

# mundi



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Special Feature

## The Middle East Today

# Ten Years After the Arab Spring





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\* Information within is current at the time of the publication (12/2020)



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Arab Spring. We look back at changes in the democratization movement and follow up on JICA's efforts in various countries.

## Prologue Vol.26

# Close Friends Sharing the Same World

Article: Mr. Salam UNAGAMI

It has been over 30 years since my interest in traditional music inspired my regular visits to the Middle East and North Africa.

In Morocco, I have visited many festivals from "Gnaoua World Music Festival" that attracted over 500,000 people in Essaouira, to "World Sacred Music Festival" in the ancient city of Fez, and even "Joujouka Festival" in a small mountain village. Tourism is the one of the biggest industry in Morocco. Regional revitalization festivals are held across the country almost every weekend from spring to autumn, so, you can enjoy festival hopping easily.



Illustration: Mr. NAKAMURA Satoshi

With over 15 million people, Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city where people from around the world have been coming and going for over 2,500 years. Once you step into the city at night, you can easily access live performances of every genre from folk and traditional music to jazz, classical, hip-hop, rock and belly dancing. I feel a deep connection with the independent musicians and the music scene, and have been covering them for more than 20 years.

In Israel, I have visited "Israel Music Showcase Festival" organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGOs 5 times. The local musicians dream of success in America or Europe, because their music scene is too small to earn & live on. The most talented musicians graduated from music schools and trained at jazz clubs tours in Europe, the US, and Japan. Many of them return to their own complex Jewish roots and play their own unique Jazz.

As I continued to research, my interests gradually expanded to the culinary scene.

In Turkey, I learned home cooking from my friends and their mothers, also from top chefs.

In Israel, I visited many friends who had different backgrounds—Eastern European, Uzbek, Moroccan and more. They taught me how to make their versions of Jewish food.

Through my research, I continue to introduce and spreading the Middle Eastern Music to Japanese listeners through radio programs of NHK FM, J-WAVE and more.

For culinary, I have published several recipe books, and now, I have my own cooking classes.

Meanwhile, many of my friends from the Middle East started to visit Japan.

Some Israeli jazzmen received a grant from the government for touring Japan. Many chefs from the region came to visit for Japanese cuisine. Until February of 2020, just before the pandemic, taking them out to casual-eating pubs ("izakaya") around Ni-shi-Ogikubo, Tokyo, or hot spring inns in Hakone, Kanagawa was like my monthly routine!

However, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have completely halted these active international exchange. Music and gastronomy industries have been significantly affected by it. Yet, I have been able to bridge the distance by enjoying online activities together, which have increased dramatically under the pandemic. On social media, I see selfies of friends who are avoiding the crowds in cities by staying at their parents' house in the Mediterranean and enjoying an ocean swim, even in November. Armenian friends in Nagorno-Karabakh, where fierce fighting has continued since September, have been posting videos of music performances every day to protest.

I feel the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the world to become homogenized at an even more rapid pace. There are good and bad aspects to this, but all of us—in Japan and the Middle East—are all living in the same world in the same 2020. It would be more obvious when the pandemic ends, and foreign tourists return to Tokyo, Tel Aviv and Istanbul. The Middle East and Japan are within a half-day distance with a direct flight. Both physically and mentally, we are not as far apart as we were.

\*\*Gnaoua are an ethnic group who were brought to North Africa as slaves from West Africa after the Middle Ages, and the term also refers to religious music rituals they perform.

### Mr. Salam UNAGAMI

Mr. Salam UNAGAMI is a music critic, DJ, and Middle Eastern food researcher. He travels regularly to the Middle East and India, continuing to research the local music and culinary scene. In addition to serving as a presenter on NHK FM's music program "Ongaku Yuurankou" and J-WAVE's Middle Eastern music program "Oriental Music Show," he is also the author of the Middle Eastern cuisine recipe book "MEYHANE TABLE More! (LD&K) and other works. Mr. Salam UNAGAMI can communicate in English, French, Hindi, and Japanese. He was born in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, and graduated from the School of Political Science and Economics at Meiji University.



Interview by a Junior JICA staff Member

# Mr. IKEGAMI Akira, please explain what Arab Spring means!

Ten years ago, today's junior staff members in their first or second year of employment were only junior or high school students absorbed by schoolwork and club activities.

Looking back, the international situation at that time was a distant world from today. Now that I'm in the same age group as the young people at the center of the Arab Spring, I think again about the situation they faced and the democratization movement that followed.



## Momentum of the Democratization Movement that Spread from Tunisia

— Ten years ago, I remember the news in Japan being filled daily with reports on the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. What kind of event was the Arab Spring which occurred around that same time in the Middle East?

**Mr. IKEGAMI Akira (hereinafter, Mr. IKEGAMI):** The Arab Spring was a series of democratization movements that spread across the Middle East starting in 2011. A democratization movement generally refers to a movement against an autocratic government that demands the country to change its political system to one under which decisions are made democratically. An incident in Tunisia, North Africa in December 2010 triggered such a series of movements. It started from an unemployed young man in his 20s trying to sell vegetables from a stall had his stall confiscated by the police, and out of desperation, he responded by self-immolating.

In Islam, burning one's own body is strictly forbidden as it signifies the loss of the body when the soul is resurrected, and also because it depicts hell as described in the Quran. The video, which was shocking in both senses, spread across Facebook and other social networking services (SNS), triggering protests against the regime of the time, especially by young people who were fed up with the high unemployment rate.

— The democratization movement spread from Tunisia to other countries, didn't it?

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** In Tunisia, the incident gave rise to riots in the capital in January 2011, forcing the president to resign. The democratization movement in Tunisia spread to other countries, and in Egypt, the Mubarak administration, which had endured for 30 years, collapsed in February 2011 and led to a presidential election being held in May 2012. In Libya, clashes between dissidents and the regime broke out after February 2011. The regime was condemned by the international community due to the numerous casualties,

# Special Feature The Middle East Today Ten Years after the Arab Spring

Around ten years ago, the Arab Spring occurred in the Middle East. This special feature recounts how the local people, as well as JICA, faced the issues raised by the youth-led democratization movement. What kind of new awareness did the Arab Spring introduce to the world?

Article: Ms. KUBOTA Mari | Photography: Mr. TAKAOKA Hiroshi

\* For the photo shoot, no one spoke and masks were temporarily removed. Thorough measures to prevent COVID-19 infection were in place for the interview.



and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces began military action in support of the dissidents, which eventually led to the collapse of the 42-year Gaddafi regime in August and the liberation of all of Libya. In Yemen, President Ali Abdullah Saleh was demanded to step down in August of that same year, and a new president was elected in February of the following year, 2012. In these countries where powerful regimes maintained a strong hold of power for decades, the actions of ordinary citizens triggered the collapse of regimes one after the other. These events also impacted other Middle Eastern countries, giving more momentum to democratization movements in many places.

— **It is surprising to know that changes occurred in not just one country, but several countries one-after-another at the same time. I've heard that the power of social media was a major factor in the spread of these movements.**

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** Actually, at that time, only young people with considerable wealth had

smartphones and the ability to use social media. In spite of the fact that many people who could not read nor write and few who owned smartphones, the Qatar-based satellite TV station, Al Jazeera, played a major role in expanding the movement. The station broadcasts in Arabic, which is the common language understood by people in all Arab societies. It can also be viewed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across national borders. Before each nation had regulated its media, but times had changed and there was no way for them to block the radio waves from satellites. Also, while it is normally quite difficult to gather people for a movement, most Muslims gather in mosques every Friday for mass prayer. I think the fact that this movement was able to develop after prayer time was also a major factor in generating so much power. The combination of various factors that included social media, Al Jazeera, and mass prayer culminated in a public demand for democracy was overwhelmingly large.

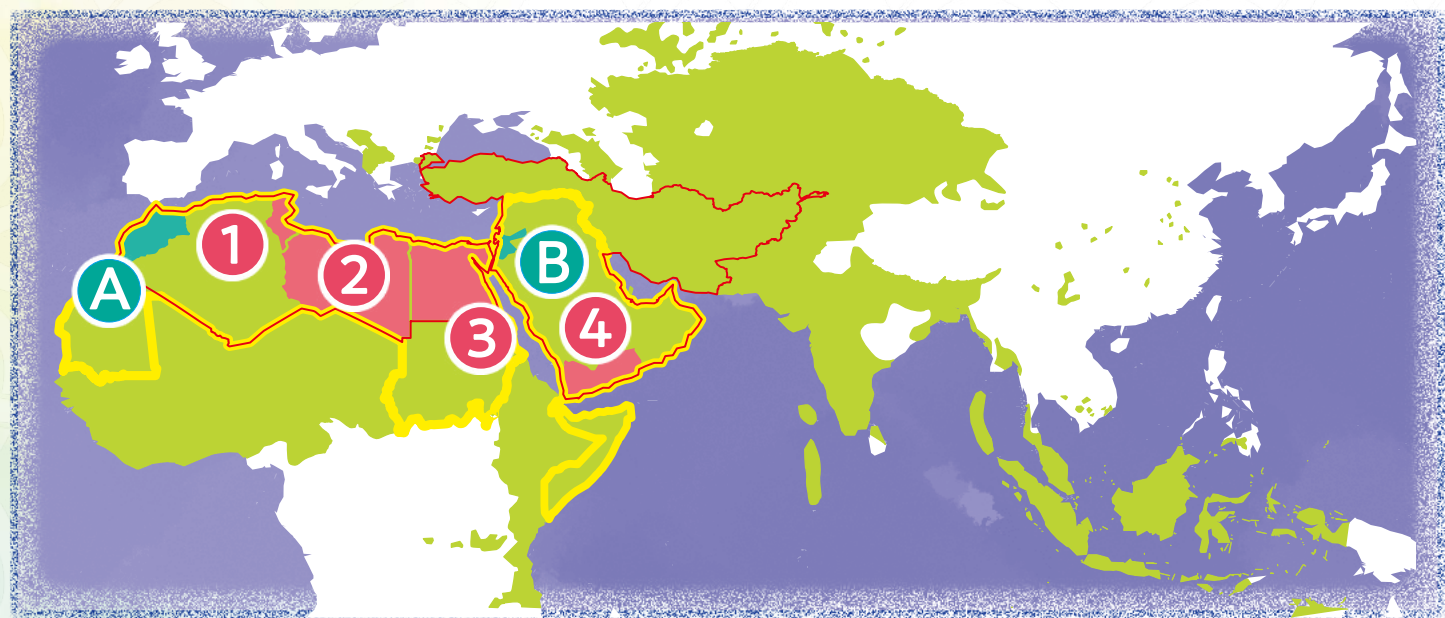
**After the Arab Spring**

— **What happened after the Arab Spring?**

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** In Tunisia where the Arab Spring began, democratization progressed more steadily than in other countries, with the enactment of a new constitution, parliamentary elections and a presidential election. This was largely due to the fact that moderate Islamic political parties remained in Tunisia. As the democratization movement spread to other countries, Syria, Libya and Yemen fell into civil wars and Tunisian Islamic militants moved to these countries. The moderate Islamic parties that remained in the country were able to advance the democratization movement as a direct result of their will to govern the country in cooperation with non-Islamic parties under a modern political system. While democratization movements also emerged in Jordan and Morocco, in cases where there was monarchy under a king revered by the people, the turmoil was settled without any decisive conflict, and constitutional reforms were established in both

countries.

In places with harsh winters, the word “spring” is often associated with positive images such as the melting of snow. However, as people in the Middle East say, “after spring comes the unbearable summer,” there were cases where the Arab Spring did not necessarily always produce good results. In some countries, despite a president being democratically elected after the democratization movement, the government was soon replaced by another. In Syria, the government took a violent stance against the democratization movement and the civil war between the government and dissidents continues today. The death toll has reached approximately 500,000 people and over 5.5 million refugees have fled to neighboring countries, resulting in what has come to be known as the greatest humanitarian crisis of the century. As mentioned, the situation that has emerged in each country is drastically different.



**Countries that amended their constitutions**

**A** Morocco  
**B** Jordan

**Countries whose governments have changed during the Arab Spring**

**1** Tunisia\*  
**2** Libya  
**3** Egypt  
**4** Yemen

As the Middle East and Arab regions are defined differently depending on the organization, etc., this map may not match that of others. JICA classifies Turkey as a European region and Afghanistan as a South Asian region.

Region with a large Muslim population

Arab region

Middle East region

\* New constitution was enacted in 2014



Mr. Peter MACDIARMID /Staff/Getty Images

**What was the Arab Spring?**

The Arab Spring was a series of democratization movements in early 2011 that began in Tunisia and spreaded to other countries across the Middle East. Regimes were replaced in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, while in other countries the governments accepted the demands of the democratization movement. One of the unique features of the democratization movement, was that ordinary people who previously had little opportunity for political participation, became the driving force for change. Those who participated in the democratization movement used social media (social networking services or SNS) such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as mediums such as satellite broadcasting to promote solidarity and to share information. This caused democratization movement to expand beyond national borders at an unprecedented speed.

**Chronology**

- December 2010**

  - Young man commits suicide by self-immolation in **Tunisia**.
- January 2011**

  - The Ben Ali regime collapses in **Tunisia** as the democratization movement (“Jasmine Revolution”) expands.
- February 2011**

  - The Mubarak regime in **Egypt** collapses, and the national army temporarily takes control of the country.
  - Demonstrations are held across **Yemen**, demanding the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.
  - In **Libya**, armed clashes break out between dissidents and the Gaddafi regime based in the eastern side of the country. Massive demonstrations also break out in **Bahrain, Morocco** and other countries.
- March 2011**

  - NATO forces, led by the US, Britain, and France, begin their military operations in **Libya** based on a resolution by the UN Security Council.
  - Democratization movements emerge in various parts of **Syria** and the government responds by a severe crackdown.
- April 2011**

  - Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) presents a plan to mediate between **the Yemeni government** and dissident groups.
- May 2011**

  - G8 decides to launch the “Deauville Partnership” to support democratization in the Middle East and North African countries.
- August 2011**

  - Dissidents seize control of **Libya’s capital**, Tripoli.
- October 2011**

  - **Libyan leader** Muammar Gaddafi dies, and dissident groups declare the liberation of all Libya.
- November 2011**

  - **Yemeni President** Ali Abdullah Saleh signs GCC’s mediation plan.
  - A transitional government cabinet is formed in **Libya**
- December 2011**

  - A national unity government is formed in **Yemen**
  - A new cabinet is formed in **Tunisia**.





**Mr. IKEGAMI Akira**

Journalist and Professor at Tokyo Institute of Technology. Born in 1950. Joined NHK as a reporter in 1973. Became independent in 2005 after working as a news reporter and program anchor. Author of several books, including "Tsutae-ru Chikara" (Power to Communicate), "Otona no Kyouyou" (Liberal Arts for Adults), and "Shin-Sensou Ron" (New Theory on War). Recognized with a Juzo Itami Award in 2013.

**Why have the results been so different from country to country?**

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** I think it depends on whether or not there was a democratic foundation. There was something memorable in the memoirs that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote. During a roundtable discussion with the Egyptian students after the fall of the Mubarak regime, she told them, "you are the ones who will create the future government," and the students were stunned. Although they had overthrown the long-running regime, they were relying on others to build a new country. As a result of advancing democratization without the traditions and foundation of democracy, dissatisfaction with the new government eventually emerged. If we look into how the rest of the world, including Japan, reacted to this situation, we may notice something further.

Perhaps the idea that we ourselves are the ones responsible for democracy is not something we are familiar with; the meaning behind the democratization movement and the democratic foundation—it is really thought-provoking, isn't it? Even for us living in Japan.

**Shifting the Image from "Middle East" to "Asia" Recapturing the Diverse attractiveness**

Most Japanese people are not very familiar with the Middle East, where the Arab Spring swept across the region. While the Middle East has an image of Arab oil tycoons and deserts, there are many people who also associate the area with conflict and

**terrorism. What are your personal impressions of the Middle East?**

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** I would like people to see the Middle East without the image of war. To begin with, people tend to regard the Middle East, Arabs, and Islam as the same thing. While there are many definitions of what "Arab" means, it is simply a person who speaks Arabic. As for "Islam," it is not a religion limited to the Middle East, but has spread across South Asia and Southeast Asia as well. Also, the "Middle East" refers to the land in West Asia and Northeastern Africa. It is very disappointing that people believe in stereotypes of the Middle East as "scary" despite the region, language and religion being all greatly diversified.

**Could you share any memorable experiences of your visits to the Middle East?**

When I was a student, I studied about the Middle East and Islam, and I also studied abroad in Turkey for a year!



**Mr. OGAWA Naohiro**  
In charge of Palestine

I love Middle Eastern food, especially tajine, couscous, hummus, and falafel.



**Ms. EBA Hinako**  
In charge of Morocco

I've never traveled to the Middle East; however, I am studying about it every day. I cannot wait to take a business trip there.



**Ms. NAGURA Satsuki**  
In charge of Iraq and Lebanon

I studied in Jordan for one year when I was a student, and shared a room with a Syrian and a Palestinian!



**Mr. OJIMA Naohiro**  
In charge of Palestine

*We interviewed Mr. IKEGAMI!*



**Q Why was the Arab Spring triggered by young people?**

It's been said that when a high percentage of the population consists of young people, it can lead to active social movements. After the post-World War II baby boom, and the boomer generation entered their 20s in the 1970s, student movements were widespread across the US and Japan. Around the time of the Arab Spring, the Middle East had a high population ratio of young people, who began to think about how to change society on their own as higher education became more widespread.



**Q What was one of the most impressive things you've seen in the Middle East so far?**

After visiting many places in the Middle East, I've gotten the impression that urban areas and refugee camps are quite different. For example, although there are many poor people in the urban area of Egypt, I felt the impression that they can somehow get by. In contrast, I felt that the reality was quite different in refugee camps, depending on where they were located. For example, in a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank, people had a sense of hopelessness that they would never get out, and it seemed like the young people had too much spare energy on their hands. However, in a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan, they built a busy shopping street called "Champs-Élysées," a street which I could feel a lively market and people with a thriving business mind-set.



**Q What country or place would you most like to visit again?**

I'd like to go to Chefchaouen, which is called the "Blue City" in Morocco, where everything is painted blue. The old town is beautiful and it's a nice place to relax and enjoy delicious foods like tagine and couscous. Jordan is also a very laid-back place. I'd love to visit every country in the Middle East, not just once, but twice of even three times. I miss the kebabs (laughs), and when I'm woken up early in the morning by the sound of the "Adhan", Islamic call to prayer, I feel like I've arrived in the Middle East.

**Mr. IKEGAMI:** They have a custom of welcoming guests by asking, "would you like to have a cup of tea?" In Jordan, when I told them that I am from Japan, they said, "Japan and the Middle East both belong to the same Asia," which left a deep impression. Indeed, when it comes to being part of the same Asia, I felt a sense of closeness with the Middle East. Especially, when I heard that Japan and Jordan would be playing in the same qualify-

ing round at the FIFA World Cup.

Whenever I visit the Middle East, I always check out the bookstores in town. It's interesting to see how many different Qurans are available, and also how many non-Quran books are being read. For example, the Iranian people are reading a wide variety of books despite being currently under the US economic sanctions. My future prediction is that Iran will become very powerful once sanc-

tions are lifted. The Middle East not only has incredible food, but there are also many kind people. It's a shame that people assume it's a scary place based on incidents and events that have occurred there. It would be great if more people could focus their attention on how diverse of a region it is.

I'll answer that!



Learn more about...

**Middle Eastern Countries**



**Q How long has the Middle East had an image of a conflict-ridden region?**

When I was still a student, I had a laid-back image of the Middle East as a peaceful land with deserts and camels. However, the Arab-Israeli Wars and the oil crisis caused by the Fourth Arab-Israeli War (Yom Kippur War) in 1973 led people to hoard toilet paper and such; a problem which made the Middle East affairs a much more relatable issue to us in Japan. The Gulf War, Iraq War, and terrorist incidents since then may have also given the Middle East region an image of conflict.



**Q What is your favorite local food?**

Kebabs. I love lamb meats. In Iran, one of the JICA people took me to a shop specializing in kebabs and it was truly delicious. In the Middle East, lamb meat does not have a bad smell because sheep are bled according to the "Halal" rules for them to be consumable by Muslims. I do not drink alcohol and love lamb meat. So, I guess I fit in perfectly in the Middle East! (laughs).





# Observing Countries through Data

Now that 10 years have passed since the Arab Spring, what is happening in the Middle East and its neighboring countries? Let's take a look at the situation in each country along with some statistics.

Special Feature

The Middle East Today: Ten Years after the Arab Spring



## Ease of Doing Business Index \*1

1st	Turkey	(33rd)
2nd	Morocco	(53rd)
3rd	Saudi Arabia	(62nd)
4th	Jordan	(75th)
5th	Tunisia	(78th)

\*1 The Ease of Doing Business Index is an index that compares and quantifies various aspects of doing business in 190 countries around the world, such as the number-of-days required to launch business and necessary costs in a standard case scenario (a domestic SME conducting business activities in the city with the largest economy in that country), across 10 categories such as business regulations. It is published annually by the World Bank. Figures shown are for 2020.

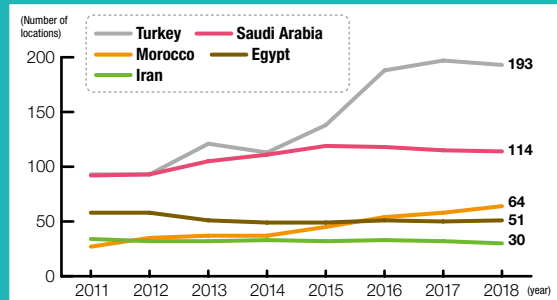
Rankings shown in parentheses ( ) are versus all 190 countries/regions.

World Bank Group (WBG), *Doing Business 2020: Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies*



## The number of branches by Japanese companies

The number of branches by Japanese companies have more than doubled since 2011, growing from 93 in Turkey and 27 to 64 in Morocco.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas (2012 - 2019)*.

The ancient capital of Isfahan was once recognized for accommodating half of the world's wealth and people.



**1 Islamic Republic of Iran**

- Population: 83.99 million
- GDP growth rate: -4.8%
- GDP per capita: 5,783 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 27.2%
- Press Freedom ranking: 173rd
- Corruption ranking: 146th

A National dish! Whole-grilled carp masgouf



**2 Republic of Iraq**

- Population: 40.22 million
- GDP growth rate: -1.0%
- GDP per capita: 5,523 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 25.2%
- Press Freedom ranking: 162nd
- Corruption ranking: 162nd

World Heritage Cappadocia and Hot Air Balloons



**3 Republic of Turkey**

- Population: 84.34 million
- GDP growth rate: 2.8%
- GDP per capita: 9,368 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 22.7%
- Press Freedom ranking: 154th
- Corruption ranking: 91st

Damascus Market, Souq al-Hamidiyyeh



**4 Syrian Arab Republic**

- Population: 17.50 million
- GDP growth rate: 2.4%
- GDP per capita: 981 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 21.1%
- Press Freedom ranking: 174th
- Corruption ranking: 178th

View of Beirut, the "Paris of the Middle East"



**5 Lebanese Republic**

- Population: 6.83 million
- GDP growth rate: 0.3%
- GDP per capita: 8,224 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 17.8%
- Press Freedom ranking: 102nd
- Corruption ranking: 137th

Floating in the Dead Sea



**6 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

- Population: 10.20 million
- GDP growth rate: 1.9%
- GDP per capita: 4,238 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 35.0%
- Press Freedom ranking: 128th
- Corruption ranking: 60th

There are more Christians than you might think! Christmas in Bethlehem



**7 Palestinian Authority**

- Population: 4.97 million \*2
- GDP growth rate: 0.9% \*3
- GDP per capita: 3,199 USD \*3
- Youth unemployment rate: 41.6%
- Press Freedom ranking: 137th
- Corruption ranking: -

\*2 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2019.  
\*3 World Bank, "World Development Indicators", 2018.

Notations on the map are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent JICA's views on the legal status or borders of the respective countries or regions. The five countries of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are located on the African continent, but classified as Middle East by JICA. Turkey is classified as a European country by JICA.

## Number of inbound international tourists

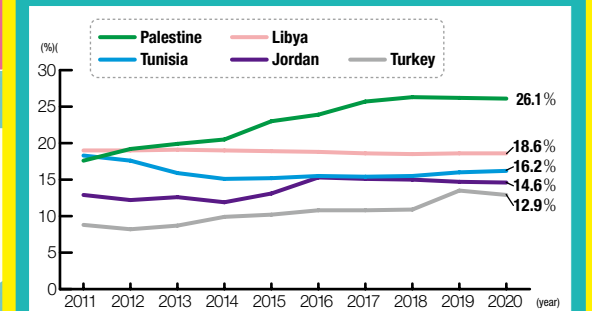
1st	Turkey	51.20 million
2nd	Saudi Arabia	17.50 million
3rd	Morocco	12.90 million
4th	Egypt	13.00 million
5th	Tunisia	9.40 million

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *Tourism Data Dashboard*; Figures shown are for 2019.

- Population: United Nations (UN). Figures shown are for 2020.
- GDP growth, GDP per capita: GDP: United Nations (UN). Figures shown are for 2018.
- Youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24 International Labour Organization (ILO), "Unemployment rate by sex and age-ILO 30 modelled estimates, Nov, 2019 (%)". Figures shown are 2020 estimates.
- Press freedom ranking: Reporters Without Borders (RSF), "2020 World Press Freedom Index". Figures shown are for 2020.
- Corruption ranking: Transparency International (TI) "Corruption Perceptions Index 2019". Figures shown are for 2019. The higher the rank, the lower the corruption level. Japan is ranked 20th.

## Unemployment rate

The (estimated) unemployment rate for 2011-20 is high in Palestine, followed by Libya.



International Labour Organization (ILO), "Unemployment rate by sex and age-ILO 30 modelled estimates, Nov, 2019 (%)"



**8 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

- Population: 34.81 million
- GDP growth rate: 2.2%
- GDP per capita: 23,217 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 27.9%
- Press Freedom ranking: 170th
- Corruption ranking: 51st



**9 Republic of Yemen**

- Population: 29.83 million
- GDP growth rate: -1.3%
- GDP per capita: 936 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 23.9%
- Press Freedom ranking: 167th
- Corruption ranking: 177th



**10 Arab Republic of Egypt**

- Population: 102.33 million
- GDP growth rate: 5.3%
- GDP per capita: 2,538 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 30.0%
- Press Freedom ranking: 166th
- Corruption ranking: 106th



**11 Libya**

- Population: 6.87 million
- GDP growth rate: 17.9%
- GDP per capita: 5,147 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 50.9%
- Press Freedom ranking: 164th
- Corruption ranking: 168th



**12 Republic of Tunisia**

- Population: 11.82 million
- GDP growth rate: 2.5%
- GDP per capita: 3,450 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 36.5%
- Press Freedom ranking: 72nd
- Corruption ranking: 74th



**13 People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**

- Population: 43.85 million
- GDP growth rate: 1.4%
- GDP per capita: 4,115 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 29.7%
- Press Freedom ranking: 146th
- Corruption ranking: 106th



**14 Kingdom of Morocco**

- Population: 36.91 million
- GDP growth rate: 3.7%
- GDP per capita: 3,273 USD
- Youth unemployment rate: 21.9%
- Press Freedom ranking: 133rd
- Corruption ranking: 80th



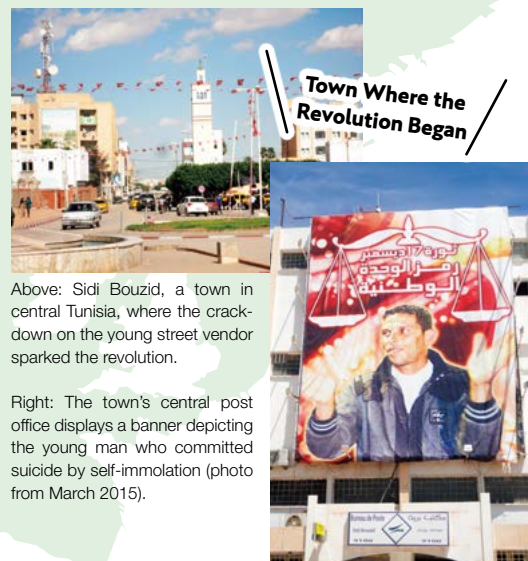
## Education and Women's Empowerment

The Arab Spring started from Tunisia. In January 2011, the Ben Ali regime which ruled the country for 23 years, collapsed due to the power of people's demonstrations. After the collapse, rather than immediately holding an election to appoint a new president, Tunisia's democratization process began by redrafting the constitution to form the nation's foundation. A National Constituent Assembly was elected to enact the new constitution, which was promulgated and implemented in 2014.

Ms. TAKAKI Keiko (hereinafter, Ms. TAKAKI), a professor at J. F. Oberlin Univer-

sity who specializes in cultural anthropology and conducts research on Tunisia, pointed out the following reasons for the success of the democratic transition: (1) the state continued to exist legally after the revolution (even after President Ben Ali was ousted), (2) there was little use of military or armed force, and consensus-building was achieved through peaceful measures such as establishing a dialogue, (3) the democratization had strong support from the civil society, (4) there was high public participation especially by women, and (5) the country had a high level of education.

The Tunisian Revolution was triggered in December 2010 by the self-immolation suicide



Above: Sidi Bouzid, a town in central Tunisia, where the crackdown on the young street vendor sparked the revolution.

Right: The town's central post office displays a banner depicting the young man who committed suicide by self-immolation (photo from March 2015).



Tunisia

# The Tunisian Revolution and Democratization: An Anthropological Process Documentation

Tunisia, about twice the size of Hokkaido, is a tourism-oriented country that opens to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Arab Spring spread from this country in 2011.

This article traces the country's transition to democracy and what has happened in the last 10 years.

A street vendor sells fruits and vegetables on the streets of Sidi Bouzid.



Citizens' protest is what led to democratization

## A society where women play an active role



Above: On International Women's Day, a civil group participates in a parade on Avenue Habib Bourguiba, the main street of Tunis, the capital city.

Below: Female police officers in Tunis. Many women play an active role in Tunisian society, where women's rights, including employment equality are guaranteed.

## Japan's Election Observation Mission



The Japanese government dispatched an Election Observation Mission to National Constituent Assembly elections held in October 2011, and JICA staff was also present.

of a young street vendor selling vegetables in Sidi Bouzid, a town in central Tunisia. Protests against the government's strict crackdown on street vending by youths, as well as dissatisfaction with the longstanding high unemployment rate, economic disparity, and monopoly of wealth by the president's family, erupted into demonstrations that led to the revolution.

Ms. TAKAKI describes the social background of the time of the revolution as follows; "there was a problem of regional disparity so-called the *Two Tunisias* problem, which was essentially an economic disparity between the northern and the coastal area where tourism was being developed, and the underdeveloped southern and inland areas. Another major problem was the high unemployment rate among young people. In 2011, the total unemployment rate was around 18%, with a 42% unemployment rate among young people and a 29% unemployment rate among the highly educated."

However, after Tunisia gained independence from France in 1956, its first President,

Habib Bourguiba, focused his efforts on establishing systems for education and guaranteeing women's rights. According to Ms. TAKAKI, "one year, about 30% of the national budget was allocated to the education. In that same year of its independence, the country also promulgated the family law that prohibited polygamy (one husband with multiple wives) and unilateral divorce by the husband. Following these progressive reforms, there were also changes in legislation for gender equality in educational rights, in political participation, and in public-sector work opportunities and wages. The investment in education, high educational attainment, and the respect for women in civil society, may have played an important factor in the more or less peaceful accomplishment of the Tunisian Revolution."

## Eliminating Regional Disparities

It has been 10 years since the revolution. Unlike the times before the revolution when powerful leaders controlled the country, the implementation of democracy is still in its in-

## The Middle East Today: Ten Years after the Arab Spring

Special Feature



A family in Southern Tunisia.

## Life in inland and other rural areas



Traditional crafts made by women.

Tunisia is also promoting South-South cooperation with other African countries

Professor at College of Arts and Sciences and Director of Library, J. F. Oberlin University  
Ms. TAKAKI Keiko

Born in Hokkaido, Japan. Majored in cultural anthropology, Maghreb region research (mainly Tunisia), and social development research. She has served as a visiting researcher at the Tunisia Institute for Economic and Social Research and Algerian Institute for Development and Applied Research. Published work includes "Tunisia wo Shiru Tame no 60-sho" (60 Chapters to Understand Tunisia; Edited/published by Akashi Shoten) and "Tunisia Kakumei to Minshuka: The Tunisian Revolution and Democratization: An Anthropological Process Documentation (Akashi Shoten). Currently co-authoring a book about the MENA after the Arab Spring over the last 10 years, which is to be published by Yamakawa Shuppansha in spring of 2021.



fancy and policymaking takes much more time than before. The regional disparities and high unemployment rates that were catalysts of the revolution have not improved much. Ms. MOROHOSHI Midori (hereinafter, Ms. MOROHOSHI), a member of JICA's Tunisian office, explains, "Tunisian domestic media has reported summaries of the past decade. They report on the reality of the post-revolutionary period, such as the lack of political stability from constant changes of government, the rising poverty rate, budget deficit, and high unemployment rate." Nevertheless, the fact that there are transparent about their domestic issues is a sign in itself that freedom of speech is guaranteed in society.

She further adds that, "especially because this is a crucial transitional period for the society, it is important for Japan, the West and other countries to cooperate with Tunisia to help establish democracy and stability of the North Africa region, and JICA's role has become more important than ever."

JICA established its Tunisia office in 1975,



**Eliminating Regional Disparities**



Stoves with high burning efficiency were introduced under the *Integrated Reforestation Project (II)* to reduce the amount of firewood used. A bread is baked with this stove.

New businesses flourish by refining essential oils.

from which it has continued to provide cooperation to address the existing challenges in the country. For example, there was an *“Integrated Reforestation Project (II)”* implemented as one of the projects to help reduce regional disparities. This project involves afforestation, including tree planting, in the northwestern mountains of Tunisia where the country’s most impoverished people live, thereby helping to improve the living environment of local residents.

The project has already shown results. Ms. MOROHOSHI explains, “in this area, people’s everyday lives required them to spend around 4 hours every day to collect water, and 1.5–3 hours to collect firewood and livestock feed. To address this situation, we installed rainwater harvesting tanks for households, and encouraged people to use ovens that burn more efficiently and require less firewood. Doing this allowed residents to spend more time on other tasks and jobs, and they were also able to create

businesses that generate cash income, such as refining essential oils from plants and starting to engage in beekeeping.” These activities have been the result of community development plans formulated with the participation of local residents through agricultural cooperatives organized in each area, and their self-supporting efforts are now beginning to pay off.

**Pursuing a Sustainable, High Value-added Fishery Industry**

An example of how stakeholders have established groups and unions that contribute to sustainable business and livelihoods is the *“Project on Co-management of Coastal Fisheries in the Gulf of Gabes”* in the Gulf of Gabes located in southeastern Tunisia.

The Gulf of Gabes, also known as the “Cradle of the Mediterranean,” boasts abundant fishery resources. Fishery is a key industry, however, illegal fishing activity has increased after the revolution, partly due to the weaken-



A local man who plants trees under the JICA’s *Integrated Reforestation Project (II)* in the northwest region.

ing of the government’s system that monitored the fishery industry. Overfishing by large bottom trawlers and the destruction of seaweed beds, which play a vital role in the spawning and growing habitats of young fish, leads to destruction of the ecosystem and a decline in marine resources.

In this project, efforts were made to combat illegal fishing and restore marine resources by constructing artificial concrete reefs that serve to prevent illegal bottom trawlers from entering the coastal fishing grounds while also promoting formation of a fish breeding habitat. We also helped to establish a fishermen’s group, since there is an importance in facilitating self-management of their coastal marine resources.

Mr. TSUJII Ryo (hereinafter, Mr. TSUJII), a JICA staff member in Tunisia, explains the significance of the project, saying “the revolution also had some negative effects, such as the rampant spread of illegal fishing. To address

**Creating New Rules**



Above: Crabs, which were previously regarded as an inedible product, are now being exported as a new product. Below: Fishermen form a group to discuss about marine resource management.

this problem, we were able to encourage local stakeholders to jointly self-manage the marine resources, by establishing rules, and by developing the mindset of respecting and obliging to these rules.” Local stakeholders also started to add new value to their marine products and sell them for profit. Crabs, which were known as a harmful inedible species for damaging nets, are now being regarded as a vital marine product for exports. As a result, the fishery industry as a whole has advanced and led to a rise in income for impoverished fishermen in rural areas.

**Job Creation by supporting SMEs and facilitating Industry-Academia Collaboration**

To address the high unemployment rate, we engaged in a *“Private Investment Credit Project”* to strengthen industrial competitiveness and to create new jobs. This project provides medium-to-long-term low-interest loans to support SMEs in manufacturing industries (e.g., textiles, agribusiness) and service industries (e.g., tourism, transportation, IT-related industries).

A manager from a manufacturing company (design and production of men’s shirts), who received the loan stated the following: “it was helpful to be able to receive a loan without having to provide physical collateral. Thanks to the loan, we have been able to increase capital investment and employment, and sales are also increasing.” The project, which ran from 2007 to 2016, distributed 305 loans that have created and maintained 7,666 jobs.



Artificial reef was installed in Gabes Bay to prevent illegal fishing and to increase fish reproduction.

Furthermore, as part of our *“Project on Quality/Productivity Improvement,”* we have provided cooperation in the form of sharing “kaizen” practices, which is the process of constantly reviewing work content to improve product quality and productivity across all aspects of work at manufacturing, service and other types of work. Companies that participated in the project saw their productivity more than doubled while their defective product rate was cut by half.

In addition to these projects, we have also been promoting industry-academia collaboration to take advantage of Tunisia’s high level of education to create new industries and employment. This includes construction of the Borj Cedria Technopark near the capital (including the establishment of R&D and higher education center, and the exchange of foreign students to Japan), as well as facilitating joint research with Japanese universities via the Technopark and the utilization of research results.

**Expansion of Startups**

Although the unemployment rate remains high, especially among young generations after the revolution, startups (launching new and creative businesses and companies) are now increasing, especially among these generations.

In 2018, the Tunisian government also enacted legislation to support startups by revising tax measures and other means. According to Mr. TSUJII, “because the country already had a high level of education and outstanding



“Kaizen” was introduced in a factory to improve productivity.

human resources to begin with, its businesses have been recognized for their high quality from several countries across Africa and Europe. In addition to digital technology-related businesses, there are also startups engaged in the research and development of the country’s natural plant resources such as rosemary and olives, which creates businesses that are uniquely Tunisian.” In January 2020, JICA also launched *“Project NINJA,”* an initiative that has been supporting entrepreneurs in creating business innovations in developing countries. The project launches a business plan contests in 19 countries, mainly in Africa. The objective of these contests is to support startups that yield innovative new business models and technologies that are suited to the new lifestyles of the post COVID-19 world. Tunisia is also participating in the contest, and it is hoping that the younger generation will improve regional disparities and unemployment rates through their innovative ideas.



# The Prolonged Effects of the Arab Spring

The democratization movement of the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia has also affected its' neighboring countries. What kind of cooperation is JICA providing in countries where there is an influx of refugees due to ongoing civil wars in neighboring countries and prolong political instability due to regime changes?

## Syrian Civil War and its Neighboring Countries

### From Democratization Movement to Civil War

The impact of the Arab Spring spread to Syria, which led to the outbreak of the current civil war. Syria, which was already under a dictatorship for 40 years was facing issues that included economic and social disparity, and high youth unemployment prior to the Arab Spring. It has been said that the dissatisfaction among Syrian people became the catalyst for the Arab Spring movement. The turmoil in Syria began in March 2011. Teenagers were arrested by the police for painting their school walls with a slogan that came from a demonstration in Tunisia; "the people want to topple the regime!" The families of the youths pleaded for leniency based on extenuating circumstances; however the security authority rejected their request. In response, social media was used to call for protests, leading to a wide-spread demonstrations across the country. Once this was reported in the media, the public began to demand the overthrow of the regime, and the demonstrations continued to gradually gain momentum. The movement grew into demonstrations of thousands of people in major cities across the country with the slogans calling to "Fight corruption" and "Topple the regime." In response, the government carried out a

harsh cracked down on demonstrations by deploying military and security forces.

The turmoil that began as civil protests gradually turned into a civil war once foreign intervention took place.

Consequently, the conflict in the country became increasingly brutal. In 2014, the militant group "Islamic State (IS)" joined the civil war, worsening the chaos and causing countless refugees to flee the country. There are also many "internally displaced persons" who are unable to flee the country and remained in Syria. This civil war is a result of prolonged conflicts amongst government forces, dissidents and other armed groups, which remain unresolved to this day.

### The Impact of Civil War on Neighboring Countries

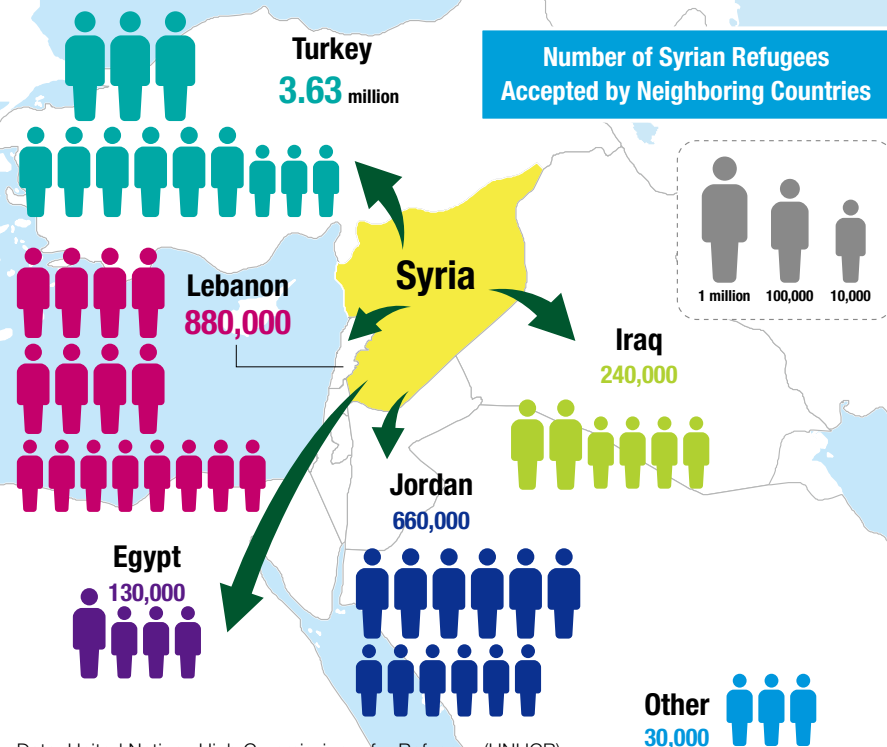
Since the outbreak of the Syria Crisis\*, approximately 500,000 people have died across the country. It has also been reported that over 6.3 million people have become internally displaced, while over 5.5 million refugees have fled to neighboring countries. Although there are fewer violent conflicts compared to the past, there are still many areas that are deemed unsafe. Not only has the basic infrastructure been destroyed, but there has been no progress in terms of repatriating refugees.

As the conflict prolongs, the impact on refugee- hosting countries increases. Since the refugee influx of ten years ago, children have been

born-into families that fled the country. As the population continue to grow, there is an increasing pressure on host countries to provide public services such as provision of electricity, water, education and medical care. In addition, many Syrian refugees do not reside in refugee camps, but rather in urban cities outside of these camps. From the host community's perspective, this raises dissatisfaction due to the possibility of deprivation of employment opportunities, which can potentially lead to further resentment.

JICA has continued its cooperation efforts with the neighboring countries that host Syrian refugees to address these complex issues.

\* Humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian civil war has resulted not only in deaths and injuries, but also led to the influx of Syrian refugees.



Data: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of November 2020.



## Creating a Stable Environment in Host Communities through Infrastructure Development

Since October 2011, Turkey has become the world's largest host country for Syrian refugees. Turkey has been progressively implementing a policy of inclusion of Syrian refugees by providing free education, public medical services, and livelihood support. Nevertheless, due to the protracted nature of the Syrian civil war, the number of Syrian refugees living in Turkey has increased to approximately 3.6 million. This has put pressures on the country's finances and public services such as water, sewage, and garbage collection, which ultimately resulted into the deterioration of living conditions. Speaking at the JICA-UNHCR co-sponsored Seminar on "Supporting Syrian Refugees in Turkey" held in Tokyo in July 2019, the mayor of Gaziantep, Ms. Fatma SAHIN (hereinafter, Ms.SAHIN) said, "our city, with a population of 2 million, has seen an influx of around 400,000 Syrian refugees, and our water supply and sewage services have been stretched to the point of collapse."

As a response to the situation, JICA has been cooperating with local governments, which are hosting many Syrian refugees located near the Syrian border. JICA's cooperation with these governments consists of the provision of infrastructure (i.e., water supply, sewage, waste management). According to a JICA official in Turkey, "local governments have told us that 'you have provided swift cooperation that is appropriate to our needs', and the Turkish government has asked us to expand similar coop-

eration efforts nationwide."

At the request of Turkey's Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, JICA conducted a survey on the needs of Syrian refugees with unstable livelihoods. The survey found that, among Syrian refugees, needs varied between women, children, and persons with disabilities, and a tailored approach in providing cooperation is required. The Mayor Ms.SAHIN further added that there are still

many issues to be addressed, and quoted: "school education and vocational training are important for Syrian refugees, and we need to consider ways to create a society where Turkish and Syrian refugees can coexist."

JICA is committed to continue its cooperation with Turkey in addressing the deepening challenges that continue due to the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis.



Rainwater drainage pipes have been installed to prevent road flooding during heavy rains.



Sewage treatment facility in south-central Kilis.

## Regional Initiatives

## A Major Force in Nation-building

The prolonged civil war in Syria has left many young people with no opportunity to attend school. As one of the Japanese government's initiatives to support the Middle East, in 2017, JICA launched the "Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees" (JISR, commonly pronounced "ji-ser") to accept Syrians who fled to Lebanon and Jordan as exchange students in Japan.

They are currently studying at graduate schools across Japan in the fields of telecommunications, engineering, and business administration etc. Although many have difficulty learning Japanese, they say, "I learnt to understand Japanese culture through my studies and daily life, and appreciate its peace and safety."

\* Japanese Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees (JISR)

Despite their desire to contribute to Syria's future, the instability in Syria has made many of them to look for jobs in Japan after completing their graduate school. Some graduates are already working at various Japanese companies, while utilizing the knowledge attained during their exchange. Currently, exchange students from Syria are studying and working hard in Japan. One day, when peace and stability return to Syria, we believe that JISR students will contribute in rebuilding the nation and bringing Japan and Syria closer together – just like the word "JISR" which means "bridge" in Arabic.



Pre-departure send-off gathering held in Lebanon in 2019 for JISR international students.





Above: Students from both first and second school groups participate in a science experiment class together.

Below: A former storage room for teaching materials was renovated into a library.



## Building a Safe Environment Where Anyone Can Learn in Safety

When over one million Syrian refugees poured into Lebanon in late 2014, there were limited opportunities for refugee children to access education. To address this situation, public schools expanded learning opportunities for refugees with a "double-shift" system in which, classes are split into two groups: morning classes for Lebanese students and afternoon classes for non-Lebanese students. However, there were also reports of discrimination against Syrian refugees and decline of education quality due to the significantly reduced class hours.

In response, JICA launched a "School Improvement Committee." This helped each school identify the issues and the objectives for improving the

learning environment, and supported the efforts necessary to address them accordingly. As a result of this cooperation, science experiments and tree-planting events were held jointly with both the first and second school groups, and a storage room was renovated into a library in order to improve the learning environment. Some students even commented that they "want to interact more with students they never get to meet in their own class," and the program was well received as an initiative that helped foster mutual understanding between Lebanese and non-Lebanese students.

These efforts will be compiled into guidelines that are expected to be used widely in Lebanon.

## "I want to make some money for the family!" - Responding to the Hopes of Syrian Refugee Women



After enjoying high economic growth in the 1990s and 2000s, Jordan's economic growth has stagnated in recent years since the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis. Several conflicts have also broken out in neighboring countries. In addition to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, Jordan has also been accepting Syrian refugees since 2012, and this rapid increase in population has placed a major burden on the country's water supply, energy supply, and social services.

Against this backdrop, JICA has been cooperating with the Government of Jordan by reducing burdens on the host community through the provision of water supply equipment/facilities and other

initiatives. JICA has simultaneously been focusing efforts on projects that promote the economic independence of Syrian refugees, especially women. Mr. SUZUKI Shota of JICA explains, "In Arab society, some people think that women should stay at home. But since many women want to work to support their families, we have provided them with training from 2017 to 2019 to help improve their livelihoods." This training was conducted in groups of 20-30 people, wherein participants learned practical skills such as cooking and hydroponic vegetable cultivation techniques, as well as business-oriented skills to start a small business, such as marketing, financial and business planning.

Since JICA has already implemented livelihood improvement projects for Palestinian refugee women in Jordan in the past, it was able to utilize that past experience in this project. "In the Palestinian refugee project, we learned the importance of long-term patience when it comes to changing negative attitudes toward women who work outside, while gaining understanding and cooperation of influential people in the community and elder men. We applied the same approach in our project for Syrian refugees."

Ongoing cooperation is critical in achieving stability within Jordan and helping Syrian refugees who have been away from their home countries and undergoing difficulties for years.



Trainees hold their cooking training completion certificates. In front of them lies the variety of dishes they learned to prepare during training.



Above: Women learn about hydroponic vegetable cultivation.

Below: Trainees pose in front of a hydroponic greenhouse, smiling with their training completion certificates.

## Countries in Perpetual Turmoil Due to the Change of Government

Although the Arab Spring brought about a change of government, some countries have been in a perpetual state of turmoil. What are the JICA's corporation initiatives in Yemen and Libya?



Participants in the "Learning through Play (ASOBI)" workshop learnt how to make and play with fishing toys.

We aim to further enhance the results of JICA cooperation, and contribute to the development of Yemen while deepening our friendship between Japan and Yemen.



Key JAAY members

## Contributing to Society by Forming a Relationship Amongst Ex-Trainees

JICA has been providing infrastructure development and technical cooperation in Yemen since 1977, and the dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) to Yemen in 1991. However, the political upheaval triggered by the Arab Spring democratization movement and subsequent intensification of civil wars have made it difficult to implement JICA projects in the country. Despite these circumstances, JICA has remained committed to continuing its training programs in Japan and third countries (such as Egypt), and has succeeded in accepting over 1,800 trainees to date. Training has covered a wide range of topics that include peacebuilding, transportation, education, water supply, agricultural development and healthcare etc.

The JICA Alumni Association of Yemen (JAAY) was established in 2005, with the aim of strengthening relationship between trainees who participated in a training program, and promoting activities to share the knowledge and skills that was attained in the program back home.

JAAY currently has 143 members, and the members have been exchanging information and organizing seminars to share the knowledge and skills gained in Japan to Yemeni society.

Ms. NOGUCHI Mari (hereinafter, Ms. NOGUCHI) of JICA explains, "in 2007, JAAY organized a 'Learning through Play (ASOBI)' workshop in Yemen. In Yemen, the activities of JOCV dispatched in the past have led to the introduction of "play" into early childhood education. This workshop was led by JAAY members who previously joined the trainings in Japan and conveyed the importance of 'learning through play' to foster independence and self-initiative." To improve the livelihoods of coffee producers, a specialty of Yemen, JAAY has also organized seminars for coffee producers in three cities where ex-trainees share modern coffee bean drying techniques, a skill that was acquired during their time in Japan. Ms. NOGUCHI says, "these activities are based on ideas from JAAY members. Everyone is connected by a sense of friendship, as they all experienced the hard work and effort while studying in Japan, and they all have a strong desire to improve Yemen. Given the current difficulty of implementing JICA projects in Yemen, JICA is supporting JAAY activities to contribute to the stability and development of Yemeni society."



## My Journey Towards My Dream After Returning Home

Despite the Arab Spring led to the collapse of the long-lasting Gaddafi regime that was in control since the 1960s, Libya remains unstable as the country is caught between the power struggle of various political forces. That being said the country is seeing a glimpse towards a path to recovery with the ceasefire agreement reached in October 2020 and elections expected to be held in 2021.

Ms. Marwa GRAIN (hereinafter, Ms. GRAIN) came from Libya to Japan in 2018 as part of the ABE Initiative\*. Her interest in Japanese technology and culture grew through TV shows, and it had been her dream to study in Japan. Initially, the ABE Initiative did not accept students from Libya, but after sending multiple requests to the Libya Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Libyan Embassy in

Japan, Ms. GRAIN was finally granted an exchange student status. After arriving in Japan, she studied Education and Psychology at the graduate school of International Christian University, where she researched the use of information and communication technology in education. Since earning her degree, she has actively been engaged in an internship at a Japanese company. Ms. GRAIN says, "although it was difficult to get used to the language and the food, I was able to visit many places overseas and in Japan to present my research, which broadened my horizons." She also plans to return to Libya this winter.

With eyes filled with hope she explains, "before I came to Japan, I had launched a company called 'Gants Sensei' that provided learning through games. After I return back home, I hope to expand my business and contribute to the education field by cooperating with Japanese companies."

\* Abbreviation for "African Business Education for Youth." The program invites young Africans to Japan, providing them with opportunities to earn a master's degree at a Japanese graduate school as well as an internship at a Japanese company.

I want to thank everyone who was involved in giving me this incredible opportunity



Ms. GRAIN interacts with students from a high school affiliated with the university where she studied. They introduced about their countries to each other.



Presenting the results of her research at a conference held in South Korea. She says, "this opportunity was only made possible thanks to my overseas study in Japan."



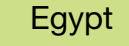
Middle Eastern countries still face challenges in a variety of fields. This section introduces JICA's efforts to address these challenges and the involvement of Japanese companies.

Article: Mr. MITSUISHI Tatsuya

# The Middle East in 2020

## Creating a Future for the Younger Generation

### Providing a Future for the Younger Generation through Practical Learning



Egypt

#### Project Title

*Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST\*1) Project Phase 3; Jan. 2019–Jan. 2024*  
*Egypt-Japan Education Partnership: Human Resource Development Project (EJEP\*2); May 2017–Dec. 2024*

- \*1 Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST)
- \*2 Egypt-Japan Education Partnership (EJEP)

The Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST) was established in 2010 through a bilateral agreement between the governments of Egypt and Japan. While the majority of Egyptian universities typically focus on classroom lectures built around rote memorization due to the increase in the number of students, E-JUST specifically implements a Japanese-style education that emphasizes experiments and practical learning. To this day, a total of 308 students have earned master's and doctoral degrees. Some graduates have pursued to higher education, and some returned to their respective universities as teachers, while they engage in educational and research projects. The very first graduates from the Faculty of Engineering are expected to graduate in 2022. Furthermore, under the leadership of the University President Ahmed EL-GOHARY, who is also a medical doctor, the university is making contributions to the society through research on measures to combat COVID-19. With the cooperation from both governments, the university plans to accept 150

People tend to think that education in developed countries requires computers and tablets, but I feel the Japanese philosophy of education is wonderful as it takes full advantage of existing materials and available resources, rather than relying solely on advanced technology.

There are now 48 Egypt-Japan schools that incorporate the Japanese-style education, and the number is expected to increase to 200 in the future. I hope that the students who have studied here will eventually take advantage of the study abroad system to study in Japan.



Dr. Hany A. EL-SHEMY from the Culture, Education and Science Section of the Embassy in Japan (right) and Dr. Hanem AHMED (left). Both are highly knowledgeable about Japan as they had been studying in Japan.



A new campus that opened in November 2019. 226 students are enrolled in its Engineering and International Business graduate schools, while 618 students are enrolled in its Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of International Business and Humanities: a total of 844 students. (as of December 2020)

international students from African countries over the next three years as it continues to grow as a hub for science and technology in Africa. Meanwhile, as part of the Egypt-Japan Education Partnership (EJEP), which was signed in 2016, 266 international students from Egypt and 160 trainees, including doctors, nurses, and teachers, have been studying in Japan.

Under EJEP, undergraduates are given the opportunity to study in Japan through short-term study abroad programs during summer vacation or through an exchange program that allows credit transfer while studying at a Japanese university for six months to a year. This program has been extremely well received.

Dr. Hany A. EL-SHEMY, Cultural Counselor at the Egyptian Embassy in Tokyo, praised the outcome of this program, saying, "this initiative has proven to be very successful, creating new cooperative relationships between universities and hospitals in both Egypt and Japan through its study abroad and training programs."

## Japanese Companies that are Locally Active



Iraq

### Supporting Reconstruction of the country through Infrastructure Development

#### Project Title

*Basrah Refinery Upgrading Project*  
*Loan Agreement signing: October 2012 (Phase 1), June 2019 (Phase 2)*

Iraq is the world's fifth-largest oil-producing country. However, due to repeated conflicts and captured territories by the Islamic State (IS), many of Iraq's oil facilities have been either destroyed, or have deteriorated due to lack of maintenance. Since oil facilities for refining gasoline, diesel oil, etc., are unable to operate at their full capacity, the country continues to rely on imports for the majority of its petroleum products.

With the aim of increasing its domestic production of petroleum products, Iraq has decided to upgrade and expand its Basrah Refinery, one of the country's largest refineries, through cooperation with JICA. This project will be instrumental in boosting economic recovery by enabling the production of petroleum products that are of high quality and meet today's environmental standards. At the peak of its construction, about 15,000 workers will be involved in the project. Iraq has high expectations for the project from the perspective of creating jobs in Iraq, where high unemployment is a domestic social issue. JGC CORPORATION's Mr. MIZUTANI Nobuyoshi (hereinafter, Mr. MIZUTANI), who is leading this project, says, "in Iraq, facilities that were built back in the 1970s by Japanese companies are still in operation. So people have confidence in Japanese



The Basrah Refinery was built in the 1970s by a Japanese company. Upgrade work will begin in the first half of next year, with the scheduled completion of 2025.

products for having high quality and long durability." He also notes that the key to this project is the "circle of people." Despite the COVID-19 pandemic preventing on-site discussions, they were able to maintain the original schedule and conclude the contract through a series of ongoing daily online discussions. Now, 10 years since the project was in its planning stage, Mr. MIZUTANI notes that the project has been driven by the passion of Mr. IBRAHIM, who is in charge of the project on the Iraqi side. He says, "the Iraqi people are hardworking, and friendly. Working with them gives me an increasing desire to play a role in the reconstruction of their country."



The contract-signing ceremony was held at the Republican Palace in Baghdad. The presence of Iraq's oil minister serves to indicate the country's high level of expectations towards the project.

Mr. IBRAHIM, in charge of the project on the Iraqi side expressed his passion for the project, saying, "this project is my son, and you are family." We are also committed to valuing the "circle of people."



Mr. IBRAHIM, Vice President of the Ministry of Oil South Refineries Company, who is responsible for the "Basrah Refinery Upgrading Project" (center) and Mr. MIZUTANI (right).

## Sharing local heritage to the world



Jordan

### Sharing Centuries of History with the World

**Project Title** *The Project for the construction of the Petra Museum Mar. 2014–Mar. 2020*  
*The Project for Community-based Regional Tourism Development in Petra Region / Nov. 2015–Mar. 2020*

By involving local residents in the museum's activities, it has become a place where many people have a personal attachment. I think this kind of step-by-step cooperation is one of Japan's strengths.



The Al Khazneh (the Treasury) of the Petra Archaeological Park.

Mr. OYAMA (center). First posted to Jordan in 1998 as a member of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) in the field of archaeology, Mr. OYAMA has since been active in Jordan as an expert and a program formulation adviser in the fields of museums, cultural heritage, and tourism.



Exterior of Petra Museum. The Museum allows visitors to gain in-depth knowledge on the history of Petra, including the Nabataean Kingdom era, the Edomites who built a kingdom 3,000 years ago that appears in the Bible, and the rule of the Roman Empire after 106 AD.



The museum has put a significant effort into developing interpretation of exhibition. Installed touch panels provide excellent ease-of-use for tourists.

The archaeological site of Petra in southern Jordan are the ruins of the Nabataean Kingdom, which flourished from the 2nd-century BC to 2nd-century AD.

In April 2019, the Petra Museum was opened at the entrance to this site. Mr. OYAMA Koji (hereinafter, Mr. OYAMA), who served as a JICA expert, was instrumental in this effort. He has provided cooperation for the opening and operation of four museums in the country since 2002, including the Karak Archaeological Museum, the Jordan Museum, the Dead Sea Museum and Historic Old Salt Museum.

Petra Museum has placed particular emphasis on how to tell their story by utilizing videos and touch panel displays, and with full-scale restored model of

ancient tombs and houses.

Mr. OYAMA explains, "we've put extra effort into installing exhibits that allow visitors to learn with great interest, such as by showing how Al Khazneh (the Treasury) that appeared in the movie 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade' was constructed. Although Jordan did not experience the type of turmoil that the Arab Spring caused in other countries, it still experienced a decline in tourism due to the unrest in neighboring countries and the rise of the Islamic State (IS). However, the number of tourists has been gradually recovering, and approximately 1.13 million tourists were visiting Petra by the time the museum opened in 2019.

"Jordan is an Islamic country, but it also has an ancient history that stretches back even before the spread of Islam. As a crossroad of civilizations, Jordan has a deep connection with ancient civilizations and history, such as the Roman Empire, which we have seen in our history textbooks. We hope that many people will come to the site to experience this history firsthand.



Morocco

### New Research Vessel to Support Marine Fisheries

#### Project Title

*Oceanographic and Fishery Research Vessel Construction Project / Jan. 2017–Jan. 2022*

As a country located in the Atlantic Ocean, Morocco enjoys abundant fishing areas, and its fishing industry is a vital industry that exports octopus, squid, tuna and other marine products to Japan. Since 2000, however, the number of fish being caught has been unreliable due to the impact of climate change and other factors. In addition, the fishery research vessels that Japan had built through past grant aid projects were obsolete, making it virtually impossible to adequately survey their fishing resources.

Given this situation, Morocco's National Institute of Fisheries Research (INRH) decided to utilize an ODA loan to construct a new oceanographic and fisheries research vessel at the Tamano Shipyard, Mitsui E&S Shipbuilding Co., Ltd. through Toyota Tsusho Corporation. Research vessels use sound waves to prospect fish stocks, but the sound and vibration generated by the ship itself sometimes prevents them from conducting accurate surveys. The new ship in this project utilizes advanced technology unique to Japan that allows to reduce underwater noise.

"This is something that Morocco, which has high regard for Japanese shipbuilding capabilities, has greatly wanted," says Mitsui E&S's Mr. ISHIDA Tsuyoshi (hereinafter, Mr. ISHIDA). A launching ceremony for the new ship was held in June 2020, and it is currently undergoing a sea trials operational testing.

Mr. ISHIDA explains, "despite the COVID-19 situation, INRH crew members were able to come to Japan thanks to the efforts of the MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and MLIT (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport). They are now being trained to monitor ship performance and to become familiar with operation of its equipment."

The new ship is scheduled to sail from Japan to Morocco in December, and from next year, it is expected to be actively utilized in a variety of surveys from its home port in Agadir, an international tourist city in Morocco.



The new ship started a pre-service testing in October. The ship will also function as an oceanographic research vessel to study the topography and composition of seawater at depths of up to 1,500 meters, and explore effects of the marine environment on marine resources.

A Moroccan National Institute of Fisheries Research crew member learned how to use an oven to dry samples collected during training. The new ship has been well received by its crew who say, "the ship interior is more spacious than before, making it much easier to use."

The new ship is equipped with a diesel-engine-driven propulsion system. This was adopted at the request of the Moroccan side based on its local ease-of-handling and running costs.

Mitsui E&S also has experience in building disaster prevention ships in Indonesia. Mr. ISHIDA Tsuyoshi is second from left.







Tunisia

## Urban Landscapes and Social Structure Changed by the Arab Spring

In 2010, the year of the Jasmine Revolution\*1 which was a catalyst for the Arab Spring, took everyone by surprise since up until that year Tunisia welcomed more tourists than ever recorded before. In 2011, right after the revolution, the transportation infrastructure was disrupted, creating an impossible environment for the tourism industry. Although tourists began to gradually return in the following year, 2012, many hotels and restaurants were already out of business before that time. While the number of tourists has increased from around 2018, it feels that there

is still room for growth. One of the most prominent changes in the last decade has been the increase in visitors from China and Russia due to the eased restrictions on visa requirements.

Today, the streets of the capital city Tunis are safe, and the city is enjoying a construction boom of high-rise buildings and condominiums. There are also more Japanese restaurants catering to the wealthy, which did not even exist before the revolution. I feel that this situation is due to the decline of the middle class, which used to comprise a significant portion of the population, and an increasing polarization of the population between the poor and the rich. Although Tunisia is facing a new set of challenges, I'm confident that the country can overcome them through the strong endurance of the Tunisian people.

\*1 Refers to the democratization movement that occurred in Tunisia in December 2010. The name "Jasmine Revolution" came from the name of the country's official flower.



Above: The building district was established after 2010. Today's buildings are more luxurious and glamorous than before.  
Below: Despite being more expensive than average restaurants, Japanese restaurants are always packed with customers.

I've seen many changes while living in Tunisia for many years



President, Travel Sun  
**Ms. KOMURO Tomoko**

Established Travel Sun, a travel agency, in Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia in 2000 after working as a local staff member of the Japanese Embassy in Tunisia from 1990.

We asked a variety of people who are working in the Middle East to share their views on societal change after the Arab Spring and the current state of the region.

# My View of the Middle East Today



Lebanon

## Red Cross Volunteer Becomes a Beacon of Hope

It has been about 10 years since the Arab Spring, but numerous problems persist in Arab countries: Syria is still experiencing a conflict; Yemen is going through the world's largest humanitarian crisis; Palestine has been under occupation for over 70 years; and Jordan and Lebanon are hosting massive numbers of refugees. Out of these countries, Lebanon has been severely affected by the Syrian Crisis, and is now hosting the world's largest number of refugees relative to its population (1 in every 6 people). In addition to the protests that have been ongoing since October 2019, Lebanon is undergoing an economic collapse, the COVID-19 pandemic, and to top it off, the country experienced a massive explosion in Beirut on August 4 in 2020.

This explosion has left approximately 300,000 people homeless, and over 70% of the population is facing multiple crises with some not even knowing if they will have food to eat tomorrow.

In the midst of this devastating situation, the Lebanese Red Cross volunteers that I work with are passionate to help others and they are working to improve sanitation for refugees and to provide psychological support. As paramedics, we also transport those people infected by COVID-19 or injured in demonstrations by ambulance. The dedicated support of these young volunteers, who work day and night to protect the lives and dignity of the people, is itself a beacon of hope for the future of the people living in the Middle East.

Japanese Red Cross Society, Regional Representative for the Middle East MENA (Middle East and North Africa) International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)  
**Ms. IGARASHI Maki**

She has been in charge of Red Cross and Red Crescent community health projects in Southeast Asia and East Africa since 2007. Since 2015, she has been coordinating activities for the provision of medical support, water and sanitation in the Middle East, particularly areas affected by the Syria Crisis.



Even in difficult times, there is always hope



Above: Ms. IGARASHI Maki (right) talks to children at a Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon.

Below: Lebanese Red Cross ambulances and volunteer paramedics rush to provide aid towards injured protectors.

Right: Streetscape in the center of Algiers, the capital city taken in September 2019. Protests have also intensified here.



Left: An ancient Kasbah of Algiers, taken in February 2014.



Algeria

## Gaining the Freedom to Express Political Opinion

I first became interested in North Africa when I met people from the Maghreb area (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) while studying abroad in Spain as a student. Because the Maghreb countries belong to the Islamic world, most of the people living there are Muslim, yet at the same time, yet at the same time, they also speak French due to the influence of the French colonial era. Later on, I researched about Algeria in graduate school, and now that I am working with the North African region, I occasionally visit the country. I think one of the biggest changes in Algeria that was brought by the Arab Spring is freedom to express one's political opinions. Before the revolution it was difficult to talk about

politics due to the government's regulation of free speech following the civil war of the 1990s. However, just like its neighboring countries, the Arab Spring led many courageous citizens to hold demonstrations demanding for political reform. This trend was seen again in 2019, which ultimately led to the replacement of the long-running regime. While the underlying catalyst of increased demonstrations in Arab countries was socio-economic dissatisfaction among the people, there are still regional disparities and high unemployment among young people.

Algeria was transformed through the courage of many citizens



Researcher, Middle East Institute of Japan  
**Mr. TAKAHASHI Masahide**

After studying about Algeria in graduate school, Mr. TAKAHASHI Masahide is now a researcher at the Middle East Institute of Japan, conducting research on the politics and economics of North Africa.



Jordan

## Building Relationships Where Everyone is Like a "Brother or Sister"

As the number of people fleeing Syria to Jordan has increased from 2012, the presence of Syrians has affected the lives of people living in Jordan, partly due to the soaring costs of goods. Seeing the impact on children fleeing their home countries and living in impoverished situations has made us think to find ways to create a school that is based on mutual understanding and respect. These days, as Syrian food and sweets stores have become popular among Jordanians, it is very common to see Syrians working in factories and in stores. Syrian students seem to blend in well in Jordanian public school classes.

On the other hand, given the ongoing uncertainty of life as a refugee, there are still many children who had given up their studies at an early age and are forced to choose work or marriage. "we are one community - like brothers and sisters" is a phrase I often hear from Arabs. As the word suggests, I realize the importance of having opportunities to listen, empathise, share ideas with people from different backgrounds at school - like brothers and sisters.



Right: Students of different nationalities participate in Tokkatsu (Special Education Activity) for social development at a public school  
Left: A bakery operating in a Syrian refugee camp.



Egypt



Handwashing is a daily practice at Egypt-Japan schools. It has become even more important with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

## Importance of Supporting Youth for the Next Generation

Most countries in the Middle East tend to have a high population growth with the average age of the population being young. However, there is a high unemployment rate among young people, and there is a need for education of the next generation and for developing industries that can create jobs. The Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST), which JICA has been supporting since 2008, continues its cooperation even today with the aim of resolving these issues. Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing interest in Japanese-style education<sup>2</sup> in Egypt, leading to the 2018 opening of the Egypt-Japan School (EJS). I strongly feel that cooperation aimed at expanding youth capacity in a creative direction is more important than ever in order to achieve stability and development in society.

<sup>2</sup> Japanese model of holistic education, which typically includes extracurricular activities such as cleaning, class duty, and homeroom meetings.



JICA Egypt Office  
**Mr. IWASAKI Akihiro**

Regardless of nationality, we must be willing to understand each other



NPO Kokkyo naki Kodomotachi (KnK, Children Without Borders), Local Project Leader  
**Ms. MATSUNAGA Haruko**

Since 2011, she has been working in Jordan as an art teacher for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) at a school run by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Since 2014, she has been working for KnK in the field of education, mainly supporting Syrian refugees.





# The Journey of JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers Vol. 25

This issue features a JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteer who is communicating the beauty of music to children through piano lessons in Tunisia.

Layout: Ms. TSUBONE Ikumi

## in Tunisia Ms. SHINDO Mari

Birthplace: Tokyo / Occupation: Musician  
Assignment term: Dec. 2019–Dec. 2021



I strive to live up to my students' passion for music!



I decided to apply for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) program because I wanted to work in a developing country and utilize my experience, which included majoring in Piano Pedagogy while studying abroad in the US, teaching piano to children, and working as a children's English teacher in Japan for seven years. I've wanted to be a JOCV member for so long that I had even written it down as my future dream in my junior high school graduation album.

I was assigned to the Monastir branch of the Dance and Music Academy, a large school with approximately 650 students, which was located in Monastir, about a two-hour drive from the capital city Tunis. While I was there, I provided one-on-one music lessons to 22 students between the ages of 6 and 18 who were in the piano course. I was also assisting teachers in grading midterm exams and holding recitals. In order to run the activities smoothly, one of the most important things is to build a re-

lationship of trust with fellow teachers. For the first two weeks before I taught classes, I had observed their lessons, taught the students together, and exchanged opinions to establish a mutual trust with the teachers.

A relationship of trust is also important to have with students. I remember a wonderful thing that happened at a piano recital about two weeks after I took over students from my colleagues. There was a student

Let's practice with a passion!



Photo from a weekly one-on-one music lesson. Student plays piano while singing the do-re-mi scale.



A recital held in the hall of the Music Academy. The grand piano was provided by JICA in 2014.

who had never performed a recital before, and during the rehearsal she said, "please don't leave my side, I want you to watch my recital."

Even though I had just met her a month before, I could tell that she was starting to trust me. Although I'm temporarily back in Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I still conduct weekly lessons with her online. I also had a chance to play piano accompa-

Children who are passionate about music attend this school.



A statue of a contrabass player stands in front of the Monastir branch of the Dance and Music Academy.

niments at a violin recital in the Academy, and became friends with a violin teacher, with whom I held an online ensemble performance by recording and multi-tracking our respective parts.

Compared to Japan, there are limited opportunities and places to study Western music in Tunisia. Despite this, the students I've met have the drive and ambition to take initiative and realize their dreams. I look forward to continuously sharing the importance of pursuing dreams with a passion to the younger generation.

### A Word from JICA Tunisia Office

Ms. SHINDO had been working at the Music Academy, putting her past experience to good use, but has now returned to Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these conditions, she continues to push forward with her enthusiasm and ambition, actively connecting with local staff and colleagues, and conducting remote lessons and sessions with fellow teachers.



Volunteer Coordinator \*  
Ms. FUJIMATSU Riko

\* Ms. FUJIMATSU Riko is a "volunteer project support professional" who supports the overall activities of the volunteer members. She is also responsible for managing the overall member activities, including researching the needs of partner countries and developing prospects.

### +one information

## The Young People's Multilingual Talent

My first experience after being assigned to Tunisia was a 10-day homestay. One of the purposes of the homestay was to become familiarized with Tunisian Ammiya (Tunisian dialect of Arabic) which is widely used in daily life, and French which is also widely used among all citizens. I lived with a family of four, with the parents and a son in his first year of middle school, and daughter in her third year of high school. The first thing that surprised me was how fluent the daughter's English was. Before my assignment, I had heard that English was not widely used in Tunisia. This young girl already spoke three languages: Arabic, considered the official language of Tunisia; French, which is widely used, and also English.

Students learn standard Arabic in the 1st grade of elementary school in Tunisia. Although this is Tunisia's official language, it is not generally used in everyday communication. They then study French in 3rd grade, and English in 5th grade. Later, in their senior year of high school, students can choose to study one of German, Italian, Spanish, or Chinese, and university classes are usually conducted in French. Due to the wide range of languages historically used in Tunisia, not only do they have a strong language education, but foreign languages are also a part of people's everyday life.

The music playlist that was playing in the family's car was selected by the daughter, which included songs from at least seven different countries, especially Arab and European countries. She was also frequently exposed to foreign languages at home, watching French TV channels and reading English novels. No doubt, this kind of lifestyle is probably another reason for the high language proficiency of the young people. (Ms. SHINDO Mari)



Illustration: Ms. SAKAGAWA Narumi