his concerns over current political situation of Mozambique, and claimed that democratic governance is indispensable for progress of society, and that the Japanese government should contribute to democratic change of developing countries more proactively. He also promised to continue to watch the program

VIDEO (Japanese)

<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/54636313>