

# Working Hand-in-hand for the Just World

Africa Japan Forum HAYASHI Tatsuo

2009 UNU/UNESCO International Conference on Africa and Globalization

- Learning from the Past, Enabling a Better Future -

United Nations University

September 28 - 29, 2009

Address made at the "2009 UNU/UNESCO International Conference on Africa and Globalization

- Learning from the Past, Enabling a Better Future -"

United Nations University, September 28 - 29, 2009

Visitors to Africa are attracted by "humanity" and "dignity" although African people have been facing difficulties for survival. Africans are supporting each other. Now we need to control the greed of the global business that hinders universal access to food, water, health and education. It is the time to globalize "inter-dependence" , the value of Africa.

I have been working as a medical doctor in Africa and Asia. More than one million of drought victims died in Ethiopia 25 years ago. It was a natural disaster. When I researched the most affected village, I was afraid to be attacked by the drought victims because they were extremely hungry and I had some food. However, on the contrary, they shared their last food with us instead of attacking us. I learnt "human being" can keep "dignity" in any condition.

Ten years ago, I met a child who was affected by HIV in a hospice. HIV affects the next generation's health and human right. HIV is widening the gap between man/women, urban/rural, rich/poor and who can survive/who cannot survive. The destinies of PWHs (People Living with HIV) in the world had been equal until 1996, when the combination antiretroviral treatment has completed. It was "miracle" in high income countries which brought their survival. But the poor who live in developing countries cannot access to the treatment. The treatment was too expensive because of the WTO patent policies with global legal enforcement. The WTO policies made the gap between poor/rich and who can survive/who cannot survive. So this boy stayed in a hospice.

In Kenya, PWHs/mothers are supporting each other. They say "If you die earlier than me, I will take care of your children. But if I die earlier, please look after my children." We enjoyed dancing together. Some of the mothers asked me "When shall you come again?" I answered "Maybe one year later." She said "It's too far." It really was too late. When I went back there, they all had died.

HIV is not only health problem but also human right abuse. "Stigma" hurts PWHs in their school and in their job. Some said "Stigma is more painful than be killed." In Africa millions of people have been

affected by HIV, but nobody liked talking about it. It had been dominated by “Fear” and “Silence”.

In South Africa, one PWH started to talk about HIV and broke the silence. I am a doctor, but a patient knows the problem better than I do. It is part of his life. So the patient is a leading player. Sometimes a patient does a greater job rather than a doctor. He did save the lives of 2 million PVAs (People living with AIDS) in the world. He organized protest marches and asked the universal access to the HIV treatment. Global action and support have come to challenge and change WTO policies. More than one million voices supported the movement. Finally WTO policies changed to protect public health rights and access to medicine for all. After the rule changed, “survival” has come. The children at the hospice can access to the medicine. We could start to bridge the gap between who can survive and who cannot survive. The change has saved lives not only in Africa but also in other developing countries.

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals were agreed. In 2005, we NGOs organized the global call for action against poverty. It was the advocacy of the debt cancellation and not the charity action like 20 years ago for Ethiopia. African friends said “We are not beggars. We need more just world.” More than 4 million White Bands were sold in Japan. This showed the will of people for the poverty reduction.

In 2008, historical hunger has come. It happened by sudden rise in price of food and fuel, although there were enough resources in the world for all. Twenty-five years ago the hunger was a natural disaster. But the hunger this time is a man made calamity through global speculation. Food, water, health and education are not for sale. We need to control the global business that hinder universal access to them. Now we need voices to change the global policies, to gain “survival.”

What we should learn from Africa is “humanity towards others”; “Ubuntu” in Uguni, “Boto” in Soto. It is the time to globalize “inter-dependence”. Let’s globalize the value of Africa.

The world is affected by poverty not only in the developing countries but in the developed countries as well, as the gap between the rich and the poor continues widen. All those affected by injustice in Japan and in Africa need to work together. Let’s work hand-in-hand for the Just World.

Let’s raise the voices, change the world and gain the survival and hope. Thank you.