

Japan and Africa

Japan and Africa have had an impactful and unique relationship for several decades. Japan long has developed a positive leadership role in Africa's development.

One of the most important and most visible features of Japan's relationship with Africa is the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). TICAD, initiated by the government of Japan in 1993, is a multilateral and international forum that focuses entirely on African development. The sixth installment of TICAD will occur this August in Kenya. TICAD is one of the oldest international forums in which issues related to Africa's development are discussed among multiple stakeholders. The TICAD organizers invite African heads of states, international and regional development organizations, representatives of the private sector, development partners, and representatives of civil society.

From 1993, TICAD was held every five years in Japan. At TICAD V in 2013, the sponsors decided to change its cycle to every three years, with the hosting country alternating between Japan and an African country. TICAD VI will be held outside Japan for the first time, in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2016. Following the success of TICAD V, expectations are high for the first TICAD on the African continent. Deciding to hold TICAD VI in Kenya is meant to move the proceedings away from a Tokyo-centric forum on African development to an Africa-focused forum. Indeed, this is considered a major milestone and a specific demonstration towards achieving a more strategic partnership between African countries and Japan. And it underscores the spirit of partnership and ownership underpinning the formation of the TICAD process in 1993.

Since its inception, TICAD has provided fundamental and comprehensive policy guidelines on African development. TICAD has evolved into a major global framework to facilitate the implementation of initiatives

for promoting African development under the dual principles of African ownership and international partnership. For the initial TICAD meetings, Japan's contributions to Africa primarily were in the areas of development assistance and poverty reduction. Other TICAD meetings focused on social development sectors, including education, health, and community development. Latter TICAD meetings emphasized infrastructural investment and the effects of climate change.

The upcoming TICAD VI more specifically is based on three pillars:

1. Promoting economic transformation through industrialization
2. Promoting resilient health systems for improved quality of life
3. Promoting social stability for shared prosperity

Given these themes, Japan has contributed to Africa in many specific ways. First, following TICAD V in 2013, the government of Japan shifted its focus towards Japanese private-sector investment in Africa. TICAD VI will feature inclusion of the Japanese and African private sectors in promoting socioeconomic development. According to Ambassador Ben Ogotu, the director of the TICAD VI Secretariat, the upcoming event will capture the essence of job creation.

Additionally, in 2013, Prime Minister Abe's pledge of USD 32 billion to be invested over the subsequent five years constituted a significant increase in Japanese investment. The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) initiated a program that helps African countries achieve sustainable economic growth by working with them to strengthen export industries. Moreover, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is supporting programs promoting human resource development for industry and business in Africa.

A second contribution from TICAD was Prime

Minister Abe's 2014 visit to Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, the first trip to Africa by a Japanese prime minister in nearly 10 years. Third, in addition to the renewed focus on private-sector investment in Africa, the government of Japan continues to contribute to development projects in individual countries. As an example, during his visit to Mozambique, Prime Minister Abe announced the provision of USD 570 million for the development of a trading corridor in that country. Japan also has been investing in Africa's agricultural sector with particular emphasis on rice production. Another example of Japan's contribution is assisting African countries with natural disaster preparation plans. Moreover, the prime minister announced the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative), a plan that will invite 1,000 African nationals over five years to study in Japan and to work as interns in Japanese companies.

What motivates Japan's relationship to Africa? Japan clearly sees the humanitarian needs in Africa and given its economic wealth, it could create a positive aid environment. Japan also uses TICAD as a platform to put forward a development model that derives from Japan's own development history. Japan long has emphasized a self-help policy based on industrialization. The benefits from these policies can be shared with African countries. Moreover, the Japanese government seeks to reinforce relations with Africa at a time when other countries are making their presence felt on the continent, considered the world's last great growth market. For their part, African countries are hoping to attract investment from diverse sources, including Japan, in order to foster sustainable growth and combat the effects of a possible slowdown in the global economy.

Japan can play a crucial role in assisting African governments towards their development goals, and TICAD represents a notable example of global

collaboration and Japanese leadership focusing on African development. While Africa's economy has been growing by around 5% annually, much of that new wealth remains under the control of African elites. For more comprehensive development, more work needs to occur with the construction of effective and efficient infrastructure, the development of a vibrant middle class, the implementation of environmental policies, and the protection of human rights and human security. The small but vocal group of Japanese civil society organizations at TICAD V highlighted this concern of expanding the view of development. For these groups, economic growth is necessary, but not sufficient in order to achieve development.

TICAD VI represents the continuity of Japanese development policy towards Africa, but also a renewed focus on what Africans themselves want. Holding this international conference in Kenya demonstrates an important shift for Japanese policy and a new opportunity to bring positive and impactful change in Africa. (*Written in July 2016.*)



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