

# Africa NOW #116

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## «Contents»

### pp. 2-9 Special Topic: **Equal health and medical services on COVID-19**

It has been almost a year since the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic began. While the pandemic has not come to an end, COVID-19 vaccines have been developed in record time and vaccination already began in various parts of the world. However, the distribution of vaccines is unequal, as some rich countries have pre-purchased enough COVID-19 vaccine doses to cover each citizen many times, while developing countries are struggling to secure the necessary amount of vaccine. One of the factors contributing to such situation is intellectual property protection. When the global HIV/AIDS crisis arose in the late 1990s, the monopoly and high price of AIDS drugs due to intellectual property protection resulted in many people dying in developing countries despite the existence of effective treatments. This problem has re-emerged with the COVID-19 crisis. In this article, we summarize the proposals from civil society in South Africa and Japan for TRIPS waiver in response to COVID-19 to protect people's lives under COVID-19 and to achieve "true autonomy" of the Global South.

### pp .3-5 **South African civil society leaders' voices for equal medical access on COVID-19**

At the World Trade Organization (WTO), the governments of South Africa and India have proposed waiver from intellectual property protections for COVID-19-related medical technologies. We interviewed members of civil society in South Africa who support this proposal and are working to ensure access to healthcare in developing countries.

pp .3-4 **If any of us is in danger, none of us is safe** by Mmapaseka 'Steve' Letsike and Lwazi Mlaba  
Interview with Mmapaseka 'Steve' Letsike, Deputy Chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) and Chairperson of the SANAC Civil Society Forum, and Lwazi Mlaba, Co-Founder of the Pan-African COVID-19 Survivors Platform. Letsike emphasizes the importance of the South African government's WTO proposal and argues that it is essential to create a policy environment that enables domestic production of vaccines in South Africa and other Southern African countries, as vaccines is regarded as a public good that should be available to everyone. Mlaba argues that it is important for the global civil society to unite and for everyone to have access to vaccines and the information related to them, saying 'If any of us is in danger, none of us is safe.'

### pp .4-5 **Allow the Global South the dignity of 'solving its own problems on its own'** by Riaz Khalid Tayob

"Africa NOW" conducted an online interview with Riaz Khalid Tayob, Researcher of the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), who pointed out that the problem with South Africa's fight against HIV/AIDS is that while AIDS drugs are provided free of charge to the public, the country's domestic production capacity for medicines has not been developed and the country continues to rely on aid and imports. In this sense, 'South Africa has lost the fight against HIV/AIDS', he states. He argues that it is important to change the unfair trade rules and create a new mechanism to develop and supply essential medicines through the cooperation of the international community.

### pp .6-7 **Intellectual property: a big obstacle to equal medical access** by Uchida Shoko

The author, Uchida Shoko, is Co-Chair of the Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC), where she has conducted research on free trade and investment agreements, advocated for governments and international organizations, and conducted public campaigns. She reviewed the history of mega-FTAs such as the TPP and RCEP, pointing out that intellectual property rights (IPRs) for pharmaceuticals have been strengthened in these agreements. She criticizes the attitude of the Japanese government, which continues to explicitly oppose, along with other developed countries such as the U.S., the proposals for the waiver raised by South Africa and India at the WTO. She argues that the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis requires a different level of measures from the past.

### pp .8-9 **'Health for All, NOW !' A trade rule as an obstacle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic** by Ui Shiori

The author, Ui Shiori, is Contact Person of the People's Health Movement (PHM) Japan Circle. She supports the training of community health development workers in Asian countries. In her article, she introduces the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration that established the philosophy of Primary Health Care (PHC) with the slogan 'Health for All !', and the PHM as an international network of grassroots people, with more than 200 organizations from 80 countries, who exchange information, conduct joint training and policy advocacy for equal access to healthcare. Ui also points out that the global free trade system is hindering the realization of primary health care and increasing the number of people around the world who do not have access to necessary health services. She is now advocating for a moratorium on IPRs until the COVID-19 pandemic comes to an end in order to achieve fair access to health care for all.

pp.10-13 **‘My 30 years in Tanzania by Kanayama Asami**

Kanayama Asami, the representative of the Shetani Art, lived in Tanzania from 1989 to 2019 and ran JAPAN TANZANIA Tours (JATA Tours) with her partner Nemoto Toshimichi. Kanayama reflects on what she and Nemoto experienced and tells about the appeal of Tanzania, where people of different religions and beliefs coexist. JATA Tours conducted more than 30 Alternative Tours to rural villages in Tanzania, that let the participants to “meet the local people, appreciate each other’s values, and share social experiences.” She also tells about her interactions with Tanzanian artists including Hukwe Zawose and his folk music orchestra CHIBITE (meaning “let’s go together” in the local language), Makonde sculptors Evarist Nampoka and his son Mathias Nampoka, Shetani artists George Lilanga and his grandson Hendrick Lilanga.

pp. 14-15 **Transforming Japanese society with the people of African roots**

This article introduces the comments made by each speaker at the second half of Part 2 of the AJF’s 25th anniversary special event “What we can do with the people of Africa in the future - Review on the history of the Africa-Japan Council” held on 8th February 2020.

p. 14 **Working with People of African Roots by Tsuyama Naoko**

AJF’s Co-Chairperson Tsuyama Naoko, who has been working and interacting with Africans and people of African roots in Japan, raises the issue of unconscious prejudice against “refugees” and “blacks” being fostered by the use of terms such as “shopping refugees” and “black companies” in Japan.

pp. 14-15 **Sending out African voices by Africans themselves by Voncujovi Sena**

Voncujovi Sena, who works for Ashinaga, founded Jasporea in 2019 to promote exchanges between Africans and Japanese living in Japan. Based on his personal experience and Jasporea’s activities, Voncujovi believes that Africans in Japan can promote the understanding and development of Africa in Japan by sending out African voices.

p. 15 **To live my own life as a bi-racial person by Miura Ark**

Miura Ark was born and raised in Japan, with a Ugandan father and a Japanese mother. She recalls her experience of being judged solely on her appearance and not being seen as a person when she attended a public school in Kamogawa, Chiba Prefecture, from the 6th grade until she graduated from junior high school. Miura later returned to Tokyo as a high school student and started working with African Youth Meetup, hoping to create a society where biracial people can live their own lives.

p. 16-17 **The real power of DANCE ! by Okazaki Emi**

This is the 9th installment in a series of ‘Essay Relay - African Kids Club’. Okazaki Emi is a single mother of two Ivoirian mixed children and runs a dance class called Akwaaba Kids Japan (“Akwaaba” means “welcome” in Akan). She is also a dance instructor at the AJF African Kids Club. In this essay, Okazaki says that Afrobeats’ dance, inspired by her own upbringing in the UK and Ghana, gives confidence to young people of African origin in Africa and around the world. Okazaki also hopes that through the activities of Akwaaba Kids, children will be able to express themselves freely, encourage each other, and feel more familiar with the cultures of African countries.

p. 18 **Book Review: Kaida Kiyomi, “Gender and Development in Africa” by Tamai Mieko**

A book review by Tamai Mieko of the book, “Gender and Development in Africa: Women’s Income-generating Projects and Intra-household Decision-making” (“*Afurika ni okeru jienda to kaihatsu: Josei no shunyu kojei shien to setainai ishikettei*” in Japanese original title) written by Kaida Kiyomi. The reviewer, Tamai Mieko, summarizes the book under review as analyzing women’s decision-making over the distribution of resources within households in the Hausa society of northern Nigeria, where gender power relations are unequal, and examining factors that promote women’s participation in decision-making within households from a gender perspective. According to the reviewer, the author, Kaida Kiyomi, based on interviews and questionnaire surveys with many couples, argues that women who are wives, while respecting “traditional” life, shift their roles as women in the household, show their earnings from their own economic activities to gain an advantage in negotiations with their husbands.

p. 19 **In memory of Saito Ryoichiro : AJF’s former executive director and board member  
by Tsuyama Naoko**

Saito Ryoichiro, former Executive Director and board member of AJF, died on December 19, 2020. In this article, AJF’s Co-Chairperson Tsuyama Naoko reports on his memorial ceremony and the messages received from AJF members and others. Tsuyama also notes that Saito, whom she worked with, consistently held the voices of people in Africa as a starting point to connect with and take action with those who are trying to survive in the same world. A brief biography of Saito Ryoichiro is attached.

Back cover **Afterword (“Hitotsu no musubime to shite” in Japanese) and a record of AJF’s activities**