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MAGAZINE

KOICA

Innovation for Climate Crisis

Special Theme
Response to Climate Crisis Deepened by Technology Gap

Infographic
Climate Crisis and KOICA's Role

Global Trends
Shrinking Development Finance

Conference
Global Development Partnership Week 2025



2026 VOL.8





READERS' LETTERS

04 Tell MAGAZINE KOICA what's on your mind!
Your voice

ODA TRENDS

06 "Shrinking development finance amid growing climate, food and financing challenges"
Global trends in development cooperation

SPECIAL THEME I **Innovative Technologies Responding to the Climate Crisis**

10 Widening inequality in the climate change era due to the technology gap: Finding answers in 'Global AI for All'!
Special Contribution by Kim Gyungah, Manager, Climate and Economic Development Team, KOICA

12 Global challenge: "Climate Crisis" and KOICA's role
ODA Infographic

14 Winner of the AI for Climate Action Award: "AI-powered farming expected in rural Laos"
Interview with Alisa Luangrath, Head of IWMI's International Cooperation Team

17 Citarum River equipped with flood early warning system: "The path of water and hearts changed by ODA"
Lee Soo-yeon, Ph.D., in Disaster Psychology and Psychosocial Impact Assessment

20 Clear blue skies Thai youth dream of
Winners of the "International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies" Poster Contest

22 How the AI-based agricultural climate information services system is transforming farming in Vanuatu
Contribution by Chun Jong-ahn, head of the Climate Change Analysis Department at the APEC Climate Center

SPECIAL THEME II **Global Development Partnership Week 2025**

28 "From the Compromiso de Sevilla to the Seoul Solution: Presenting an exemplary model of development cooperation"
The 18th Seoul ODA International Conference

32 "Korea's ODA with Jeong: Leveraging its unique strengths"
Interview with Professor Kim Young-wan, Department of Political Science, Sogang University

36 "Realigning the course of ODA to reduce future costs"
Interview with Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD DAC

41 Insights from the GPEDC LAP
Opening New Pathways for Emerging Donors

44 "Prioritizing People, Focusing on Education and Healthcare over Infrastructure"
Interview with Alejandra del Moral Vela, executive director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID)

REGULAR FEATURES **KOICA Now**

50 "Development cooperation that excludes women is unsustainable"
Interview with Eun Mee Kim, Professor Emeritus of Graduate School of International Studies and Chairperson of Board of Trustees, Ewha Womans University

53 "I'm glad I can afford my children's school meals myself"
Integrated Dairy Productivity Improvement Project for smallholder farmers in Kamalamai Municipality, Nepal

56 "Drink clean water, receive rehabilitation treatment, and walk back into a healthy daily life"
Support Project for Afghan Refugees and Host Communities in Pakistan

59 From 'What was done' to 'What has changed'... Impact evaluation elevates the level of development cooperation projects
KOICA Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum

62 "Sustainable support significantly benefits youth careers"
Interviews with participants in KOICA's International Organization Placement Support Program

66 Helping hands for El Salvador's economic reconstruction
Contribution by Cho So-hui, director of the KOICA El Salvador Office

68 Sowing seeds in Uganda, the "Pearl of Africa"
Contribution by Cho Soong-ho, manager of the Department of Evaluation

70 Goikha(KOICA), It's My Pleasure!
Grow as you are, Cooperate as we are

73 Goikha and WeKO 7th cohort meet! "Goikha Cine with WeKO"
"Goikha" brand film premiere & KOICA Global Supporters WeKO 7th cohort achievement-sharing ceremony

NEWS

76 KOICA NEWS
Latest issues at a glance

CLOSING REMARKS

82 Realizing 'AI for All' through Development Cooperation: Leading the Way in Addressing the Climate Crisis
KOICA President CHANG, Won Sam











Your voice

Tell MAGAZINE KOICA what's on your mind!

It would be nice if you organized events online or in Korea, such as conferences where researchers, alumni or students could give presentations on new challenges faced by countries in the context of multipolarity. An annual international conference on international development would help connect and build a CIAT network. Thanks.
- mam***@gmail.com

The magazine is effective for communication and raising awareness on positive outcomes happening as a result of KOICA work. However, I suggest that it should also include critical reflections on what didn't go so well , as well as data-driven articles with follow-up on how projects have been implemented.
- sal***@gmail.com

I really like how you design and format this magazine. It makes me feel closer to Korea and Korean people.
- sho***@gmail.com

I would like to see more testimonies from recipient countries and how the international community views KOICA and its impact on their local communities.
- eba***@gmail.com

Each and every item in MAGAZINE KOICA offers something insightful, interesting and innovative. The magazine covers diverse elements in Korea's initiatives for a better tomorrow through ODA projects. I would like to thank the entire MAGAZINE KOICA team for the quality they deliver in both text and images. Reading your magazine is a great pleasure. "THEMATIC FOCUS" section is the one I truly like. It brings out much of hidden features of our world. One small suggestion: It would be really nice if you added the interactive stories from ODA projects' local beneficiaries and their love for Korea. Looking forward to your next issue and wishing the team all the success.
- rad***@gmail.com

Adding more on-field reporting, visual content, cultural features, and practical tips for volunteers and more short-form videos would also make the magazine more engaging and informative.
- ror***@gmail.com

I like the article written in the Project Highlight section. It tackles collaborative projects between countries that help communities' livelihoods.
- mer***@gmail.com

I hope to see a magazine that even people who are not familiar with KOICA can read easily with great interest. It will naturally make MAGAZINE KOICA that much more valuable.
- sss***@gmail.lcom

Career information on the field of international development cooperation should be incorporated.
- zub***@gmail.com

I think the magazine will be more immersive if vivid articles written by office employees or beneficiaries at project sites are added.
- dkn***@gmail.com

We gladly welcome your feedback

Let us know what you think of MAGAZINE KOICA VOL.8. We will listen to what you say and strive to improve MAGAZINE KOICA accordingly. Readers whose letters are published in VOL.9 will also receive a gift.

*** Send your mail to: press@koica.go.kr**
*** Share your opinions via the QR code as well.**

Global trends in development cooperation

“Shrinking development finance amid growing climate, food and financing challenges”



• The 30th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) agreed to significantly scale up climate adaptation finance for developing countries by 2035. However, no agreement was reached on the phasedown of fossil fuels.

COP30 concluded on November 22 last year “Climate adaptation finance to be increased by at least threefold”

The 30th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30), held in Belém, Brazil, officially concluded on November 22 last year. The most notable outcome of the conference was the agreement to double climate adaptation finance for developing countries by 2025 and to triple it by 2035. In addition, according to the COP30 decision text, Parties reaffirmed a roadmap toward mobilizing climate finance at an annual scale of USD 1.3 trillion by 2035 and agreed on a replenishment cycle for the Loss and Damage Fund. However, no agreement was reached on issues related to the phasedown of fossil fuels. UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that, given delays in achieving climate goals and current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, overshooting the 1.5°C temperature limit has become inevitable, and stressed that COP must demonstrate stronger commitment to implementing the actions agreed under the Paris Agreement.

OECD projects a contraction in global development finance amid coordinated ODA cuts by major donors

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projected that global official development assistance (ODA) in 2025 would decline by approximately 9 to 17 percent compared to the previous year. This represents a further decrease following a 9 percent drop recorded in 2024. The OECD also noted that global ODA levels could return to pre-pandemic levels by 2027. The OECD assessed that it is the first time on record that four major donor countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France—have announced coordinated ODA cuts for two consecutive years. It further warned that, as these countries account for a substantial share of total global ODA, the reduction is likely to have a greater impact on least developed countries, sub-Saharan Africa, and health-related assistance.

UN calls for accelerated implementation of the sustainable development goals: “International cooperation needed to address multiple, overlapping crises”

On July 14 last year, the United Nations released The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025, calling for strengthened international action to achieve the 2030 Agenda, with only five years remaining. The report assessed that since 2015, there had been meaningful progress in areas including expanded access to education, improvements in maternal and child health indicators, reduced burdens of infectious diseases such as HIV and malaria, and a narrowing of the digital divide. However, it found that extreme poverty, hunger, and inadequate housing conditions continued to affect millions of people worldwide, while inequalities faced by vulnerable groups, including women and persons with disabilities, persist. The United Nations emphasized that climate change, humanitarian crises, and human rights challenges were increasingly interlinked, underscoring the need for integrated responses and accelerated action through multilateral cooperation.

Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development held… Climate finance and international financial architecture reform take center stage

The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) was held in Seville, Spain, from June 30 to July 3 last year, during which international discussions took place on financing for sustainable development and climate action. The conference was notable for being the first to meaningfully link decisions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with the financing for development agenda.

The outcome document, known as the Seville Commitment, goes beyond the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) by integrating climate finance into the core framework of development finance and by specifying the mobilization and provision of resources to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. It also emphasized the need to support developing countries in implementing their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP).

International AI Technology Competition held… Korean Team named final winner

A Korean team led by a Lao researcher was announced as the final winner of the AI for Climate Action (AICA) Award 2025. The award ceremony was held in October last year as part of the AI for Climate Action Forum 2025 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and aimed to identify AI-based solutions for effective climate change responses in developing countries and small island developing states. Jointly organized by the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee, the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the event featured project presentations by finalist teams from Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Korea. The final award was given to an AI-based smart farming and irrigation system developed by a team led by Alisa Luangrath of Lao PDR, affiliated with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). Alisa Luangrath stated that the system enables AI to learn from agricultural data in a manner similar to farmers with decades of experience in Lao PDR and to identify solutions independently, adding that she was grateful that its potential to bring tangible change to Lao agriculture had been recognized.



• The United States, the United Kingdom, and other major donor countries have announced coordinated cuts to official development assistance (ODA) for a second consecutive year, for the first time on record.



• At the AI for Climate Action Award 2025, the team led by Alisa Luangrath of Lao PDR, affiliated with the Korea's Integrated Watershed Management Institute was named the final winner.

GPEDC Forum held in Korea… Discussions focus on development finance effectiveness and strengthening multilateral cooperation

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) Forum was held in Korea from September 30 to October 1 last year. The forum served as the first major international platform following the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), held in Seville, Spain, in July last year, and focused on development finance effectiveness and international cooperation to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participating countries discussed policy challenges related to translating the outcomes of FfD4 into practice at the country level and reviewed implementation progress based on GPEDC monitoring data. The forum also provided an opportunity to share experiences on the impact of data- and evidence-based policies, strengthening national development cooperation ecosystems, and preparations for the High-Level Meeting scheduled for 2026—2027.

“Rising threats to food security from the spread of transboundary animal diseases”

On November 28 last year, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) called for strengthened international cooperation to prevent and control animal diseases at an information session on the Global Partnership Programme for Transboundary Animal Diseases (GPP-TAD), held at its headquarters in Rome. The FAO Director-General cited African swine fever, highly pathogenic avian influenza, and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), which recently caused major outbreaks in Europe, as key examples, warning that recent funding cuts could weaken existing response mechanisms. Transboundary animal diseases cause livestock losses of up to USD 330 billion annually and have direct impacts on the livelihoods of small-scale farmers as well as on international trade. An FAO official emphasized that a sustainable, coordinated response framework involving governments, financial institutions, and the private sector is necessary.



• Threats from animal diseases, including African swine fever and avian influenza, are increasing in countries around the world. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has called for strengthened international cooperation to prevent and control animal diseases.

Innovative Technologies Responding
to the Climate Crisis

“AI Emerges as a Noteworthy Alternative”

Extreme heatwaves, massive wildfires, record-breaking heavy rains, and ongoing droughts…
Signs of the climate crisis are seeping into our lives across the world.
How are the international community and KOICA responding to this borderless climate crisis with innovative technologies?












Special Contribution By Kim Gyungah, Manager, Climate and Economic Development Team, KOICA

Widening inequality in the climate change era due to the technology gap: Finding answers in 'Global AI for All'!



• The KOICA-UNFCCC "Climate Future Partnership" and the international community continue efforts to bridge the AI technology gap between developed and developing countries.

Repeated droughts, floods, and sea-level rise are occurring in various parts of the world. The impact of the climate crisis is widening further due to gaps in technology and capital. According to a recent UNFCCC technology document, most developed countries are advancing disaster alerts, climate forecasting, and energy efficiency using artificial intelligence (AI), while many developing countries fail to reap technical benefits due to shortages in data, infrastructure, and capacity. It is concerning that AI, while serving as a tool for new opportunities, can exacerbate the climate crisis due to its massive energy consumption, cooling water use, and increased power demand. How can we overcome such inequality?

Climate inequality and the technology gap in the AI era

UNFCCC technology documents point out that, in order for developing countries to respond to climate change using AI, complex challenges must be addressed, including securing reliable data, strengthening cybersecurity, eliminating gender and regional biases, and improving energy efficiency. However, sensors and satellites for collecting and storing climate-related data, as well as the computing resources needed to analyze them, are mostly concentrated in developed countries. Training and inference of AI models indeed require enormous amounts of electricity and cooling water, leading to increased carbon emissions from data centers. Amid growing debates over whether AI will mitigate or worsen the climate crisis, developing energy-efficient algorithms and building green data centers have emerged as key tasks.

Technology gaps also occur at the AI application stage. Developed countries are building models that predict floods, droughts, and wildfires, and optimize food production using satellite and IoT data. For example, AI-based early flood warning systems predict damage based on data collected from rainfall and water-level sensors, helping residents evacuate. The United States and the European Union analyze weather and ocean data to accurately predict hurricane paths. Japan uses AI to propose optimal cultivation timing and water resource management in agriculture. Canada develops wildfire prediction models to reduce damage.

According to the UNFCCC's Technology Needs Assessment (TNA), many developing countries face surging demand for AI-related technologies such as climate data platforms, digital MRV (Measurement, Reporting, and Verification) systems, and disaster risk analysis, yet adoption lags due to data security concerns, a lack of skilled personnel, and cost burdens. If this gap persists, inequality in climate response capabilities will inevitably deepen.

AI for Climate Action Initiative: Strategies to bridge the technology gap

International efforts to bridge the technology gap are currently underway. At the UNFCCC COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024, KOICA and the UNFCCC signed the "Climate Future Partnership." The Climate Future Partnership aims to jointly develop and disseminate AI-based climate solutions for developing countries. Its flagship program, the "AI for Climate Action (AICA) Initiative," hosted Africa's first "AI for Climate Action Forum 2025" in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in October 2025. Over 200 representatives from African governments, international organizations, and academic institutions gathered at the forum to share cases of climate adaptation and mitigation using AI, and agreed that small-scale, lightweight AI models tailored to each country's situation could serve as practical alternatives to large-scale, high-energy AI systems.

KOICA's AI for Climate Action Award (AICA Award) is a technology competition that discovers innovative AI-based climate solutions. In the 2025 AICA Award, 634 teams from around the world participated in fierce competition. The final winner was the "SAFIR," AI agricultural solution developed by the Korea's Integrated Watershed Management Institute (IWMI) team, led by Alisa Luangrath from Laos. SAFIR is an AI model that collects weather, soil, and groundwater data to predict short- and medium-term agricultural production and support efficient water resource management. It earned high praise from the judges for reducing disaster risks and increasing farm incomes.



• Kim Gyungah, Manager, Climate and Economic Development Team, KOICA

New government's national task: Global AI for all

Korea is also positioning AI as a key national growth engine. The new government, launched in June 2025, designated AI as its top national policy priority, appointed the first-ever "AI Future Planning Senior Secretary" in the Office of the President, and announced a strategy to achieve a 3% potential growth rate using AI. National tasks in the climate and environment sectors have also been significantly strengthened. The Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment confirmed in September 2025, while finalizing the new government's 123 national policy tasks, that it will steadily pursue five key tasks in the climate and environment sector, including realizing carbon neutrality, creating a circular economy ecosystem, and strengthening climate adaptation capacity. The government plans to build an integrated climate adaptation information platform to enhance national climate adaptation capabilities and to prepare the 4th National Climate Crisis Adaptation Plan to advance the climate change monitoring and prediction system.

Additionally, on November 11, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment finalized and announced a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 53—61% by 2035 compared to 2018 net emissions levels. This represents an upward revision from the initially proposed range of 50—60%, supporting the implementation of national policy tasks such as the enactment of the Carbon Neutrality Industry Act and the establishment of an integrated climate adaptation information platform, alongside the 2030 target of a 40% reduction. Korea's AI and climate policies are mutually complementary, demonstrating a strong intent to lead globally in both technology and climate.

An era requiring cooperation and inclusion beyond technology

AI possesses a dual nature as a powerful tool for responding to climate change while also potentially creating new risks and inequalities, making inclusive governance, capacity building, and improvements in energy efficiency essential alongside technology development. Support to enhance data and infrastructure accessibility in developing countries, region-tailored AI solutions, green data center development, and the establishment of ethical AI standards must be pursued together.

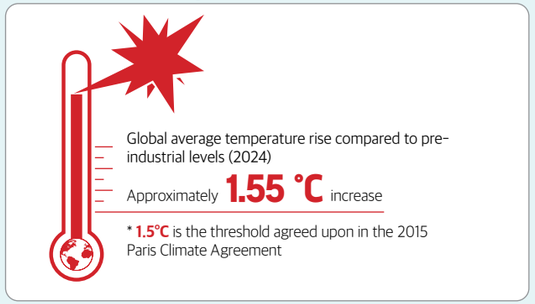
As the new Korean government expresses its determination to leap forward as one of the "Top 3 AI Powers" by prioritizing climate and AI as core national tasks, KOICA aims to play a central role, in partnership with the UNFCCC, in highlighting climate inequality caused by technology gaps and reducing disparities in AI technology. Furthermore, KOICA seeks to foster consensus that international solidarity is essential for AI to become a public good for solving humanity's shared challenges. "The keywords permeating the two pillars of the Climate Future Partnership - AI collaboration and climate finance collaboration projects"- are 'solidarity' and 'cooperation'. Through the 2025 Tanzania AICA Forum, KOICA delivered the message that "for technology to truly realize its value, the international community must be connected." Moving forward, KOICA plans to actively promote the "K-AI for Climate Action" brand globally, strengthening a global cooperation ecosystem in which AI technology and ODA contribute together.

ODA Infographic

Global challenge: “Climate Crisis” and KOICA’s role

The international community is grappling with problems caused by the climate crisis, including food insecurity, heightened risks of infectious diseases, and a growing number of refugees. The climate crisis is a transnational, shared threat to humanity, and developing countries, which lack infrastructure, financial resources, and adaptive capacity, are particularly vulnerable to it. KOICA is undertaking various initiatives to address the vulnerability of developing countries caused by the climate crisis and is collaborating with Korean companies that possess innovative technologies.

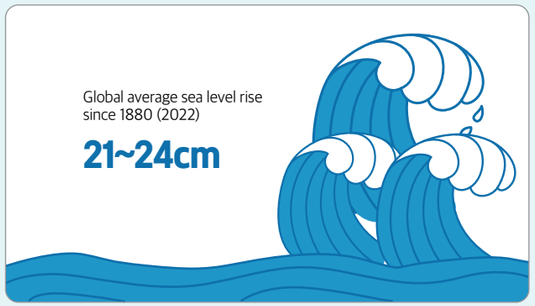
<The current state of the climate crisis by the numbers>





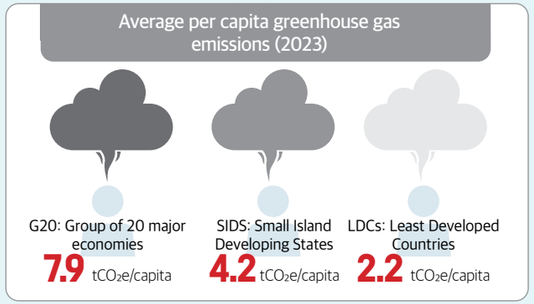
Number of people forcibly displaced due to natural disasters (2022)

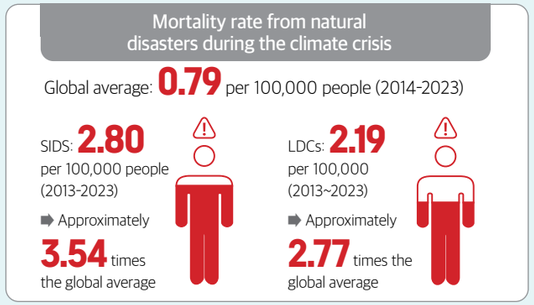
Approximately 22.2 million people

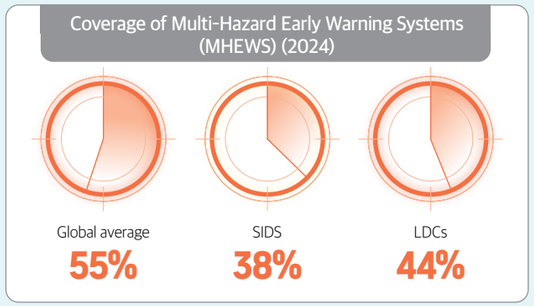


Source: World Meteorological Organization (WMO), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Independent Data Monitoring Committee (IDMC)

<Vulnerability and response gap in developing countries>







Source: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

<Korean companies responding to the climate crisis in developing countries through KOICA’s CTS>

* CTS: An abbreviation for KOICA’s Creative Technology Solution program, a project that solves challenges in developing countries through solutions from innovators such as aspiring entrepreneurs and startups

AVALVE

Problem

Vietnam, where 47% of the total labor force is engaged in agriculture, is experiencing adverse impacts on crop cultivation due to environmental pollution and the climate crisis but faces difficulties in mounting sustainable responses because of low education levels

Solution

The distribution of artificial intelligence (AI)-based smart farming technology provides automatic control of crop cultivation environments and delivers various types of information, making it easier even for novice farmers to cultivate high-value crops

Top achievements

- Increase in monthly income per local smallholder farmer: **10%**
- Number of smart farm facilities established locally: **30**
- Number of local smallholder farmers who completed professional smart farm training: **154**
- Number of new agricultural sales channels developed for local smallholder farmers: **5**

TR CORPORATION

Problem

Vietnam is facing severe air pollution, with the number of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)* four times higher than in other OECD countries, yet 94% of COPD patients remain undiagnosed, creating difficulties in early detection

*COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease): A chronic respiratory disease in which lung function deteriorates due to inflammation caused by harmful gases or fine particles and is the third leading cause of death worldwide. The main causes are air pollution and smoking, and early diagnosis is very important, as initial symptoms are mild.

Solution

Providing “The Spirokit,” an AI-based respiratory disease testing device that enables simple yet accurate early diagnosis of COPD

Top achievements

- COPD suspected patient screening rate in Vietnam: **10%**
- Number of testing devices distributed to Vietnamese medical institutions: **100**
- Number of beneficiaries who received respiratory disease screening: **907**
- Number of training sessions conducted for local Vietnamese medical staff on using diagnostic devices: **2**

WEKOTEC

Problem

Vietnam needs a water quality monitoring system due to water pollution but struggles to address the issue because of a lack of indigenous technology, high implementation costs, and insufficient operational expertise

Solution

Providing an IoT-based automatic water quality meter optimized for local conditions that can simultaneously measure up to 11 water quality parameters, enabling systematic, data-driven water quality management

Top achievements

- Number of water quality monitoring products developed and distributed locally: **5**
- Compliance rate with effluent water quality standards at sites where monitoring systems were installed: **99.5%**
- Number of residents living near water treatment plants whose water quality improved through the solution: **669,380**
- Number of people who received capacity-building training on water quality management methods: **50**

WI.Plat

Problem

Indonesia, which is struggling with water management, suffers annual water losses of approximately 1.51 billion cubic meters and economic losses of approximately 422 million USD due to aging pipelines

Solution

Providing “NELOW,” a water supply management system that collects and analyzes leak-related data transmitted from water pipes using AI and IoT technology

Top achievements

- Water loss reduced: **1 million㎥**
- Number of leak points identified through leak detection: **79**
- Water loss reduction rate achieved using NELOW: **32%**
- Number of leak management specialists trained locally: **52**

Interview with Alisa Luangrath, Head of IWMI's International Cooperation Team

Winner of the AI for Climate Action Award: "AI-powered farming expected in rural Laos"



• Alisa Luangrath, leader of IWMI's International Cooperation Team, said that the AI-based SAFIR solution they developed should not replace farmers' wisdom, but rather serve as an "assistant that helps them make decisions."

The award ceremony of the international AI competition "AI for Climate Action Award 2025" was held in October last year in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Launched in 2024, the second edition of the competition ran for four months, inviting AI-based solution proposals to address climate change in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The jury consisted of seven AI experts from the UN and multinational organizations. In 2025, a total of 634 solutions were submitted, and four teams proposing solutions for Laos, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia advanced to the final round to compete against one another. The winner was the solution "SAFIR (Smart AI-based Farming & Irrigation for Resilience)," proposed by the Korean team from the Integrated Water Management Institute (IWMI), led by the Laotian team leader Alisa Luangrath. SAFIR is an AI-based solution designed to address agricultural and water resource challenges in developing countries. The following is a Q&A with team leader Alisa Luangrath.

Q How do you feel about winning the AI for Climate Action Award 2025?

It was truly an honor. We are immensely grateful that the UNFCCC and the UN Climate Technology Centre and Network(CTCN) recognized our potential. Above all, we sincerely thank KOICA for creating this platform.

Q What kind of solution is SAFIR?

SAFIR is an AI-based agriculture and irrigation management system. It provides farmers with guidance on when and how much to irrigate through a mobile app that includes a Lao-language voice chatbot, while helping government and local water managers efficiently manage regional water resources through extensive data. Ultimately, it aims to enhance agricultural productivity while strengthening regional water security and climate resilience.

Q How does the AI in this solution operate?

The AI analyzes soil moisture, weather, and groundwater level data through its model. It predicts drought and soil drying points using machine learning and identifies optimal water management strategies through reinforcement learning. The AI learns from data like a farmer with decades of experience, independently determining when to irrigate for maximum yield.

Q What was the background for developing this idea?

After majoring in environmental science at the National University of Laos, I came to Korea to study. Having completed my master's degree at Korea University, I now work at the IWMI. As a Laotian, I know better than anyone how deeply climate change affects agriculture in Laos. While working in Korea, every time I encountered advanced technologies in climate and agriculture, I dreamed of enabling vulnerable farmers back home in Laos to benefit from them. So, I proposed applying our institute's technology to Laos. This proposal led to the SAFIR concept that won the competition. In other words, SAFIR is a solution born from the meeting of my earnest desire and the institute's technological expertise, creating hope.

Q What do you think of the level of Korea's AI technology while researching here?

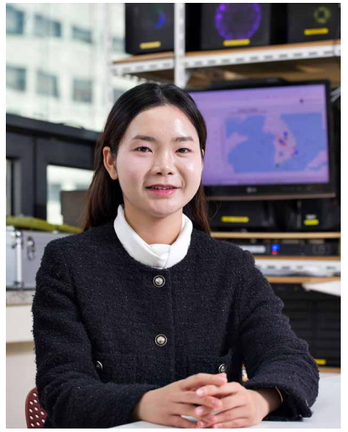
One of the most surprising things when I arrived in Korea was how deeply AI technology had already permeated everyday life. Korea was rapidly adopting AI across a wide range of fields: it analyzes crop conditions in smart farms, boosts production efficiency in factories, and supports disease diagnosis in hospitals. For me, Korea's AI ecosystem went beyond simply being a place to "learn technology" and became a living classroom where I could directly witness how technology can transform people's lives for the better.

Q What was the most difficult or most sensitive aspect when preparing the SAFIR solution?

The most challenging part was establishing an on-site maintenance system. Adequate education and capacity building are essential so that local technicians and farmer leaders can inspect and repair the equipment themselves. In addition, building trust with local farmers requires a careful approach, as Laotian farmers possess generations of experience and wisdom. We believe the technology should not replace that wisdom but function as an "assistant" that supports decision-making. Therefore, active communication to consistently reflect farmers' perspectives and transparently demonstrate the technology's effectiveness is essential.

Q Why should Asian countries, including Laos, adopt AI technology to address the climate crisis?

Southeast Asia is a region highly vulnerable to unpredictable extreme weather. AI-based predictive technology is one of the most effective means to prepare in advance for such risks and minimize damage. Moreover, agriculture remains the economic backbone of many Asian countries. It is a vital industry that sustains the livelihoods of many people. By leveraging AI, data-driven decision-making becomes possible, enabling stable improvements in agricultural productivity in practice. This, in turn, helps increase farm household incomes and eradicate poverty.



• Alisa Luangrath, Head of IWMI's International Cooperation Team

Above all, AI technology can make agricultural systems far more intelligent with minimal cost and without massive infrastructure investment. It offers an opportunity to leapfrog years of traditional development stages and move directly toward a sustainable agricultural structure.

Q What advice would you give to junior researchers pursuing a similar path?

If I may highlight three important points, first, precisely defining the social problem to be solved is crucial. If those working with technology fail to accurately grasp the social issue they aim to address, even the best technology becomes useless. Second, selecting the most appropriate tools is essential. Rather than first thinking about the technology or familiar methods one possesses, it is indispensable to relentlessly question which tools truly fit the problem. Finally, collaboration is vital. I found that better solutions emerge when people from diverse backgrounds come together. Only when each other's expertise converges does a complete solution take shape.

Mini Interview

“Data reduce climate information inequality”



Choi Ye-ji, CTO of DI Lab Inc.

Choi Ye-ji, CTO of DI Lab Inc., a company providing an AI-based climate and environment platform service, served as a judge for the “AI for Climate Action Awards 2025.” The following is a Q&A with CTO Choi.

Q You participated as a judge in the AI for Climate Action Award 2025. How do you evaluate this year’s winning solution?

SAFIR stood out not only for its technical sophistication but also for its on-site practicality and feasibility. It went beyond a mere good idea, presenting a detailed design—from data flow to AI model operations—that demonstrates how to effectively address Laos’s climate risks and agricultural irrigation challenges. The fact that it was implemented in a service form that farmers can truly use was also impressive. When deciding the final winner, “how accurately it reflected the target country’s reality” and “how focused it was on actual problem-solving” were key criteria, and SAFIR excelled in those aspects.

Q What factors led you to become interested in climate issues?

Majoring in meteorology naturally led to my interest in climate change, and I realized that the climate crisis is no longer a distant future. Despite clear scientific evidence, it was regrettable that many people still failed to properly recognize the severity of the climate crisis. This is also an issue of climate information. Realizing that information gaps lead to misguided judgments and indifference, I came to believe that disseminating data would be key to addressing both the climate crisis and information inequality.

Q In what ways can AI serve as a tool to solve the climate crisis?

Climate science, particularly meteorology, is one scientific field with a long history of accumulated data. Every day, hundreds of terabytes of weather and climate data are generated worldwide. AI can process and analyze vast amounts of data in an instant. Through research, I realized that the combination of satellite data and artificial intelligence could play a crucial role in addressing the climate crisis. Satellites enable uniform global observation, addressing the bias caused by the concentration of observation equipment in specific regions. Moreover, AI goes beyond simply improving prediction accuracy; it can become a new climate response tool that makes climate data more equitable and effectively utilized.

Q What was the biggest concern while conducting AI projects in developing countries?

The biggest concern was when and how to strengthen capacity. In international development projects, capacity building through system usage training often takes place at the end to ensure sustainability. However, AI technology evolves so rapidly that short-term training alone is insufficient. Therefore, from the project’s outset, it was considered crucial to build an understanding of AI concepts and potential applications, enabling local partners to grasp the principles and independently apply and adapt them throughout the entire process. Another major concern was creating an environment in which local data could be utilized. To develop regionally appropriate AI models and enhance reliability, local data is ultimately the most critical. To this end, legal restrictions on data sharing and use were carefully reviewed, followed by formal document exchanges to clearly establish the grounds for data utilization. This process requires considerable time due to administrative procedures, making strategic approaches, including proper scheduling, essential.

Q What do you think is the role of development cooperation agencies, like KOICA?

KOICA can help design large-scale frameworks through ODA projects so that data from developing countries translates into actual policies and industries, rather than merely providing equipment. AI-based climate response projects emphasize building local capacities for sustainable operation, rather than just transferring technology. However, from a practical standpoint, maintaining long-term collaboration with local partners to sustain projects involves various challenges. In this regard, public support from agencies like KOICA provides significant leverage. With government-to-government cooperation, developing countries can operate and enhance AI systems domestically using Korea’s advanced technology, eventually building independent technological capabilities. This represents a form of leadership that Korea can demonstrate on the international stage. K

Interview with Lee Soo-yeon, Ph.D., in Disaster Psychology and Psychosocial Impact Assessment

Citarum River equipped with flood early warning system: “The path of water and hearts changed by ODA”



• Dr. Lee Soo-yeon, who holds a Ph.D. in disaster psychology and social impact assessment, joined the “Citarum River Basin Flood Early Warning System Project” to provide objective data on whether residents of the Citarum River basin—who have suffered severe hardship from repeated flooding—are experiencing tangible improvements in their lives through this initiative.

The Citarum River, flowing near the Indonesian capital Jakarta, has two faces. It supplies 80% of Jakarta’s daily water needs, serving as a vital lifeline for 25 million residents by providing water resources and power, while also causing massive annual flood damage to communities in its basin. However, this reality is now expected to change. KOICA’s 12-year “Project for Flood Forecasting and Warning System in Citarum River Basin, Indonesia” concluded this year. The project aims to minimize flood damage for residents in the Citarum River basin. KOICA installed observation and warning equipment, including automatic flow gauges and water level sensors, at 85 locations across the river basin to collect data and establish a proactive flood response system. With the full operation of this flood early warning system, how will life change for residents of the Citarum River basin? We met Dr. Lee Soo-yeon, an expert in disaster psychology and psychosocial impact assessment, who directly engaged with residents, listened to their concerns, and participated in project performance management and evaluation

to discuss local reactions and the project process.

Q Please introduce yourself.
I am a disaster psychology and social impact assessment expert responsible for performance management in international development cooperation projects. In this "Project for Flood Forecasting and Warning System in Citarum River Basin, Indonesia," I analyzed how the flood early warning system established through the project has affected residents' psychological stability and disaster response behaviors, empathized with their experiences, and systematically managed and evaluated the overall project performance.

Q What was the background for your participation in the KOICA project?
Even with the establishment of an advanced flood early warning system, it becomes ineffective if residents do not trust the information or fail to follow the guidelines based on it. Before the project, residents of the Citarum River basin had suffered not only physical damage from repeated floods but also severe psychological trauma and a sense of helplessness. As a disaster psychology expert, I believed it was essential to accurately understand residents' psychological barriers and needs. Additionally, as a performance management specialist, I joined the project to objectively demonstrate, through data, if it brought real changes to residents' lives.


• The downstream area of the Citarum River during a flood

Q What kind of river is the Citarum River, what has been the extent of flood damage so far, and what are the causes of the floods?
The Citarum River serves as a lifeline for tens of millions of residents in West Java, yet local communities have endured immense suffering from annual floods. The causes of flooding are multifaceted, including climate change and urbanization. However, my focus was on the necessity of "region-specific evacuation training." Some areas already had warning systems in place, but evacuation training and education were essential to reducing damage. However, since such training often did not occur, the damage became even more severe.

Q What kind of system is the flood early warning system built by KOICA?
Technologically, it is an integrated system utilizing the latest observation equipment and predictive models. Its core lies in real-time data collection and scientific forecasting. Automatic rain gauges and water level sensors are densely installed at key points from the upper to lower reaches of the river to monitor data in real time. This data is transmitted to a central server via wireless communication networks and analyzed using advanced flood prediction models. The models comprehensively consider rainfall, water levels, and topographic features to forecast when, where, and to what extent floods will occur. Finally, the predicted risk information is rapidly disseminated to the disaster management agency's situation room, relevant officials, and residents through various channels such as webpages, text messages, and automatic warning sirens.

Q What changes have occurred since the flood early warning system was established?
The most important effect is securing the "golden time." In the past, floods were recognized only when heavy rain suddenly brought water to residents' doorsteps, leaving almost no time for evacuation. After the system was established, predictive warnings can now be issued at least two to three hours before a flood occurs, giving residents ample time to move valuables and reach safe shelters with the elderly and vulnerable.

Q What was the most difficult or impressive aspect during the project implementation?
Residents who had experienced repeated disasters were initially reluctant to open up to outsiders and share their honest feelings. Significant effort was required to build trust and obtain accurate data.
The most impressive aspect was when our performance data actually demonstrated changes in residents' lives. Once accurate information was provided, residents showed remarkable potential and became agents of change themselves, which brought great fulfillment.



• All-source situation room of the Citarum River Basin Flood Early Warning System

Q Has residents' anxiety about disasters greatly decreased?
Yes, it has. The biggest causes of anxiety are "uncertainty" and "lack of control." The flood early warning system reduced uncertainty by providing predictive information and increased residents' sense of control by enabling them to plan and execute evacuations in advance. This directly led to psychological stability and an improved quality of life.

Q After this project, do Indonesian residents view KOICA even more positively?
Of course. Expressions of gratitude toward KOICA and Korea were overwhelming. Residents particularly appreciated that KOICA listened to their voices. The opinion-gathering process KOICA conducted was seen as a sincere effort to empathize with their most pressing issue—anxiety—and to find solutions together.

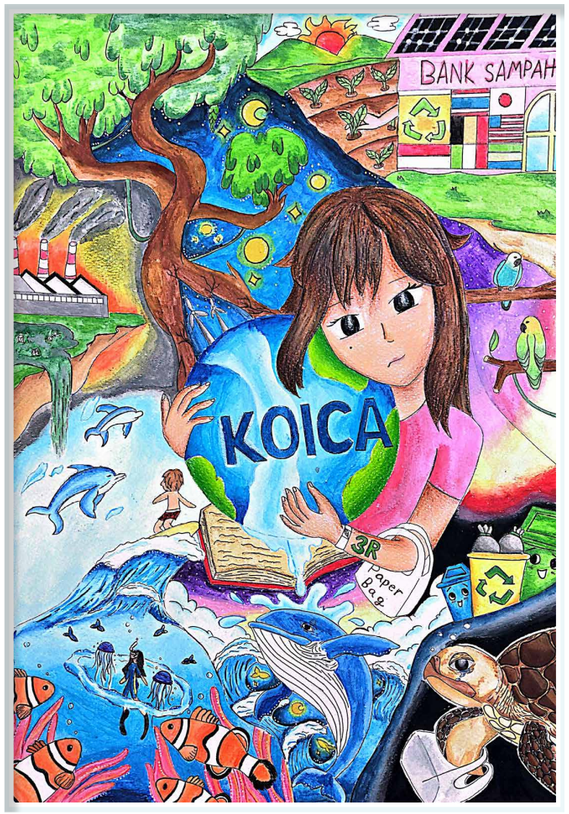
Q Other countries and organizations have also implemented ODA projects there. What do you think are the differences between them and KOICA's project?
The biggest differentiator of KOICA's project, in my view, is the "human-centered approach" and thorough performance-based management. Many ODA projects tend to focus primarily on providing hardware, such as infrastructure development. This project specifically deployed performance management experts like us from the start to thoroughly consider residents' psychological and social factors. It established a clear performance management framework, continuously monitoring and demonstrating tangible outcomes, such as behavioral changes and reduced anxiety, rather than focusing solely on equipment installation.

Q Please share your impressions from participating in this project.
This project was a valuable experience that reaffirmed the importance of understanding residents' psychology and behavior alongside technology in disaster management. It also confirmed that performance management can be a powerful tool not only to assess project success but also to drive positive changes in residents' lives. I hope to continue creating projects that lead to sustainable change. K

Winners of the “International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies” Poster Contest

Clear blue skies Thai youth dream of

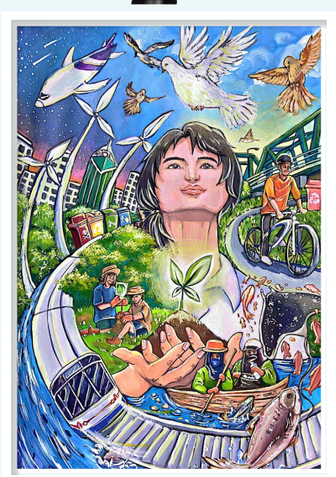
Every September 7 is the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, adopted by the UN upon Korea’s proposal. It was established in 2019 to encourage reflection on the preciousness of breathable air and drinkable water. KOICA’s Thailand office marked this meaningful day by partnering with volunteers for the “KOICA Bluesky 2025” which included an environmental protection poster contest for Thai youth. Students from 25 schools, including 12 schools in Bangkok and 13 universities where KOICA volunteers are dispatched, participated in large numbers and expressed their aspirations for a clean global environment on white canvases, reflecting the theme “Protecting Our Air and Water.”



<Winner> ‘KOICA Green Heart’







<1st Runner-Up> (From left): ‘A Whole New World’, ‘Every Green Begins with a Small Point in Our Heart’, ‘Protecting Our Air and Water’





<2nd Runner-Up> (From the top left, clockwise): “Eco Echo,” “Forest’s Breath,” and “Join Together to Preserve the World”









<Special Recognition Award>(From the top left, clockwise): ‘KOICA for Earth’, ‘Protect the Environment’, ‘Together, We Protect Water and Air, ‘Reduce Air Pollution for Fresh Air’







<Special Recognition Award> (From Left) ‘Impact of Air and Water Pollution’, ‘KOICA Green Step’, ‘The Crack We Call Progress’



• Vanuatu farmers are participating in workshops related to the ToT program, where they are being trained to measure the weight of taro and cassava using the tablet PC camera.

Contribution by Chun Jong-ahn, head of the Climate Change Analysis Department at the APEC Climate Center

How the AI-based agricultural climate information services system is transforming farming in Vanuatu

The small Pacific island nation of Vanuatu faces a threat to its survival due to continuous sea level rise and the recurring cyclones that strike every year. The 2020 Cyclone Harold struck Vanuatu, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands, causing widespread devastation for residents in the region. Vanuatu's economy is largely based on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism industry highly dependent on the natural environment. Since the majority of the population relies on these sectors for their livelihoods, climate change is not just an environmental issue but a matter of survival that determines the continuity of life.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Climate Center (APCC, APEC Climate Center) has been implementing the "Climate Information Service for Resilient Development Planning in Vanuatu(Van-CIS-RDP; locally known as VanKIRAP Project)" since 2018 with support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The VanKIRAP project was launched to strengthen the capacity of the people of Vanuatu to respond independently to disasters caused by climate change. It is especially significant as the first international cooperation project that Korea secured through the GCF.

Addressing climate change can no longer be managed by the capacity of individual countries alone. International climate funds, such as the GCF, are key mechanisms that support developing countries in mitigating the impacts of climate change and building adaptive capacity. When technology and capital combine through climate funds, sustainable change becomes possible even in vulnerable regions. The Vanuatu project is a prime example demonstrating that, through the GCF, it is possible to build local climate information services, foster human resources, and operate self-sustaining systems.

'OSCAR' maximizes farm efficiency by integrating AI technology

A core achievement of the VanKIRAP project is the development and handover of 'OSCAR (tailOred System of Climate Services for AgRiculture)'. The OSCAR system is a tailored agricultural climate information service that integrates weather and climate forecasts, soil data, agricultural climate indices, and droughts and heatwaves early warning indices, providing real-time information to farmers and policymakers in Vanuatu. It also provides the first electronic soil map service targeting Vanuatu's main islands. The introduction of the OSCAR system on social media has attracted significant attention, with many farmers and stakeholders posting questions and comments.

APCC adopted a demand-driven approach focused on local needs rather than a technology-centered approach. Through the Training of Trainers (ToT) program, designed for farmers proficient in using OSCAR to educate their fellow farmers, APCC has supported Vanuatu government officials, agricultural extension officers, and data collectors to acquire the capacity to independently operate and maintain the system. As a result, the Vanuatu government has secured the foundation to independently sustain climate information services. Currently, education programs utilizing OSCAR are operated under the leadership of the Vanuatu government without direct intervention from the APCC, and the content is actively shared through social media.

The VanKIRAP project is recognized as a leading example of successfully applying AI technology for climate change adaptation in developing countries. Many developing countries lack the infrastructure to collect on-site data from weather and atmospheric observation stations and often face challenges accessing costly high-resolution satellite imagery. The APCC believed that AI technology could address disparities in technology and data accessibility. Using AI-based super-resolution techniques, it enhanced low-resolution satellite data into high-resolution imagery, creating OSCAR's unique high-resolution maps. Farmers can use this map to gain a precise understanding of Vanuatu's complex terrain and diverse agricultural environments, enabling them to make more accurate decisions regarding crop cultivation and soil management.

The CCD (Crop-Climate Diary), developed alongside OSCAR, is equipped with user-friendly AI features. Notably, the APCC developed an AI-based function that uses the tablet PC's camera to automatically estimate the weight of tropical crops such as taro and cassava. This feature enables Vanuatu farmers to quantitatively record crop growth conditions without additional equipment, greatly improving the quality of agricultural data. It received enthusiastic feedback during local workshops in Vanuatu. Many farmers actively participated in hands-on practice, directly measuring



• APEC Climate Center-Vanuatu Government customized agricultural climate information service system 'OSCAR' handover ceremony. The person on the right is the author, Chun Jong-ahn, head of the Climate Change Analysis Department at the APEC Climate Center.



• The ToT program, designed to enable farmers proficient in using the customized agricultural climate information service system "OSCAR" to educate their neighbors, has proven highly effective. Vanuatu farmers participated enthusiastically in the workshops associated with the ToT program.

the weight of taro and cassava and reacting with statements like, "The era when AI weighs our crops has arrived." This signifies a meaningful outcome in which AI technology has become integrated into local lives, and climate information has established itself as a practical tool for daily use.

Climate information as a "language of survival"

The Vanuatu case as a model example

Another distinctive feature of OSCAR is that it provides not only new information but also Traditional Knowledge (TK)-based coping practices that Vanuatu farmers have long used. As farmers began to directly utilize OSCAR's information, noticeable changes emerged in agricultural practices across Vanuatu. When droughts are forecasted, farmers prepare using traditional knowledge-based methods such as mulching*, while also making data-driven decisions by utilizing predictive information from the "Agromet Bulletin" to adjust the planting times of taro and cassava. A local farmer said, "Through OSCAR's yield prediction function, we can figure out the expected harvest in advance and prepare accordingly." The system has become more than just a technology; it is a practical tool for responding to the climate crisis, ultimately contributing to Vanuatu's food security and improving agricultural productivity.

The APCC provides seasonal forecast information 1 to 6 months in advance using the "Multi-Model Ensemble" technique, which synthesizes climate models from various countries to produce highly predictive climate data. Vanuatu uses these forecasts to anticipate changes in rainfall and temperature, enabling the development of agricultural plans and the establishment of a climate-resilient agricultural system.

The achievements of the VanKIRAP project were presented at the Pacific Islands Climate Outlook Forum (PICOF), the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC), and the United Nations Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COP28, COP29, COP30), attracting significant international attention. In particular, Vanuatu's Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation (MOCC) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries, and Biosecurity (MALFFB) have expressed strong confidence in the successful operation of OSCAR and have officially agreed to proceed with follow-up projects. Currently, the APCC and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) are seeking additional funding from the GCF to enhance the OSCAR system and support its expansion to other Pacific island countries.

In international development cooperation, what ultimately matters is the shared understanding that "all work is done by people." It is crucial to genuinely understand the stakeholders in the recipient country, think from their perspective, and engage in decision-making collaboratively. The key stakeholders of the Vanuatu project expressed sincere gratitude, saying, "We collaborate with various national agencies, and the APCC team always discusses and makes decisions together with us." It was this trusting and empathetic collaboration that made sustainable change beyond technical achievements possible.

The true achievement of the VanKIRAP project lies not merely in the establishment of the system. The project presented a model of self-reliance and solidarity through climate information. As climate information was translated into the local language and integrated into the lives of farmers, it became a "language of survival."

Climate change is a global crisis that transcends borders. The experience of Vanuatu could foreshadow our future. Korea will combine climate information services, artificial intelligence technology, and cooperation frameworks through the GCF to pursue sustainable development with Pacific island countries and strengthen its role as a leading nation in climate crisis response.

* A technique that involves covering the soil surface around crops with materials such as straw, plastic sheets, fallen leaves, or bark to reduce moisture evaporation, suppress weed growth, and regulate soil temperature

KOICA











Global Development Partnership Week 2025

“Discussing the Challenges and Future Directions of International Development Cooperation”

KOICA co-hosted the “Global Development Partnership Week 2025” with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from September 21 to October 3, 2025. Distinguished guests from around the world attended various meetings during the week, including the 18th Seoul ODA International Conference and the 8th Busan Global Partnership Forum, to explore pathways toward sustainable development in developing countries.















The 18th Seoul ODA International Conference

“From the Compromiso de Sevilla to the Seoul Solution: Presenting an exemplary model of development cooperation”



• Participants pose during the 18th Seoul ODA International Conference, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KOICA at Lotte Hotel in Seoul on Sept. 29. Among them are KOICA President Chang Won-sam, Second Vice Foreign Minister Kim Jin-ah, KOICA Vice President Lee Yun-young, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee Carsten Staur, and Director of the Secretariat for TOSSD Julia Ben.

The Seoul ODA International Conference, launched in 2007 and held as part of International Development Partnership Week 2025, serves as a global dialogue platform where diverse stakeholders from government, private sector, academia, and beyond gather to discuss key development cooperation issues and share knowledge and experiences.

Under the theme “Calling for Partnership: Catalyzing Financing for Development,” the conference brought together around 400 participants, including government representatives and development agencies from ODA donor and recipient countries, major international organizations, civil society, academia, the diplomatic corps in Korea, and members of the public. KOICA live-streamed the conference online, allowing participants from around the world to join the event in real time.

The conference mainly focused on discussions continuing from the Compromiso de Sevilla. The Compromiso de Sevilla is the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), held in Seville, Spain, last June, where the global community gathered to address complex crises and discuss effective ways to mobilize and utilize development financing. The conference was also significant in that it served as a forum for the international community to collectively explore practical ways to implement the Compromiso de Sevilla.

In his opening remarks, KOICA President Chang Won-sam said that, at a time when solidarity and cooperation among development partners sharing universal values are more essential than ever, it is important to use this ongoing forum to seek solutions that go beyond the limitations of ODA-centered development financing and to create meaningful opportunities for practical collaboration.

In her welcome remarks, Second Vice Foreign Minister Kim Jin-ah underlined that FfD4 was an important occasion advancing multilateral development cooperation, emphasizing that concrete efforts through global partnerships are essential for implementing the Compromiso de Sevilla.

Carsten Staur, chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), emphasized in his keynote speech that the Compromiso de Sevilla is not an endpoint but a new starting point, urging everyone to demonstrate leadership and join forces to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the shared objectives of the international community.



• KOICA President Chang Won-sam delivers the opening address. In his remarks, he called for joint efforts to find solutions that go beyond the limitations of ODA-centered development financing.



• Second Vice Foreign Minister Kim Jin-ah emphasized in her welcome address that concrete efforts through global partnerships are required to implement the Compromiso de Sevilla, highlighting three priorities for joint action.

International efforts to implement the “Compromiso de Sevilla”

The first session, moderated by Park Jong-han, director-general for Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, centered on “FfD4 Outcomes and Korea’s Contribution,” providing a platform to share the conference’s key outcomes, discuss future prospects, and explore relevant implications.

Julia Benn, director of the Secretariat for Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), took the stage as the first speaker and introduced TOSSD’s core values and objectives, highlighting “strengthening ownership,” “improving transparency,” and “inclusive governance.” She emphasized that TOSSD fundamentally aligns with the principles of effective global partnership in development, providing a foundation for cooperation between developed and developing countries through diverse approaches that go beyond traditional ODA models.

Oliver Schwank, chief of Policy Analysis at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Financing for Sustainable Development Office, introduced the overall status of the Compromiso de Sevilla’s implementation and the UN’s related roles and strategies. He underscored that multilateral and multi-stakeholder partnerships are crucial for the international



• Moderated by Park Jong-han, director-general for Development Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the first session on “FfD4 Outcomes and Korea’s Contribution” featured speakers including Julia Benn, Director of the Secretariat for TOSSD, Oliver Schwenk, Chief of Policy Analysis at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Financing for Sustainable Development Office, and Song Ji-sun, Professor at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy.



• Oliver Schwenk, chief of Policy Analysis at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Financing for Sustainable Development Office, highlighted the challenges hindering the implementation of the Compromiso de Sevilla.

community to effectively address today's challenges.

As the final speaker, Song Ji-sun, professor at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, discussed "Korea's ODA Strategy and Development Effectiveness." Professor Song explained that, in order to advance the Compromiso de Sevilla amid the rapidly changing landscape of international development cooperation, the Korean government is pursuing a strategy to enhance both the scale and quality of its programs, thereby building a more comprehensive and effective ODA system. She went on to explain that Korea is focusing on multidimensional responses to global challenges such as peace, security, and climate/environment through ODA.



• The second session, chaired by Park Kyung-ryul, professor at KAIST, was titled "Development Finance and Partnerships : Approaches to Mobilization, Alignment and Coordination," featuring five speakers who presented successful case studies from various countries.

Sharing successful cases from various countries based on innovative cooperation models

The second session, chaired by Park Kyung-ryul, professor at KAIST, focused on "Development Finance and Partnerships : Approaches to Mobilization, Alignment and Coordination," featuring presentations that explored these strategic topics. In this session, development cooperation partners from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Convergence Blended Finance shared successful case studies from their respective organizations.

Anders Aabo, senior adviser in the Department for Climate, Nature and the Private Sector, at Norad, presented cases of improving development effectiveness in the fields of climate and food security through innovative financing methods and strategic partnerships. He drew particular attention by introducing strategies that contribute to rural development and food security through initiatives like the "FASA (Financing for Agri-SMEs in Africa)," a joint cooperation project with KOICA that strengthens financial support for agricultural small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa. Aabo, who emphasized the necessity and importance of multilateral cooperation, expressed his gratitude to KOICA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying, "Various forums like the Seoul ODA International Conference serve as vital platforms for building partnerships and creating new opportunities for collaboration."

Noela Pantoja Crespo, executive director of APCI, shared Peru's cases of securing development financing through diverse and innovative cooperation models, including 'South-South Cooperation,' which pursues mutual benefits and solidarity through resource, technology, and knowledge exchange among developing countries; 'Triangular Cooperation,' where developing countries advance development cooperation with support from developed countries or international organizations; and 'Circular Cooperation,' a hybrid and expanded form of 'South-South Cooperation' and 'Triangular Cooperation'.

Tim Strawson, team lead at the UNDP Sustainable Finance Hub, presented on mobilizing resources for the Sustainable Development Goals through the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) and the development effectiveness strategy. Christopher Clubb, managing director at Convergence Blended Finance, discussed the role and challenges of blended finance in channeling private sector capital into development projects to bridge the massive financing gap required to achieve the SDGs.



• Attendees at the conference showed great interest, diligently taking notes on the speakers' passionate presentations throughout each session.

Strengthening global partnerships for effective development cooperation

As time passed, the meeting grew more intense. In the final third session, participants examined how the "Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)," launched at the 2011 Busan High-Level Forum, could be reinterpreted and applied in the changing development cooperation landscape. Kim Ji-hyun, research fellow at the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEPI), moderated the session titled "GPEDC Principles at the Core: Envisioning the Future of Development Finance Governance" featuring Christina Hartler, acting assistant director-general of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency(Sida), and Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), as speakers.

Hartler said that "the core value of development effectiveness in ODA-centered development cooperation is an essential element in promoting sustainable development amid today's complex and resource-constrained environment." She also emphasized that "the core direction of development finance governance should focus not only on expanding resources but also on ensuring tangible results through the GPEDC principles, making this moment more crucial than ever for strengthening global partnerships."

Bhattacharya, the final speaker at the 18th Seoul ODA International Conference, emphasized the importance of the principles of development effectiveness from the perspective of the "Global South," referring to emerging and developing countries in the Global South. He also underscored the need to apply and expand the GPEDC principles and to strengthen governance amid the increasingly complex and diverse development finance landscape. He added that "dialogue" serves as both a means of survival for development cooperation amid multilayered crises and a tool to bridge gaps among diverse stakeholders, earning a warm round of applause from the audience.

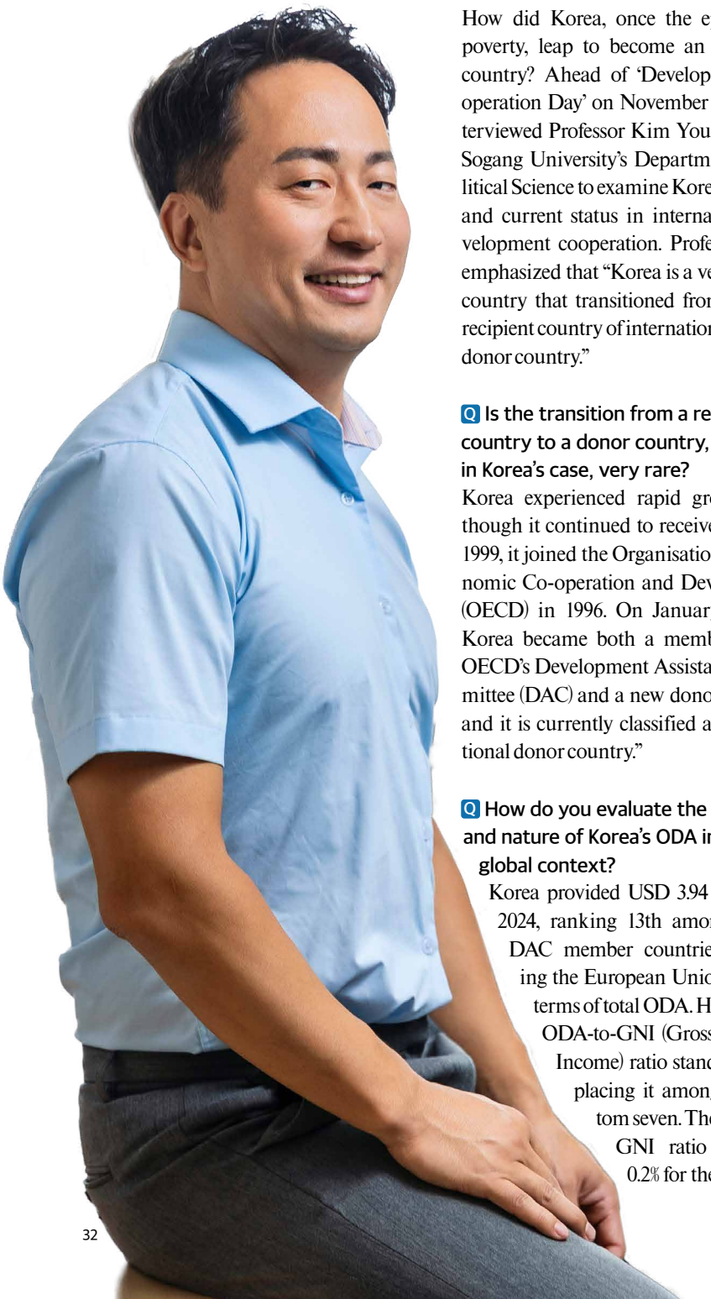
At the end of each session, a Q&A segment was held, during which speakers responded directly to questions submitted online in real time, facilitating the exchange of diverse thoughts and opinions.

Lee Yun-young, KOICA Vice President said in his closing remarks that "the conference was highly meaningful in that the international community collectively sought practical measures to translate the 'Compromiso de Sevilla,' the outcome document of FfD4, into concrete actions rather than leaving it as a mere declaration." He added that "it also served as an opportunity to share various partnership-based financing models—such as Blended Finance, South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation, and Circular Cooperation—with the international community and to set a clear direction for sustainable development cooperation." He also expressed his earnest hope that "the various innovative financing strategies and principles of development effectiveness discussed at this conference will lead to concrete actions by the international community, contributing to the building of a more sustainable and equitable future."

KOICA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the "2025 Global Development Partnership Week" from Sept. 21 to Oct. 3, organizing events such as the 18th Seoul ODA International Conference, the 8th Busan Global Partnership Forum, the 5th High-Level Meeting of the MIKTA Development Cooperation Institutions Network, and the 30th Steering Committee Meeting of the GPEDC, all of which provided a platform for domestic and international development cooperation stakeholders to discuss challenges and future directions in global development cooperation.

Interview with Professor Kim Young-wan, Department of Political Science, Sogang University

"Korea's ODA with Jeong: Leveraging its unique strengths"



How did Korea, once the epitome of poverty, leap to become an advanced country? Ahead of 'Development Cooperation Day' on November 25, we interviewed Professor Kim Young-wan of Sogang University's Department of Political Science to examine Korea's history and current status in international development cooperation. Professor Kim emphasized that "Korea is a very special country that transitioned from being a recipient country of international aid to a donor country."

Q Is the transition from a recipient country to a donor country, as seen in Korea's case, very rare?

Korea experienced rapid growth. Although it continued to receive aid until 1999, it joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996. On January 1, 2010, Korea became both a member of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and a new donor country, and it is currently classified as a "traditional donor country."

Q How do you evaluate the scale and nature of Korea's ODA in today's global context?

Korea provided USD 3.94 billion in 2024, ranking 13th among the 33 DAC member countries, including the European Union (EU), in terms of total ODA. However, its ODA-to-GNI (Gross National Income) ratio stands at 0.21%, placing it among the bottom seven. The ODA-to-GNI ratio exceeded 0.2% for the first time in 2024. Between 2015 and 2023, it ranged from 0.14% to 0.17%. Considering that the international community's target for the ODA-to-GNI ratio is 0.7% and taking Korea's total ODA into account, it is still difficult to say that Korea has firmly established itself as a major donor country.

Q What major achievements has Korea made in international development cooperation on the global stage?

Korea itself has grown tremendously through ODA. ODA plays a very important role in enhancing a nation's soft power and national interests. When bridges or roads are built through ODA projects, the Korean flag is displayed alongside them, which helps people in those countries recognize, "Ah, this was built by Korea." KOICA exerts a positive influence through community-centered development cooperation projects such as ICT centers and schools. A notable example is the "Korean Hospital(Hospital Municipal Modelo Corea)" in El Alto, Bolivia. The hospital was established in 1998 in an area with limited basic medical facilities. With secondary support, obstetrics and pediatrics departments were added. As a result, it is now regarded as the best maternity hospital in Bolivia, and the perception among mothers giving birth there that "the Korean hospital is the best" has spread, improving Korea's image. Such experiences naturally create an atmosphere in which Koreans and Korean companies are warmly welcomed.

Q ODA has positively improved Korea's standing.

Of course. When a positive local atmosphere is established, it becomes easier for companies to operate as well. When discussing public diplomacy achievements, there's a saying that goes, "No matter how much budget you spend on public diplomacy, it can't beat BTS." Recently, 'K-Pop Demon Hunters' has been playing that role. A country's image is extremely important, and ODA is playing a major role in positively shaping Korea's image. Moreover, because Korea is a donor country that has never engaged in colonial rule, the significance of Korean ODA is even more distinctive. Korea began providing ODA with sincere intentions, and it has helped improve Korea's image.

Q The biggest challenge with Korean-style development cooperation is its limited budget. Could you explain this in more detail?

The budget is the biggest challenge. China has abundant financial resources and constructs roads and buildings completely free of charge. In Africa, for example, you can immediately recognize Chinese-built structures because they are so grand and impressive. In this way, China develops the area, and the resulting profits or resources flow back to China. Japan embodies a "the spirit of craftsmanship" investing large budgets over long periods to steadily and deeply develop specific fields. In comparison, Korea faces limitations in achieving noticeable results quickly with a limited budget.

Q On the other hand, what are Korea's unique strengths?

The greatest strength is diligence. Koreans and Korean culture embody a commitment to doing one's utmost, treating any task entrusted to them as their own. Moreover, Korea is the only country that has transitioned from a developing recipient to an advanced donor, serving as a role model for other developing nations through its own challenging experiences. Leveraging its own growth experiences while understanding the perspectives of developing countries is a major strength. Another interesting observation I've made while visiting project sites is that residents of developing countries view Koreans differently than how they see people from other nations. Generally, Koreans are viewed positively for understanding the challenges faced by developing countries and for treating their people warmly and without prejudice. That's why I like to say: Korea is a nation that practices "ODA with Jeong*."



• Professor Kim Young-wan from the Department of Political Science at Sogang University (second from the left) conducts a field interview for a development cooperation project in Ethiopia.

Q How can Korea's model be distinguished from those of other donor countries?

There is a need to develop integrated development cooperation projects into a Korean-style ODA model. It is also necessary to establish ODA strategies that are uniquely Korean. The Aral Sea GRIP project, carried out in cooperation with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), is an innovative initiative that attracted private investment through the issuance of "green bonds." Through such new approaches, Korea needs to take a leading role in addressing the climate crisis.

Q What does an integrated development cooperation project entail?

An integrated development cooperation project refers to implementing development initiatives by organically linking and coordinating projects across multiple sectors, rather than focusing on a single field. This integrated approach is especially effective in community-based development cooperation projects. Community-based development cooperation can achieve high effectiveness even with relatively small budgets, making it well-suited for

* A uniquely Korean sentiment, refers to a deep, enduring emotional bond that develops over time through shared experiences, sympathy.



• Professor Kim Young-wan with children at Inawa Panaynep Elementary School (ICT education project site) in the Philippines



• On the way to Lagutai School, a site of the Philippines ICT Capacity Building Project

advancing Korea's model. For example, in village development projects, it promotes the overall growth of the community by implementing projects across multiple sectors—such as health, education, income generation, conflict mitigation, and women's rights enhancement—either simultaneously or sequentially. The advantage of this approach is that it can improve the efficiency and sustainability of projects through the complementary effects generated between different initiatives.

Q How can Korea contribute in situations where new international agendas are emerging?

Globally, the refugee issue is a challenge that the international community must address collectively. It is essential to raise awareness about refugees and support their resettlement or voluntary return. When university students are asked, "What do you think about refugees?" most respond negatively. However, when asked to define what a refugee actually is, most are unable to provide an accurate explanation. A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their home country due to persecution for political or similar reasons and cannot obtain protection from their own government. In reality, most refugees want to return to their homeland, but they become refugees precisely because they cannot. No one chooses to become a refugee voluntarily. Therefore, refugees must be protected in their current location until political conditions allow them to safely return home. Korea needs to take the lead in developing cooperation projects aimed at addressing the refugee issue. In addition, tackling the climate crisis and promoting eco-friendly policies are urgent tasks that must be addressed. The GGGI, an international organization founded in Korea, can serve as a key platform and tool for Korea to contribute to the international community in the environmental field.

Q Why is addressing the climate crisis an important agenda?

The climate crisis response agenda is important because the climate crisis is not only an issue for international development cooperation but a shared challenge for all humanity. The entire world is currently threatened by the climate crisis, and even citizens of advanced countries are not immune to its effects. Developing countries, in particular, are highly dependent on agriculture due to their economic structures, making them especially vulnerable to the direct impacts of climate change. The climate crisis is causing increasing cases of income reduction and even loss of livelihoods. This is closely linked to the emergence of the concept of "environmental refugees." Therefore, the entire world must collaborate to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis on developing countries and pursue sustainable response measures.

Q Contributing to emerging international agendas will naturally enhance Korea's global standing.

Yes, that's correct. ODA should not remain merely a concept of "helping out." By improving the lives of residents in developing countries and transforming their societies, Korean companies can also expand, creating a sustainable ODA ecosystem. However, many people still hold negative perceptions, seeing ODA as "a waste of tax money." Changing these perceptions is crucial.

Q How do you respond to the criticism that ODA is a waste of budget?

I believe that ODA is not at fault. The criticism that ODA is a waste of budget mainly arises from two misunderstandings. The first is the perception that ODA is not properly delivered to partner countries. It is true that, in some past cases, ODA was executed without full transparency. This was an issue faced not only by Korea but also by other donor countries. However, such problems are not unique to ODA but are general challenges that can occur in any policy project and must be addressed. Today, the ODA execution structure has become far more transparent, with thorough management and supervision systems in place, steadily enhancing the reliability and effectiveness of projects. The second misunderstanding is the belief that ODA has little relevance to people's own lives. In reality, ODA contributes to global stability, international credibility and the long-term condtions that ultimately affect all of our lives. From this perspective, the claim that ODA is wasteful is, in fact, nothing more than a misunderstanding.

Q What is your perspective on the reduction of ODA budgets in several countries?

It is well documented that the United States has historically used ODA as a tool to advance its national interests. Nevertheless, President Donald Trump has argued that U.S. ODA is a waste of budget. His decision to reduce funding for USAID overlooked the agency's contributions to enhancing the U.S. image and building soft power through development cooperation projects around the world. In Korea, many people do not fully recognize how much ODA contributes to improving the national image and enhancing soft power. In fact, ODA has long accounted for less than 1% of the government budget. The situation is similar in the United States. Attempting to cut that budget risks undermining the 70 to 80 years of effort invested so far. There is hope, however, that the U.S. government's approach will change following Trump's administration.

Q Despite that, why must ODA continue?

The international community has a responsibility to support the growth of developing countries. The first reason is humanitarian. As of 2024, approximately 700 million people worldwide—about 8.5% of the global population—live in absolute poverty, unable to meet even basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Some critics ask, "Why provide aid overseas rather than domestically?" However, poverty in developing countries exists on a completely different scale compared to Korea, where absolute poverty is almost nonexistent. Unlike Korea, many developing countries lack well-established social security systems for the poor, making support from the international community essential. The second reason is practical: conflicts and poverty in developing countries ultimately impact developed nations as well. Korea is an export-driven country that relies on raw materials and markets in developing countries. Without support for these nations, securing imports of raw materials could become challenging. When Korea invests 10 units through ODA projects, it can often receive at least 10 in return, and sometimes even more. As developing countries stabilize and grow through ODA, Korea also benefits from this growth. The more countries Korea supports, the greater the opportunities to secure markets and resources for itself.

Q Some people still question, "What benefits does international development cooperation bring to our national interests?"

Due to Korea's industrial structure, ODA directly translates into national interests. By helping people in developing countries who need assistance, they may one day purchase Korean products, collaborate with Korean companies, or come to Korea to work. The more ODA we provide, the more our national interests grow, and Korea's global standing rises.

Q Could you explain that in more detail?

ODA can serve as a catalyst for promoting Korea's national interests. For Korean companies to successfully expand overseas, two key factors are essential: first, cooperation from local governments to support their activities; and second, positive perceptions and support from local communities. Without acceptance at the government or community level, overseas expansion becomes extremely challenging. ODA helps secure these two factors. It not only facilitates Korean companies' global entry but also builds trust and goodwill among local populations. Furthermore, when Korean firms establish themselves successfully abroad, this significantly contributes to job creation for domestic youth and overall economic growth.

Q What direction do you think Korea's international development cooperation should take in the future?

Korea must take a leading role. While China has abundant capital and the United States provides a large scale of ODA, Korea does not. Instead, Korea is well-positioned to propose new international agendas. For example, taking the lead on issues such as responding to the climate crisis would make a significant contribution to the international community. I have personally considered the slogan "Zero ODA," meaning "using ODA to create a world where ODA is no longer needed." Korea achieved economic growth by receiving ODA and is building a positive image by providing ODA. Although there are still shortcomings, if Korea leverages its unique strengths to pursue special agendas, it can contribute to the international community just as it benefited from aid. K

Interview with Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD DAC

“Realigning the course of ODA to reduce future costs”

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international forum comprising 33 major donor countries. Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD DAC, is a seasoned figure in multilateral cooperation with decades of experience in development and international diplomacy, and has been leading the DAC since 2023 to help shape the direction of international development cooperation. He visited Korea to attend the “Global Development Partnership Week,” co-hosted by KOICA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from September 21 to October 3, 2025. In this issue, MAGAZINE KOICA sat down with Chair Carsten Staur to hear his views on the challenges and responsibilities facing global donor countries, as well as Korea’s changing role in this evolving landscape.

Q Global demand for development finance is rising rapidly amid climate change, regional conflicts, and health crises. At the same time, some donor countries are cutting back on their ODA budgets. How do you view this growing gap between global needs and available resources?

The widening gap between global needs and available development finance is concerning. Reversing this downward trend will not be easy, but it is necessary. Increasing assistance is a tall order for donors, and we know well the fiscal and political pressures they are facing.

In Europe, there is significant pressure to strengthen defense capabilities to counter Russian aggression against Ukraine and the broader threat to NATO. Many countries also need to stabilize their fiscal situations by raising tax revenues and reducing expenditures. These are legitimate reasons why governments are becoming more cautious about spending in many areas, including ODA. It is not the only budget being cut; many others are also being reduced. However, governments need to take a broader view. Cutting ODA also means cutting vital investments in our shared global future.

Climate change, for example, does not disappear because of what Russia does in Ukraine. It is with us and will remain with us. The sooner we correct our course, the better it will be, and the cheaper it will be in the long run. There is overwhelming evidence that we need climate action and that governments must engage, including through climate assistance that helps countries address both adaptation and mitigation challenges. Countries need to double down on these efforts.

Another challenge is poverty and inequality. Both are increasing in many countries. Inequality is rising within and between nations, and the number of people living in poverty is growing. These are concerning trends that require action.

Governments must take these global, long-term challenges seriously and invest in addressing them. The sooner and the more decisively they act, particularly in supporting the poorest and most vulnerable countries, the easier it will be for the world to manage the problems ahead. Governments are making cuts for understandable reasons, but they should not. Short-term reductions come with long-term costs.

Q What principles or strategies should DAC members prioritize to ensure that development finance remains sustainable and predictable?

An informed discussion in donor countries is essential to understand how different issues are interrelated, why investment in development cooperation is necessary, why it must be done now, and why it needs to be strengthened. This is one of the most important conversations we need to have.

Prioritizing investments in development cooperation is another crucial task. The focus should remain on the poorest, most vulnerable, and most fragile countries, including small island states and least developed countries. These nations rely heavily on ODA because they lack significant export revenues or foreign investment. Much of their progress in health, education, and human capital depends on ODA, and that must continue to be a key priority.

Mobilizing additional finance is also critical. Blended finance* is still relatively new, but it is becoming increasingly important because it allows a limited amount of ODA to leverage additional capital. We need to raise more capital through such approaches to meet growing global needs.

There is also much we can do to improve how we manage ODA. The aid effectiveness agenda remains central in this regard. Every dollar, every euro, every Swiss franc, and every won must be spent as effectively as possible. This requires constant awareness of where the challenges to aid effectiveness lie and a continued effort to address them.

Q How can we ensure that development assistance is used effectively?

Fragmentation is one of the clearest challenges to development effectiveness, and the OECD has extensive data to demonstrate this. Aid is being spread across more countries, often in smaller amounts, less strategically, and with a stronger focus on projects rather than programs. We also see a lack of coordination among donors and insufficient alignment with the priorities of partner countries. These issues are described clearly in various OECD publications and analyses, all of which point to one conclusion: we can do better. We can make ODA more effective from the donor perspective.

Another important element is the need for stronger collaboration. This involves not only traditional donors that are members of the DAC, such as Korea, the European Union, the United States, Canada, and Australia, but also South–South providers and other non-traditional partners. These include countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia, such as Thailand and Indonesia, as well as several countries in the Arab world and Turkey, all of which play major roles in development cooperation.

We need to bring all these actors together, learn from each other, and work in a coordinated and collaborative way to ensure that we can deliver the best possible development cooperation for the benefit of the countries and populations we aim to support.

Q Korea is often cited as a successful story of becoming an aid donor from a recipient in the past. How can it share its lessons with other countries seeking to strengthen their development programs?

Korea can lead simply by being what it is. I have been impressed by the remarkable transformation the country has undergone. I still remember being in New York when Ban Ki-moon was Secretary-General of the United Nations. He often spoke about his childhood in Korea in the 1950s and 1960s, when the country was still developing, like many others at the time.

Since then, Korea has achieved extraordinary progress. It has built a vibrant and dynamic economy with a high GNI per



• Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD DAC, said, “The poorer and more vulnerable a country is, the more swiftly and decisively we must support it so that it can more easily manage the problems facing the world.”

* Blended Finance : a financial structure that combines public resources, such as ODA, with private capital to achieve development objectives.



• Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

capita and strong performance across sectors. This trajectory over the past decades stands as a powerful example. Korea, like Singapore and a few others, has shown that it is possible to build a strong, outward-looking, and expanding economy that benefits the population as a whole.

Of course, every country faces its own challenges. In the case of climate change, Korea is deeply engaged in the green transition and in addressing climate-related issues, not least because it faces similar challenges at home. This is a form of learning by doing, an iterative process in which national experiences become sources of insight and inspiration for development cooperation. Korea is therefore a credible example of how experience and policy can reinforce each other in practice. It is not just about words or statistics but about demonstrating that progress is achievable when vision and systems work together.

Korea is now one of the major economies in the world, and with that status comes responsibility. As a member of the G20, Korea has an important role to play on the international stage, setting trends and demonstrating leadership in the global community. I hope Korea will continue to strengthen and sustain its leadership role in global affairs, supported by an economy that provides a solid foundation for international engagement.

This applies not only within Asia but also across other regions, where stronger Korean leadership, presence, and participation in international development cooperation would be very welcome. Peer reviews have shown that Korea could do more on the multilateral front, working with development banks, the UN system, and other international organizations. This is an area where Korea can extend its reach and influence further by deepening engagement with multilateral partners, not only through bilateral efforts but also by strengthening the multilateral dimension of its cooperation program.

Q As a DAC member, Korea carries both responsibilities and expectations. What role do you see Korea and its ODA agency, KOICA, playing in shaping the future of international development finance?

I hope that Korea will continue to be one of the significant donors and active members of the DAC, contributing to the development of standards and normative frameworks that guide international development cooperation. Together, we must keep improving how we work and how we measure our collective impact.

Like other major donors, Korea carries an important responsibility that comes with its position as a leading contributor. It is expected to take an active role in shaping the norms, standards, and reporting practices that strengthen global development cooperation. I encourage Korea to fulfill that responsibility by engaging proactively in this shared effort to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of development finance.

Q The Seoul ODA International Conference was held during the Global Development Partnership Week, The Busan Global Partnership Forum was also part of the week's events. What key outcomes or messages do you hope will come out of them?

This conference reminds me of the Roman god Janus, with two faces looking in different directions. There are two dimensions to its significance, much like two sides of a coin.

One side is domestic. I hope that the investment you are making during these days of discussion on the development agenda will resonate in public debate and in the media. It should serve as a catalyst for broader conversation about why development cooperation matters, why Korea should remain committed to it, and why deeper engagement is needed. That domestic discussion, in itself, is an important outcome of hosting an event like this.

The other side is international. Korea has made a strong effort to bring partners together—not only donors but also partner countries. Tomorrow, I will be meeting participants from Latin America and Africa. The fact that DAC members, other providers, and partner nations are all here together is significant. We need a future model of development cooperation that is more inclusive and built on genuine partnerships between donors, providers, and partner countries.

The wide range of participants at this event sends a clear signal that Korea is taking an active role in promoting the idea that development cooperation must be a shared effort. It should be a partnership between those who provide financial resources and technical expertise, and those who align that support with their own priorities and ambitions.

Q You mentioned that you will be meeting with partners from Latin America, Africa, and possibly Southeast Asia. What topics will you be discussing with them?

The DAC's ongoing review of its own role is one of our main priorities at the moment. As a committee, we serve as the custodians of ODA, defining what counts as ODA and what does not, and providing guidelines on what constitutes good development cooperation. In that sense, we play a role in shaping ODA and ensuring that it remains an effective instrument for development cooperation.

This has been an ongoing process for many years. We have continuously worked to improve how ODA operates and how it interacts with other forms of development finance. The new review, which we launched in Seville, aims to take a deeper look at ODA's role today.

One focus area is data and statistics. We want to assess what we currently provide and explore how we can go further—for instance, by adding more forward-looking analysis and projections rather than relying only on retrospective data. The goal is to better understand what is happening now and what might happen in the near future, drawing on the insights and inputs of our members.

Another important issue is how we can make better use of the data and analysis we already have. In the past, much of our work has focused on what donors need. Going forward, we also want to listen more closely to our partners to understand what they need from our data and analysis, and how we can make it more relevant and useful for them.

We are also examining how to place ODA in a broader context. ODA can act as a catalyst and an enabler—it sets processes in motion. It can mobilize private finance, support domestic resource mobilization, and stimulate wider cooperation beyond ODA itself. We are exploring how ODA interacts with other financial flows such as remittances, which globally exceed ODA in volume. The question is how ODA can help make remittances a more effective source of income and a stronger driver of development. The same applies to private finance. Blended finance allows ODA to unlock greater private investment than would otherwise occur. The question for us is whether we can do more and do it better.



• Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD DAC, said, "Reducing ODA resources is equivalent to cutting essential investments in humanity's shared future."

Another major topic is the overall trajectory of ODA. In 2023, global ODA reached $213 billion, but we are now seeing signs of decline. As I mentioned in my speech today, if 2023 was the peak, projections for 2024 to 2027 show a sharp drop. In the worst-case scenario, ODA could fall by almost 30%. We have already seen a decrease of about 7 to 9% from 2023 to 2024, and we expect a further drop of between 11 and 20% by 2027. This is a major challenge. We need to turn this around. This situation is not acceptable given the scale of global problems we face. We must find ways to persuade our members and other providers to increase their ODA again. That will require sound analysis, political leadership, and a shared understanding that ODA is not charity.

It is, of course, an expression of empathy and solidarity, but it is also a strategic investment. ODA plays a vital role in international cooperation because it creates the space for many other forms of collaboration to happen.

Q ODA is sometimes perceived negatively at home, seen as taxpayers' money being sent abroad. How can governments and donors communicate the value of development cooperation to their citizens and build public support?

Communicating the value of ODA requires analysis that goes beyond simply saying we invest in a project and that it helps a certain number of people overcome illness or poverty. That is, of course, a vital part of ODA, ensuring that it is used wisely and delivers tangible results and impact. But we must also help citizens understand that ODA contributes to addressing the global challenges we all face, such as climate change, growing insecurity, and pandemics.

Take the example of COVID-19. Five years ago, the world was hit by a pandemic that exposed weaknesses in our systems of preparedness and response. In just a few weeks, a new report will evaluate the global COVID-19 response. We must learn from what worked and what did not. The next pandemic will come, and it is estimated that there is a 1 to 2% risk every year of facing another event like COVID-19. We cannot afford to be unprepared again. ODA can play a critical role in building a global system of preparedness and response that allows international collaboration in health to be far more effective than it was five years ago.

Technology is another area where ODA can contribute. We need a serious discussion on how artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies can serve humanity rather than dominate it. While ODA alone cannot address this issue, how we integrate AI and digital innovation into development cooperation can make a meaningful difference in shaping technology for human progress.

Another challenge is the global rise of autocracy. In many parts of the world, we see the strengthening of authoritarian systems at the expense of democratic participation, particularly among those already left behind by development. This is not a positive direction. Addressing it requires access to data, facts, and open, fact-based public discussion.

We also face growing risks as social media increasingly replaces public-interest media as a source of information. There is an urgent need to support independent, fact-based journalism, especially in developing countries. ODA can help in this area by supporting initiatives through organizations like UNESCO to establish and maintain public-interest media that serve the public good.

ODA can make a difference across many areas, but its deeper value lies in helping to shape global development in a positive and cooperative direction.

Q In the United States, policies do not necessarily support expanding the ODA budget. Many European countries are increasing their defense budgets while cutting other expenditures. Do you find it increasingly difficult to persuade partners in such an environment?

On the United States, we are still in a wait-and-see situation. It is difficult to say where things will ultimately end up. What is clear is that the government decided early on to abolish USAID and transfer many of its functions to the State Department. There is a great deal happening in Washington, but so far, no one knows what the final outcome will be. It is therefore too early to draw firm conclusions about the direction of U.S. development policy.

On the European side, it is difficult to maintain a focus on global and long-term priorities when every day brings urgent local and short-term pressures. The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the growing threat it poses to NATO and several European countries are extremely serious, and the need to increase defense spending is clear. That is not my view as DAC Chair, as I do not have positions on defense as such, but as a European citizen, I can easily see why this increase is necessary.

At the same time, we need to have an informed discussion about how this should not be seen as an either-or choice. It must be a both-and. Europe cannot and should not abandon its long-term global aspirations because it faces a short-term, though decisive, regional threat from Russia. We must be able to do both, strengthening our defense while continuing to address global challenges.

If we focus only on defending our own interests in the European theater, we risk missing the opportunity to deal with global problems in time. And if we wait too long, it will become far more difficult and costly to respond to the challenges the world faces. We need to act fairly quickly to set in motion the measures that will allow us to confront both the regional and global threats that are already upon us. K



• KOICA held the GPEDC LAP (Learning and Acceleration Program) on September 24, 2025, at the Koreana Hotel in Seoul to enhance the effectiveness of international development cooperation and promote learning and collaboration among emerging donors. The event brought together around 20 practitioners from the foreign affairs ministries and development cooperation agencies of 10 countries, along with domestic and international experts, for a meaningful exchange.

Opening New Pathways for Emerging Donors

Insights from the GPEDC LAP

On September 24, 2025, the GPEDC Learning and Acceleration Program (LAP) convened at the Koreana Hotel in Seoul with the aim of strengthening development effectiveness and fostering practical cooperation among emerging donors. Anchored in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC)—a multistakeholder platform championed by the Republic of Korea—the program provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on shared principles and approaches essential to effective development cooperation.

This year's LAP focused on peer learning around the four core principles of development effectiveness: country ownership, a focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and mutual accountability. Around 20 practitioners from the foreign ministries and development cooperation agencies of 10 countries, alongside international experts, gathered to explore new models of cooperation through workshops, breakout discussions, and case-sharing sessions.

A notable development this year was the growing prominence of emerging donors. Countries that once relied heavily on Official Development Assistance are now transitioning into active providers, reshaping their roles within the international development landscape. Türkiye and Indonesia are among the countries at the forefront of this transformation, aligning their evolving cooperation strategies with the GPEDC principles.

The UNDP trainer who led the session introduced the current international discourse on strengthening the effectiveness of South–South Cooperation (SSC), as well as recent institutional approaches surrounding it. The lecture was organized into two sessions. The first session focused on the history and core foundations of effective development cooperation, including the distinction between Aid effectiveness and Development effectiveness, the establishment of the GPEDC, and its monitoring framework. The second session explored practical approaches to SSC, the need to measure its effectiveness, and possible methods for tracking it in the future. In particular, the sessions also served as a space for sharing the cooperation challenges faced by dual-role countries.

Mini Interview 1

Türkiye's Development Cooperation Built on Delivery and Flexibility



Mücahid Bozyel
Assistant Expert, Strategy Development Department, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)

Q What are Türkiye's key strengths as an emerging donor, and what is currently the top priority in its development cooperation strategy?
Türkiye's strengths lie in its long-standing experience in humanitarian and development assistance, its ability to make swift decisions, and its strong implementation capacity. Our transition 'from a recipient to a donor' has also given us a deep sense of empathy and flexibility in working with partner countries. At present, our top priority is to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of our cooperation by reinforcing local ownership and promoting people-centered, needs-based approaches. This aligns closely with the SDGs and the GPEDC principles.

Q What stood out to you during the GPEDC LAP?
What impressed me most about the GPEDC LAP was its practical and collaborative learning environment. At a time when global ODA levels are declining, the sessions clearly underscored the importance of effectiveness, transparency, and strong partnerships in maximizing the impact of limited resources.

Q How do the GPEDC framework and the LAP contribute to Türkiye's development cooperation strategy?
I believe that the GPEDC framework enables Türkiye's development cooperation to maintain its national priorities while providing a foundation for aligning with global principles and directions on effectiveness. It reinforces the importance of country ownership, transparency, and mutual accountability—values that Türkiye has consistently emphasized. In particular, as Türkiye's ODA/GNI ratio is projected to decline, it becomes increasingly important to deliver assistance in a more effective and sustainable manner. In this regard, the GPEDC framework and the LAP can serve as practical tools to maximize the impact of available resources and strengthen coordination among domestic and international stakeholders.

Q Were there any memorable moments during the training period?
One of the most memorable moments was my in-depth conversation with a colleague from Thailand, who showed great interest in Türkiye's reporting and monitoring practices in development cooperation. As we discussed the details of our reporting and monitoring systems, I began to see real potential for future joint projects.

Q Were there any experiences that particularly impressed you in Korea?
What impressed me most during my visit to Korea was how the country was able to recover from hardship and achieve prosperity so rapidly. Korea has not only endured war, but also overcame severe economic crises, and today it is regarded globally as one of the most successful examples of fast and sustainable development. Korea's journey from adversity to success clearly demonstrates the power of national determination and vision, and it left a deep impression on me.

Mini Interview 2

Indonesia's Strategy for Inclusive and Demand-Driven Cooperation



Muhammad Fatkhan Hasfi
Staff Member in Charge of Asia-Pacific Affairs, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Q What strengths does Indonesia possess as an emerging donor?
Indonesia's strength lies in its 'dual identity' as both a recipient and a donor. This gives us a deep understanding of partner countries' realities and allows us to share cooperation experiences that are grounded in practice. This dual perspective positions Indonesia well to advance demand-driven and inclusive cooperation—both of which are increasingly central to effective development partnerships.

Q What impressed you most about the GPEDC LAP?
The most impressive aspect of the GPEDC LAP was its participatory and inclusive discussion structure. It was meaningful that emerging donors jointly developed a practical framework to measure and improve the effectiveness of South—South Cooperation.

Q Were there elements of KOICA's ODA systems that you found useful for Indonesia?
I was particularly impressed by KOICA's systematic monitoring and evaluation framework and its inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement.

Q How can the GPEDC framework contribute to Indonesia's strategic direction in development cooperation?
The GPEDC principles—country ownership, inclusive partnerships, and mutual accountability—align closely with Indonesia's priorities in South—South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation. The LAP provides practical tools to operationalize these principles more effectively and to strengthen the strategic direction of our cooperation efforts.

Q During your stay in Korea, were there any foods that left a strong impression on you?
The dish I enjoyed the most was 'sotbap', rice cooked in a traditional pot. Although it looks very simple, it felt incredibly special.
The fresh ingredients come together to create a rich and well-balanced flavor.

Mini Interview 3

UNDP's Perspective on the Challenges and Opportunities Facing Emerging Donors



Rebekah Chew
Team Leader, Effective Development Cooperation, UNDP

Q What was the core objective of this GPEDC LAP session?
The core objective of this LAP session was to create a space for emerging donors to jointly examine the development effectiveness challenges they currently face and to identify potential solutions. Participants shared the most pressing issues within their own cooperation systems, reflected on the meaning and role of South—South Cooperation (SSC) in their specific contexts, and explored concrete approaches to measuring and improving the effectiveness of their initiatives. Because emerging donors often operate simultaneously as both providers and recipients, they encounter a unique set of structural challenges. The LAP offered an opportunity to address these issues in a systematic and collective way.

Q What roles did UNDP and KOICA play in this year's GPEDC LAP?
UNDP and KOICA played complementary roles throughout the program. UNDP provided the substantive design and technical guidance, drawing on its global expertise in development effectiveness. KOICA, having championed the effectiveness agenda since the establishment of the GPEDC, served as a key co-organizer and operational partner. In essence, UNDP supplied the technical backbone while KOICA provided the institutional leadership and platform necessary to deliver the LAP.

Q Why is it important for emerging donors to actively participate in development effectiveness dialogue?
The role of emerging donors—particularly through SSC is expanding rapidly. With global development resources under increasing strain and the 2030 Agenda at risk, cooperation must become more strategic, transparent, and results-driven. The recent Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Seville also underscored the urgency of enhancing SSC effectiveness as a global priority. For these reasons, active engagement by emerging donors in effectiveness dialogue is not only timely but essential.

Q What were the key themes emphasized in your lecture during the LAP?
The lecture consisted of two sessions. The first traced the evolution of the development effectiveness agenda, drawing distinctions between aid effectiveness and development effectiveness, and introduced recent updates on GPEDC monitoring. The second session explored practical considerations, approaches, and dilemmas involved in assessing the effectiveness of SSC. Participants were also given the opportunity to help shape potential future approaches for tracking SSC effectiveness.

Q How do you expect this lecture to contribute to capacity-building for emerging donors?
This session enabled emerging donors to reflect on their own development effectiveness challenges and to revisit what effective SSC means within their national contexts. It also supported countries in identifying ways to measure and track SSC effectiveness more systematically.

Interview with Alejandra del Moral Vela, executive director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID)

“Prioritizing People, Focusing on Education and Healthcare over Infrastructure”



• Alejandra del Moral Vela, Head of AMEXCID, visited Korea in September last year to attend “Global Development Partnership Week 2025.” She said, “Mexico’s development cooperation is characterized by prioritizing people-centered policies such as education, health, and food security over large-scale infrastructure construction.”

The Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID[1]) serves as Mexico’s key institution for promoting sustainable development and fostering partnerships across Latin America and beyond. Operating under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AMEXCID coordinates Mexico’s official development assistance and international cooperation initiatives, emphasizing shared prosperity, gender equality, and South–South Cooperation.

Alejandra del Moral Vela, the first woman to lead AMEXCID, is known for her pragmatic leadership and cross-party negotiation skills. Under her direction, AMEXCID is expected to enhance Mexico’s development diplomacy by deepening partnerships in climate action, public health, education, and digital transformation. During her visit to Seoul for the Global Development Partnership Week, she discussed Mexico’s vision for inclusive development and highlighted the importance of regional cooperation.

Q Today, Mexico stands at a historic moment with its first female President, Claudia Sheinbaum, and a woman leading AMEXCID. How do you see this shaping Mexico’s development and international cooperation policies?

Mexico is living a transformative moment, it’s true. With President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, at the head of government and myself leading AMEXCID, we are showing that women’s leadership strengthens diplomacy and development. This historic step is not only symbolic; it brings new priorities to the center of cooperation: equity, sustainability, and solidarity.

We are convinced that international cooperation must reflect the principles of ‘humanismo mexicano[2]’, placing people and their dignity at the heart of our actions.

The presence of women in leadership positions makes this approach more empathetic, inclusive, and action-oriented. It sends a powerful message across the Global South[3]: leadership diversity matters, and it can change the way we design and implement cooperation policies.

For instance, President Sheinbaum has prioritized climate resilience, gender equality, and social inclusion as key axes of Mexico’s development agenda. At AMEXCID, we are translating those national priorities into cooperation initiatives abroad—programs that ensure food security, empower women farmers, train youth, and strengthen climate adaptation. Having women at the forefront is not just about representation; it is about redefining priorities and ensuring that global partnerships, reflect the lived realities of people.

Q What have been the greatest challenges—and the most rewarding moments—for you as a woman leading in international diplomacy?

One of the main challenges is ensuring that the voices of emerging donors and partners in the Global South are heard on equal terms with traditional donors. The development landscape is still dominated by a few large actors, and making sure that new perspectives are included requires persistence, diplomatic skill, and coalition-building. At times, advocating for a more horizontal solidarity-based approach goes against established structures of power.

Yet those challenges are outweighed by the rewarding moments. The most fulfilling experiences come when we see concrete changes in people’s lives through cooperation projects. For example, when I visited a rural school supported by AMEXCID, I met children who now had access to books, digital tools, and trained teachers thanks to the Escuelas México[4] program. Similarly, families participating in Sembrando Vida[5], in Central America shared how the program not only improved, their food security, but also gave them renewed hope for the future.

Those testimonies remind us, why cooperation matters: it is not about statistics or declarations, but about human dignity, opportunities, and hope. For me personally, being able to connect policy discussions, at the international level with tangible improvements in communities is the greatest reward.

Q The term “Global South” is now prominent in international politics and economics. How do you see this trend reshaping the development cooperation landscape?

The rise of the Global South reflects the reality of a multipolar and interconnected world. Cooperation is no longer unidirectional; it is horizontal, inclusive, and increasingly based on mutual learning.

Countries like Mexico are proving that solidarity, not hierarchy, must guide international partnerships. This shift is reshaping the landscape, by opening the door to innovative models, such as Triangular Cooperation[6] and Circular Cooperation[7], which combine local experience, regional ownership, and global knowledge.

It also allows countries, like ours to share solutions that come from our own experiences. Programs born in Mexico, such as Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro or Sembrando Vida, have been successfully adapted, to Central America and the Caribbean. This demonstrates that development, is not a one-size-fits-all export from the North, but a collaborative effort rooted in the realities of each region.

Q As an emerging donor, Mexico has developed its own cooperation strategies. What are the distinguishing features of Mexico’s development cooperation approach?

Mexico’s cooperation is characterized by solidarity, horizontality, and respect for sovereignty. Through AMEXCID, we focus on sharing knowledge and experiences, not imposing models.

One distinctive feature is our emphasis on people-centered policies. Instead of large-scale infrastructure or purely financial aid, we prioritize projects that directly improve, the well-being of communities—education health, food security, and climate resilience.

Programs such as ‘Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro[8]’ and ‘Sembrando Vida’, have been adapted to Central America and the Caribbean, showing that solutions designed in the Global South can inspire and benefit other regions. Our approach is not about exporting policies, but about co-creating solutions with partner countries, respecting their ownership and national priorities.

1 Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo
2 A foreign policy approach centered on human dignity, equality, inclusion, solidarity, and humanitarian responsibility.
3 Refers to countries with relatively less developed economies, namely developing, emerging, and low-income nations.
4 A flagship development cooperation initiative led by AMEXCID to promote educational development and strengthen cooperation between Mexico and countries in Latin America. It provides incentives for students and teachers as well as infrastructure support to improve learning environments.
5 A federal program initiated by the Mexican government to address two interrelated challenges: rural poverty and the worsening environmental crisis. It provides smallholder farmers with direct income support, technical assistance, and training to promote sustainable agriculture and strengthen the resilience of rural communities.
6 A form of development partnership in which a traditional donor country, an emerging donor country, and a partner developing country work together on joint projects.
7 A new model of development collaboration in which knowledge, technology, and solutions circulate among all partners, including developed, emerging, and developing countries
8 A Mexican government program aimed at enhancing youth employability to promote economic inclusion and social participation among youth.



• Alejandra del Moral Vela, Director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation, said that Mexico and KOICA can further expand their cooperation in strengthening climate resilience and advancing digital cooperation.

Q What are the main challenges and opportunities for emerging donors like Mexico in expanding international development partnerships?

Challenges include limited financial resources, compared to traditional donors, and the need to build institutional capacity to implement, monitor, and evaluate programs effectively. Another challenge is visibility—ensuring that the contributions of emerging donors, are recognized in multilateral forums where narratives are often dominated by larger players.

Yet the opportunities are vast. Emerging donors can innovate faster, create flexible mechanisms, and bring local experiences that resonate with partner countries. Mexico is demonstrating this through triangular cooperation with Germany, Spain, Japan, and now with Korea. These partnerships prove that combining different strengths, leads to more effective and inclusive outcomes.

For example, our triangular cooperation with Spain and Central American countries, has created innovative education and health projects. With Germany, we are exploring sustainable energy and climate initiatives. With Korea, we see enormous opportunities in renewable energy, digital innovation, and women's empowerment.

Q Reflecting on the main objectives of '2025 Busan Global Partnership Forum' taking place simultaneously this week, what are AMEXCID's current strategies to maximize effective development cooperation?

Mexico is fully committed to the effectiveness agenda by promoting transparency, accountability, and country ownership. At Busan, we emphasize that cooperation must be demand-driven and aligned with national development plans.

AMEXCID is advancing a model where, every peso invested in cooperation has a measurable social impact. Effectiveness for us is not only about financial management, but about ensuring that cooperation translates into real improvements in people's lives.

We are strengthening evaluation systems, developing digital tools for monitoring, and increasing dialogue with civil society and local communities. This way, cooperation becomes a shared effort—not just between governments, but also involving citizens, academia, and the private sector.

Q MIKTA has become an important platform for middle-power cooperation, and Mexico served as chair last year. From that perspective, what are your reflections on participating in the 5th high-level meeting?

MIKTA is a bridge between regions, economies, and cultures. Serving as chair reaffirmed Mexico's role as a connector in global debates. At the 5th high-level meeting, we underlined that middle powers can foster consensus and promote innovative cooperation especially in times of global uncertainty.

For Mexico, MIKTA demonstrates how collaboration among middle powers can advance global agendas in a pragmatic and balanced way. It allows us to shape debates on climate, health, and digital transformation by offering practical perspectives that reflect both developed and developing country experiences.

Q Mexico has been advancing flagship initiatives such as triangular cooperation, youth and women's empowerment, and the Sembrando Vida (food security) program. How do you envision these priorities contributing to MIKTA's collective agenda?

These initiatives reflect MIKTA's spirit: practical, inclusive, and innovative. By promoting youth and women's empowerment, Mexico contributes to more resilient and equitable societies.

Through Sembrando Vida, we address food security and climate resilience—issues that are central, to MIKTA's collective agenda. Triangular Cooperation, meanwhile, allows us to share these lessons, beyond our immediate region, strengthening South-South and Interregional Cooperation.

These priorities also demonstrate, how MIKTA can move from dialogue to action. By aligning our national experiences with collective goals, we ensure that our cooperation has real impact.

Q One of the main topics at the 5th High-Level Meeting has been the Joint Project Model of MIKTA. How do you see this model and how will this model contribute to the future cooperation among MIKTA member states?

The Joint Project Model, embodies the principle of shared responsibility. By pooling resources and expertise, MIKTA countries can achieve, greater impact and visibility.

Mexico supports this model, as a mechanism to operationalize, our commitment to sustainable and inclusive development. It is a practical way to show how cooperation can move from words to action, and from isolated projects to long-term partnerships that inspire others.

Q Finally, looking to the future, what vision does Mexico bring to its cooperation within MIKTA and with the broader international community? How do you see this vision being translated into concrete action, particularly through the work of the MIKTA Development Cooperation Working Group?

Mexico brings a vision of solidarity, inclusiveness, and innovation. Within MIKTA, we seek to strengthen collective action, on climate change, health, and digital transformation.

Our broader vision, is to build a cooperation system that reflects, the realities of the 21st century—multipolar, equitable, and focused on shared prosperity. We believe that cooperation, should not be charity; it should be solidarity and shared responsibility.

This vision guides, our engagement with MIKTA and beyond, as we work to ensure, that international development reflects the aspirations of all regions, not just a few.

Q KOICA is expanding its cooperation with emerging donors, emphasizing triangular cooperation, innovative financing, and effectiveness. What kind of partner is KOICA to Mexico?

KOICA is a natural partner for Mexico. We share a commitment to solidarity-based cooperation, and both countries bring complementary experiences. KOICA's technical expertise and Mexico's regional presence in Latin America, create a strong foundation for Triangular Cooperation.

Together, we can leverage our comparative advantages, to design projects that are not only effective but also transformative for partner countries. By combining Korea's innovation and Mexico's local knowledge, we can build models of cooperation that inspire other regions.

Q Are there any recent AMEXCID initiatives or project that could align with cooperation with Korea?

Yes, several. Our renewable energy projects in the Caribbean, food security programs in Central America, and academic exchanges with Asia, all align with Korea's priorities.

In particular, Mexico and KOICA can expand collaboration on climate resilience, digital cooperation, and women's empowerment. These areas are critical for building inclusive and sustainable societies and we see great potential, in our partnership.

Q What are your expectations for the future partnership with Korea in the context of global development cooperation? Are there specific areas or mechanisms you would like to see strengthened?

We expect a deeper and more strategic partnership, that goes beyond bilateral cooperation. Together, we can scale up triangular projects in Latin America, co-develop innovative financing mechanisms, and strengthen the MIKTA agenda.

Ultimately, Mexico and Korea can show how emerging donors, contribute to global solutions. This partnership is not only about cooperation between two countries, but about demonstrating, how shared values and innovative approaches can inspire the international community. K

KOICA Now

“Aiming for a World Where No One Is Left Behind”

From an interview with Eun Mee Kim, the first UN Women’s National Goodwill Ambassador for the Republic of Korea, to news about KOICA’s project to establish and strengthen public rehabilitation centers in the West Bank, this is the story of KOICA’s dynamic activities at home and abroad.



• Eun Mee Kim, Professor Emeritus of the Graduate School of International Studies, Ewha Womans University, and the first UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador from the Republic of Korea

Interview with Eun Mee Kim, Professor Emeritus at the Graduate School of International Studies and Chair of the Board of Trustees, Ewha Womans University

"Development cooperation that excludes women is unsustainable"

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women. Thirty years ago, the world declared that "women's rights are human rights." However, amid new global challenges such as the climate crisis, digital transformation, and the spread of artificial intelligence (AI), the issues of gender equality still require further improvements.

Eun Mee Kim, the first UN Women Goodwill Ambassador from the Republic of Korea and Professor Emeritus of the Graduate School of International Studies, Ewha Womans University (former President; current Board Chair, Ewha Womans University) emphasizes the need to reinterpret the spirit of the Beijing Declaration in today's context and calls for international cooperation to address new as well as existing forms of gender discrimination. As a sociologist studying the political economy of developing countries, Professor Kim has concluded through her work in international development cooperation that "development excluding women is not sustainable." This belief is the starting point and core of the activities she has pursued for decades, moving between academia and fieldwork.

Q As a sociologist researching political and economic development in developing countries, what led you to enter the field of gender?

After earning my master's and doctoral degrees in the United States, I taught as a Professor at the University of Southern California (USC) before returning to South Korea in 1997. While pioneering the field of international development cooperation and serving on major government advisory committees, I noticed a complete absence of gender perspectives in discussions. There was no consideration of issues from a gender viewpoint, nor any attempt to develop solutions grounded in gender perspectives.

In 2006, there was a decisive moment while serving as a member of the Committee for International Development Cooperation under the Prime Minister's Office. Paragraph 1 of the Basic Spirit and Goals in Article 3 of the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation states: "International development cooperation is based on the fundamental spirit of reducing poverty in developing countries; improving the human rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and youth; realizing gender equality; achieving sustainable development and humanitarianism; promoting economic cooperation with developing countries; and pursuing peace and prosperity in the international community." Although the Basic Act clearly stated that aid should be provided to improve women's human rights and achieve gender equality, this was not reflected in the actual projects or budget allocations. When I asked why the budget allocation was so small, a government official at the time responded, "Since the Republic of Korea still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality, what right or experience do we have to implement gender projects in international development cooperation?" The comment was even more shocking because it came from a woman official.

Q Why is the role of women important in international development cooperation?

I used to think that political economy and gender were completely separate fields. But what I realized in the field was that if women are excluded, no development program can be sustainable. For example, in a water supply project, the primary individuals fetching water are mostly women. For hygiene education, it is women who implement it at home and pass it on to their children. Thus, it is going to leave a big hole if we do not include women throughout the entire process of international development cooperation project from designing to the actual implementation. Therefore, development that excludes women carries a high risk of failure in terms of both efficiency and outcomes.

Q What is the significance of this year marking the 30th anniversary of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women?

The Beijing World Conference on Women was a historic event in which the international community adopted the principle that "women's rights are human rights" as a universal norm. This milestone also led to the use of the term "gender" rather than "sex" in official UN documents and meetings. "Sex" refers to biological differences between males and females, whereas gender is a concept that encompasses social and cultural roles and norms. This marked an important turning point to broaden the perspective on gender discrimination to include the structural and institutional dimensions of gender inequality, and in turn allowed us to examine solutions involving structural and institutional changes for eradicating gender inequality.

Q How do gender issues manifest in recent crises, such as climate change and conflicts?

Unfortunately, disasters and crises disproportionately affect women and girls. According to the UN SDGs Report, during the COVID-19 pandemic, both developing and developed countries saw a significant increase in women's unemployment rates and care-giving burdens. The former was largely due to the fact that around 40% of employed women worldwide worked in industries most severely impacted by the pandemic, such as accommodation, food services, retail, and manufacturing. Thus, more women lost jobs than men. Similarly, more women had already been exposed to greater care-giving responsibilities at the household, and their care-giving responsibilities increased more markedly than men, which was compounded with their more fragile employment status.

In another example, during the Ebola virus outbreak in Africa in 2014, the pregnancy rate among girls sharply increased. What is the connection between infectious diseases and the rise in young girls' pregnancies? The reason was school closures. Girls who could not attend school—especially those who had lost their parents—were left vulnerable to sexual violence. Schools were not only places of learning but also served as protection. Cases with water supply problems and increased agricultural labor burdens caused by climate change also disproportionately affect women. While disasters do not discriminate, the damage they cause varies according to gender.

Q What are the strengths of Korea's ODA that make it a model from the perspective of developing countries?

I believe the strength lies in the "message and experience." Just over 60 years ago, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita GDP of less than 100 dollars. Yet, despite war and security crises, South Korea achieved



• Professor Eun Mee Kim (second from the left) is pictured with international students in traditional attire during a leadership workshop for the Ewha Womans University-KOICA Master's Degree Program in 2008.

both economic growth and democratization. From the viewpoint of developing countries, South Korea's experience of achieving economic development from rags to riches in a recent decades sounds much more realistic and tangible than the advanced nations, which have developed over centuries ago. South Korea's experience of economic growth with no natural resources is far more realistic and relatable than resource-rich countries such as the UK or the US. Having experienced the hardships of recipient countries firsthand, South Korea can respect the sense of ownership of other recipient nations. In other words, a sense of solidarity—like comradeship— can be formed between South Korea and countries in the Global South in need of international development cooperation.

Q Do you have any notable examples of Korean-style, gender-focused ODA?

The project for the Prevention and Treatment of Obstetric Fistula in Cote d'Ivoire, carried out jointly by KOICA and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) from 2012 until last year, was particularly impressive. Fistula is a painful and degrading medical condition for women, which has been caused by difficult childbirth. Pre-term birth, traditional delivery methods attended by midwives, female genital mutilation, and inadequate maternal health care systems are associated with fistula. Although surgical treatment is possible, many fistula patients were ostracized by their families and local communities, and as a result fell into poverty based on mistaken belief that they were somehow impure or cursed.

Fortunately, women who received surgery through KOICA's support were able to return to their families, find employment, and even become leaders in their communities. Extending beyond simple medical support, this is a case of overcoming social stigma and restoring dignity. Another good example of South Korean-style gender-focused ODA is the transfer of know-how in operating the "Sunflower Center," which is South Korea's model for preventing sexual violence and supporting victims, to Vietnam. By providing medical, legal, psychological, and employment support all in one place, the center effectively aided victims' recovery and reintegration into society, and was selected as an excellent achievement project by the OECD in 2021.



• Professor Eun Mee Kim was appointed as UN Women Goodwill Ambassador in 2024.

Q What do you think should be the strategic direction for gender-focused ODA linked to the SDGs moving forward?

Gender is not only an independent goal—SDG 5, achieving gender equality—but also a cross-cutting issue that permeates all fields. Gender must not be excluded from areas such as climate, education, technology, or peace. A 'gender-transformative approach' is needed to go beyond simply increasing women's participation and aim to change power structures and social norms. K



• Livestock farming in Nepal accounts for about 9% of the nation's total GDP, serving as an important means of livelihood for the Nepalese people. The photo shows women from the village of Sindhuli carrying milk containers as they head toward the village. / Courtesy of Heifer Korea

Integrated Dairy Productivity Improvement Project for smallholder farmers in Kamalamai Municipality, Nepal

"I'm glad I can afford my children's school meals myself"

Srijana (13), from the village of Sindhuli, Nepal, heads to the milk collection center at 4 a.m. every day. With her small but diligent hands, she milks the cows, and the milk she collects is delivered to nearby markets through the village's distribution network. Her daily income from dairy cows is 432 rupees (about $3), amounting to around $9 per month. The cow she raises is named Dream. Dream, whom she met through a special opportunity, has become more than just livestock—she now symbolizes her family's dreams and hopes. "The dairy cow is a very important asset for the village's future," Srijana said. "Now Dream offers such strong support for our family that we even hang flower garlands around her neck.

The changes in Srijana's family are no coincidence. In April 2023, KOICA launched the project titled "Integrated Dairy Productivity Improvement Project for Smallholder Farmers in Kamalamai Municipality, Nepal." The project aims to enhance dairy productivity for smallholder farmers in the Kamalamai region, including Sindhuli village, and to help them build a foundation for self-reliance by sharing Korea's livestock farming experience and technology.

Nepal is a nation highly dependent on agriculture. According to 2023 statistics from the National Statistics Office (NSO) of Nepal, about 4.13 million households, accounting for 61.91% of all households in the country, are engaged in farming. In particular, agriculture accounts for 26.27% of Nepal's total GDP, roughly six times higher than the global average of 4%. Livestock farming, closely linked to agriculture, accounts for about 9% of Nepal's GDP, making it a vital means of livelihood for the Nepalese people.

In Nepal, agriculture and livestock farming are crucial industries that support

local communities. However, they have been dealing with low productivity. According to 2023 statistics from Nepal's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD), the annual milk production from 2.88 million milking cows in 2023 was 256,000 tons (256 million liters), with an average daily milk yield of about 2.45 liters per cow. This is significantly lower than the global average range of 6 to 8 liters. Heifer Korea, the Korean branch of the nonprofit international development organization Heifer International, partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation in 2022 to support dairy industry development by providing a total of 108 Korean purebred Holstein breeding bulls and dairy cows. 24 milking cows were given to a dairy-specialized institution under Nepal's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, while the remaining 80 cows were distributed to 51 households in Sindhuli, Kamalamai. Basic dairy infrastructure such as milk collection centers and refrigeration systems was also established. The establishment of basic dairy infrastructure aims to bring positive changes to residents' economic activities and dietary habits. Through this, the project seeks to provide stable income sources for families and achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as the promotion of women's and children's rights and the preservation of communities.

Beyond Livestock Distribution: Spreading Advanced Livestock Farming Systems

The cows delivered to Sindhuli village in Nepal are not merely livestock but living symbols of technology transfer, embodying Korea's livestock expertise and the hands-on experience of its farmers. KOICA, in collaboration with Heifer Korea, implemented the "Integrated Dairy Productivity Improvement Project for Smallholder Farmers in Kamalamai Municipality, Nepal" to introduce Korea's systematic livestock management practices and sustainable dairy systems to rural areas of Nepal. It was an effort that went beyond merely supplying livestock, aiming to transform the entire dairy farming structure of a village and a region.

KOICA and Heifer Korea especially focused on improving productivity in Sindhuli village as a key objective. They shared Korean farmers' long-standing experience and dairy technology, including individual cow health management, balanced feed formulation, and hygienic milking techniques. They also introduced one-on-one breeding consultations, joint milk collection centers, and quality inspection systems, which increased daily milk production from 7 liters to 13.27 liters—nearly doubling. The 51 farms raising Korean dairy cows achieved an average daily milk production of 22 liters, more than tripling their previous output.

This project also aligned with the pressing global goals of climate crisis response and sustainability. In particular, Sindhuli village, a rural area near the Himalayas, is directly affected by the impact of the climate crisis, making climate adaptation a matter of survival. To this end, they installed fans and automatic sprinklers inside the cowsheds to alleviate heat stress in the dairy cows. A biomass system for managing livestock manure was also installed. This biomass system processed animal waste in an environmentally friendly way, reducing the ecological burden and making a significant impact on household incomes in Sindhuli village. By utilizing part of the LPG gas previously used as biomass energy, household incomes in the farming communities increased. The biomass produced from livestock manure was about 7kg per month, saving over $7 in energy costs.

Heifer Korea CEO Lee Hae-won said, "The biomass system is the aspect where residents of Sindhuli village in Nepal felt the strongest impact in responding to the climate crisis," adding, "Although residents initially said it was unnecessary, about 120 households ended up adopting the biomass system because they wanted it."

KOICA and Heifer Korea went beyond simple livestock support by aiming for a structural transformation of the dairy sector through digital technology education. They introduced a mobile application-based dairy management system called "Farmers' Hands" in Kamalamai Municipality. "Farmers' Hands," developed by the Korean startup Bodit, selected for the K-INNO Global Program to support on-site demonstrations program, carried out in cooperation between the Public Procurement Service and KOICA. In June, 100 units were distributed to 18 farms in Nepal. Through alerts from the "Farmers' Hands" app, which is connected to devices attached to the cows' necks, farmers can now detect abnormal signs in their livestock, respond early to diseases, and analyze feed efficiency. This allows them to move beyond experience-based livestock rearing and adopt scientific and systematic animal management. The digital transformation has also led to educational innovation that strengthens farmers' knowledge and capabilities. Field-based training was provided alongside the project, covering topics from app usage to vaccination schedules, estrus management, and hygienic milking techniques. The establishment of wired internet within farms is also an important achievement. Particularly noteworthy in the digital transformation is the change in the social status of women. Women, who previously only did household chores and auxiliary livestock tasks, began to assert themselves as they received training in using digital devices and managing milking centers, enabling them to generate stable income. Through "Farmers' Hands," women have grown into practical dairy experts by recording the health status of dairy cows, organizing milk production data, and voluntarily submitting opinions at village meetings.

Mini Interview

"Residents: From Beneficiaries to Active Leaders of Village Transformation"

Lee Hae-won CEO of Heifer Korea

Q What is the biggest change you have observed in the field while carrying out the work?

It's the change in people. At first, they were hesitant about unfamiliar technology and could barely speak a word, but now they lead village meetings and directly manage cooperatives. Among the villagers, Ms. Indira Pokhrel stands out the most in my memory. She always told us it felt like "going to school" (laughs). In the past, she had no opportunities to learn, but now she is actively involved as a member of the management team of the women's dairy cooperative she belongs to. When Ms. Pokhrel had the chance to meet with Nepalese government officials and confidently presented the cooperative's goals in front of many people, I couldn't help but feel emotional.

Q Were there any difficulties in their process of adopting the technology?

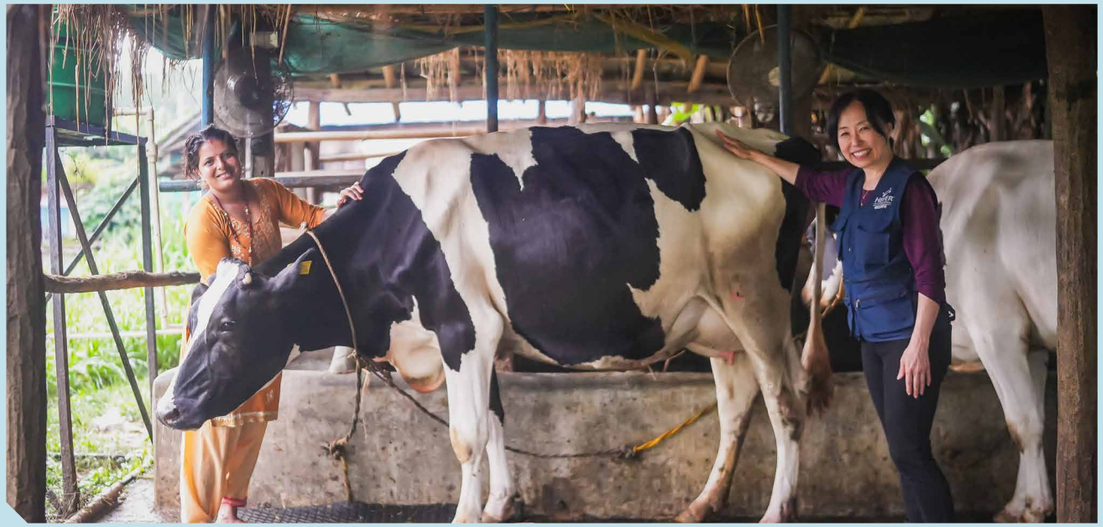
Even if you have good technology, whether it will work properly when brought to the local context is an entirely different matter. We introduced an application called "Farmer's Hands" and a smart livestock management device, but for those not used to digital tools, it was a very unfamiliar instrument. At first, many people wrote down livestock-related information by hand and later entered it into the application. Still, through consistent training, changes started to happen. Gradually, the perception that "directly recording and digitally checking is convenient" took hold. It was the first step in the digital transformation.

Q Have there been any changes in the village as well?

The most notable aspect while carrying out this project has been the "community." All the villagers are collaborating, sharing the business vision and operational status. The women have changed too. Those who initially wouldn't even make eye contact now say, "We want to give back the help we've received to other villages someday." Additionally, cooperative members wrote a proposal to the government and secured greenhouse equipment for cultivating crops using manure. They have grown from being mere beneficiaries into protagonists driving regional change.

Q Were there any particular remarks that stayed with you?

I remember a woman who said, "I'm glad I can afford my children's school meals myself." I believe her single phrase captures the entire meaning of our ongoing support project. The cows are merely a means, and true change is created by the people themselves. It encompasses women's rights, changes in families, and the restoration of communities—all of them. I believe this is the very essence of ODA and what true sustainability means. K



• Lee Hae-won, CEO of Heifer Korea (right), poses with women from Sindhuli village in Nepal and "Sidori," a milking cow provided through cooperation with the Korean Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation to promote the village's dairy industry. / Courtesy of Heifer Korea



• KOICA staff members and students from a Pakistani refugee camp pose for a commemorative photo in a classroom.

Support Project for Afghan Refugees and Host Communities in Pakistan

“Drink clean water, receive rehabilitation treatment, and walk back into a healthy daily life”

September 21 is the International Day of Peace, designated by the United Nations (UN). KOICA, on behalf of the Republic of Korea, supports vulnerable communities around the world suffering from conflicts, climate change, and other hardships, and delivers hope to them. The various support activities currently underway in Pakistan and Palestine once again demonstrate their significance.

Securing clean water through the installation of water supply systems

“It hurt not being able to use clean water. Eating and washing were luxuries. But thanks to KOICA, we can now access clean water anytime.”

For Sami Ullah and his family, who were forcibly displaced from Afghanistan to Pakistan and are now living in the Dargai refugee camp in the northwest, access to clean water was a daily struggle. Since the village had no well, his young daughters had to endure the heat and walk long distances to fetch water. However, the situation changed dramatically when KOICA installed a water supply system in the Dargai refugee camp, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“No longer do my daughters have to go far. Thanks to this, they now have time to study.”

Sami Ullah and his neighbors now enjoy the joy of tending small gardens right in their home yards.

Since 2022, KOICA has been implementing the “Support Project for Afghan Refugees and Host Communities in Pakistan” in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As part of this initiative, 14 water sources were identified throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where refugees are densely concentrated, and large-scale water purification and storage systems were installed at eight of these sites. The original plan was to install two large-scale storage systems, but distributing them across eight smaller reservoirs is considered a flexible strategy that takes residents’ opinions into account.

Introduction of advanced medical equipment in public healthcare institutions in Pakistan

In addition to addressing water supply issues, KOICA is also supporting local communities in Pakistan in the health and education sectors. KOICA installed medical equipment and solar power systems in 16 public healthcare institutions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. Particularly, at the Balochistan Institute of Nephro-Urology Quetta, an oxygen generator was installed, contributing to improved recovery rates for patients with severe respiratory conditions. KOICA also renovated facilities and provided equipment to six maternal and child health centers in refugee camps. These health centers operate 24-hour delivery rooms and are equipped with ambulances for emergency transport, serving as frontline facilities that protect the lives of pregnant women and newborns. In 2024 alone, approximately 140,000 refugee patients received primary medical care, and around 150,000 underwent tuberculosis screening through UNHCR with KOICA’s support.

KOICA is also supporting education by providing transportation fees to about 3,000 female refugee middle school students, expanding educational opportunities for girls. Through this support, female students have been able to continue their studies without dropping out. It has also positively impacted efforts to prevent early marriage among women and expand their participation in society. For children who cannot attend school, a home-based alternative learning program was introduced to help them stay connected to education. To strengthen digital education, KOICA conducts training programs for teachers on both online and offline teaching methods and provides students with tablet PCs to support effective digital learning.

KOICA actively supports initiatives that involve direct participation by local residents. A system was established that enables rapid identification of refugee needs and quick problem-solving onsite through community volunteers who serve as bridges between refugees and UNHCR. Additionally, KOICA runs coordinated programs with NGOs to support sexual minorities and people with disabilities, and has developed strategies



• At the rehabilitation center built by KOICA in Ramallah, Palestine, guardians and therapists are observing the beneficiary’s rehabilitation process.

to respond to sexual violence.

Opening of rehabilitation centers in Palestine

"I thought I would never walk again. But thanks to KOICA, I have regained my normal daily life."

KOICA's humanitarian aid has also brought significant changes to Palestine, a prominent conflict-affected area. A 19-year-old young man named Ahmad Abed, living in Qabatiya, suffered a severe traumatic brain injury about one year and four months ago when rocket fragments struck the right side of his head during an Israeli airstrike. He was immediately admitted to the ICU and remained in a coma for 22 days. His left limbs were paralyzed, and he was blind in his right eye, requiring assistance from others.

He was transferred to a rehabilitation center in Qabatiya, where he received physical therapy, and his condition improved within three weeks. His walking became much more stable and natural, enabling him to get up from the floor and climb stairs without assistance.

Along with physical therapy, he underwent four weeks of occupational therapy. Thanks to this, he regained the ability to independently perform daily activities such as eating, bathing, dressing, and washing his face using both hands. As his memory and cognitive functions improved, he became capable of planning and managing his daily schedule independently. Due to changes in his appearance and the trauma from his injuries, he experienced psychological anxiety and social isolation. However, through consistent psychological therapy, he regained stability and confidence. Currently, Ahmad independently performs daily activities, has returned to work, and consistently continues his rehabilitation exercises on his own.

The Qabatiya rehabilitation center that helped Ahmad recover his health was built with the support of KOICA. On April 28 this year, KOICA opened two rehabilitation centers in Ramallah and Qabatiya, located in the West Bank of the Jordan River. This is part of KOICA's "Establishment of Public Rehabilitation Outpatient Care Centers and Capacity Building of Human Resources in the West Bank, the State of Palestine" project, which has been underway since 2021 in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

The rehabilitation centers, newly established by remodeling local public hospitals, include occupational therapy rooms, physical therapy rooms, speech therapy rooms, and mental health counseling rooms. Equipped with the latest tools, including virtual reality (VR)-based walking and balance training systems and 3D interactive devices for cognitive rehabilitation, the centers go beyond traditional physical therapy to provide integrated treatments such as occupational therapy, psychosocial support, and social rehabilitation. These treatment centers are highly significant, as they allow residents of the West Bank of Palestine, who have endured nearly two years of armed conflict, to access professional rehabilitation services, supported by Korea.



• Interior of the rehabilitation treatment center remodeled and opened by KOICA and WHO in a public hospital in the West Bank, Palestine

Aiming to achieve mutual cooperation in the Middle East

KOICA provides comprehensive support to countries exposed to risks from conflicts, terrorism, unstable governance, and poor basic living conditions under harsh environments. KOICA is also expanding humanitarian support projects to promote peace in Palestine through cooperation with various domestic and international partners, including international organizations and civil society. As one of the prime examples, KOICA has been collaborating with UNICEF since 2021 on the "Integrated Educational Environment Improvement Project in the West Bank of Palestine," which aims to enhance the educational environment of kindergartens, as well as primary and secondary schools, in communities affected by prolonged conflict. KOICA, in partnership with one of Palestine's leading NGOs, Sawa, provides psychological counseling services to residents affected by the conflict.

"Since the outbreak of the conflict with Israel, KOICA has been providing humanitarian assistance to Palestine in cooperation with various partners, including the UN." said Kim Min-jong, country director of the KOICA Palestine Office. "KOICA will continue to pursue projects that contribute to overcoming conflict and promoting peace and recovery from a long-term perspective."



• KOICA held the "KOICA Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum" on June 26 at its headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do.

KOICA Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum

From 'what was done' to 'what has changed'... Impact evaluation elevates the level of development cooperation projects

The implementation of a development cooperation project does not necessarily lead to change. Projects such as building schools, constructing hospitals, and transferring technology should be evaluated not by their visible outcomes, but by the extent to which they have brought tangible improvements to the lives of local residents. This kind of scientific analysis and assessment of the changes that occur beneath the surface of visible outcomes is known as "impact evaluation."

Impact evaluation focuses not on outputs, but on outcomes and impacts. It tracks changes in people's behavior, improvements in quality of life, and shifts in social structures, asking whether those changes can be attributed to the project itself. Impact evaluation is not merely a technique; it is a tool that uses data to explain the depth and sustainability of the changes brought about by development cooperation projects. In today's complex environment, where numerous variables interact, quantity-based performance indicators alone are insufficient to accurately measure the results of development cooperation projects. Since impact evaluation provides practical lessons for the design and policymaking of similar





• At the "KOICA Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum," various panelists took the podium to shed light on the value of impact evaluation from diverse perspectives. (From left) Won Ji-hye, Director of the Evaluation Office at KOICA, and Seo Hee-kwon, Ph.D., from the Development Impact Evaluation Department at the World Bank

projects after completion, it is now considered not optional but necessary.

KOICA is integrating impact evaluation into its overall organizational strategy. Since 2023, it has been providing impact evaluation training for staff in collaboration with organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and World Vision. This year, KOICA launched its own training program, marking the beginning of full-scale efforts to institutionalize impact evaluation. Among these efforts, KOICA held the "KOICA Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum" on June 26, 2025, at its headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do, under the theme "The Beginning of Data-Based Evaluation: Impact Evaluation."

Impact evaluation Asking about the 'real change' KOICA holds Development Cooperation Evaluation Forum

The forum, attended by KOICA staff and experts from major partner organizations such as the World Bank and UNICEF, was a milestone that went beyond simply sharing techniques, demonstrating the philosophy and practical strategies KOICA is applying to integrate impact evaluation into its project framework.

Won Ji-hye, director of the Evaluation Office at KOICA, who delivered the keynote speech, explained three reasons why KOICA is focusing on impact evaluation now. The first reason is to reflect the growing demand for results as the ODA budget continues to increase. The second reason is to properly understand what effects occur where, as projects become larger and more complex. The last reason, according to Director Won, is that KOICA aims to use the results of impact evaluations as a basis for making better decisions in the future.

Director Won said that, for the first time this year, the Evaluation Office has selected and is conducting five impact evaluation projects. Going forward, KOICA plans to institutionalize the process so that evaluations are designed from the start of projects and their results are reflected in actual policies and programs.

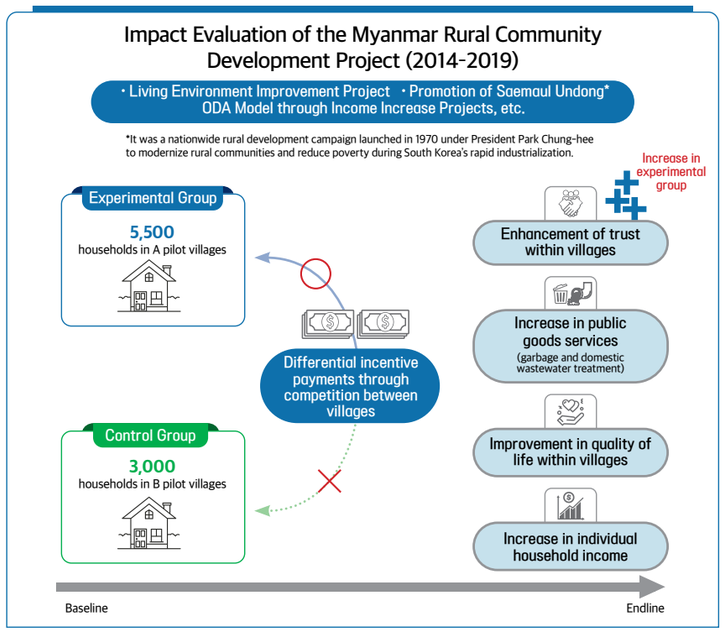
In the first session, Professor Kim Bu-yuel from the Department of Environmental Planning at Seoul National University's Graduate School of Environmental Studies summarized the core of impact evaluation with the question, "Has this project truly created change?" He emphasized that it is necessary to go beyond simply asking "Were there good results?" and to clarify whether "Were these results due to this project?" To illustrate this, he introduced various cases, including KOICA's water and sanitation project in Ghana, a scholarship program in Malawi, and rural community development projects in Cambodia and Myanmar. Professor Kim said, "The projects conducted in Cambodia and Myanmar, which aimed to improve village living conditions, increase income, and expand access to education and health services, were evaluated using quasi-experimental and experimental impact evaluation methodologies. Through this, it is possible to scientifically identify which factors actually brought about change."

Seo Hee-kwon, Ph.D., from the Development Impact Evaluation Department at the World Bank, explained three situations when impact evaluation is necessary. The first is when it is essential to closely examine how a project actually operates on the ground. While things may appear fine on the surface, a detailed look may reveal various underlying issues. The second situation is when different stakeholders surrounding the project (government, civil society, international organizations, etc.) have conflicting opinions about the most effective direction. In such cases, evaluation can confirm which approach actually had an impact. He cited his experience working on a school feeding project in Burundi with the World Food Programme (WFP), explaining that data-driven evaluation helped build consensus among stakeholders.



• Cho Yoon-ho, a senior researcher at the Child Future Institute, World Vision, emphasized that the core of impact evaluation lies in relationships with the field and collaboration with partners.

The third situation is when there is a desire to understand whether truly fundamental change has occurred beyond short-term numerical outcomes. Dr. Seo cited the ongoing plastic waste management project in Cusco, Peru, which KOICA is currently collaborating on — titled "Strengthening Integrated Solid Waste Management through Sustainable Tourism and Social Inclusion in Transition to Circular Economy with Gender-Responsive Approach in the Province of Cusco," and emphasized that, beyond observing results such as an increased recycling rate, it is essential to examine how that change structurally impacts people's lifestyles and policies.



Dr. Zlata Bruckauf from UNICEF, who gave the third presentation, introduced how impact evaluation works in complex situations through two cases in the child and health sectors, emphasizing, "The more vulnerable the target group, the more we must rely on evidence rather than intuition."

Cho Yoon-ho, senior researcher at the Child Future Institute, World Vision, pointed out why impact evaluation is important from an NGO perspective. He emphasized that "impact evaluation is more about trust than complex techniques," saying that "the core of evaluation lies in relationships with the field and collaboration with partners." Dr. Cho added, "Evaluation is not just about numbers," emphasizing that "to reveal truly meaningful change, it is necessary to closely examine how the project actually operates in the field and what kind of relationships it forms with people."

KOICA: Designing change

KOICA views impact evaluation not merely as a tool for tracking performance but as a stepping stone for the successful implementation of development cooperation projects, and is exploring various ways to achieve this goal. Going forward, to ensure the integration of evaluation from the very first stage of projects, the Evaluation Office will lead impact evaluation tasks starting from the project planning phase and utilize the results as a basis for key decisions such as policy formulation, budget allocation, and partner selection. KOICA is also preparing a system to regularize multiple impact evaluation tasks each year by applying impact evaluations to areas requiring structural changes, such as public administration, the environment, and digital transformation.

KOICA is evolving from an organization that simply seeks the "right answer" to one that "designs change."

Interviews with participants in KOICA's International Organization Placement Support Program

"Sustainable support significantly benefits youth careers"

KOICA operates various programs, including the Young Professional (YP), the KOICA Multilateral Cooperation Officer (KMCO), and the WFK (World Friends Korea) KOICA Volunteer Corps, to help young people aspiring to work in international organizations achieve their goals. To ensure these programs are not one-off opportunities, KOICA also implements initiatives that support young professionals in extending their careers within international organizations. Representative examples include the KMCO Follow-Up Support Program and the Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations.

Kwon Jung-hwa, program officer at the GGGI Philippines Office

"The KMCO Follow-Up Support Program enhances employment chances in international organizations"



• Kwon Jung-hwa, a program officer at the GGGI Philippines Office, appears in a promotional video for the Mindanao Development Authority, explaining the digital monitoring project for the mangrove ecosystem in Surigao, Philippines.

Q Please introduce yourself.

I am Kwon Jung-hwa, currently working as a program officer at the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) Philippines Office. GGGI is an international organization that supports climate change response and green growth, and I collaborate with the Philippine government and international partners to strengthen the country's climate response capabilities. My responsibilities cover the entire program cycle, including planning and proposing new projects, building partnerships, and monitoring and evaluating implementation. In particular, I work with the government, development partners, and private institutions to develop and execute practical solutions within the Philippines' complex climate, social, and economic context.

Q People may not be familiar with GGGI. Could you tell us more about the organization?

GGGI is an international organization established in 2012, headquartered in Jeongdong, Seoul, with offices in over 50 countries. It supports member countries in addressing climate change while maintaining sustainable economic growth. It also acts as a "green growth partner" by providing policy advisory and technical support, helping member countries attract green investments, and establishing institutional frameworks. Through these efforts, GGGI helps each country achieve its sustainable development goals and reach greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Q I heard that you were selected as a KOICA Multilateral Cooperation Officer (KMCO) and began working at the GGGI Philippines office.

The KOICA KMCO program, implemented since 2013 to strengthen cooperation with international organizations and cultivate global talent in development cooperation, dispatches Korean professionals to partner international organizations, such as UN agencies and GGGI, with which MOUs have been signed. The dispatch period is one year, with the possibility of a one-year extension through evaluation, allowing for a total of two years of service.

I was selected as part of the 13th KMCO cohort in 2022 and worked at the GGGI Philippines Office for two years. During this period, I gained a deep understanding of GGGI's business structure, KOICA's international organization cooperation projects, and the decision-making and collaboration processes of international organizations. Based on this experience, I transitioned to a GGGI staff position in February 2025. KMCO is KOICA's flagship program that helps Korean talent build expertise by working on the front lines of international organizations. During the dispatch period, the program is highly effective, as it involves performing a variety of tasks specific to international organizations beyond KOICA projects, including government collaboration, national strategy formulation, and field monitoring. After the dispatch ends, participants can apply for KOICA's KMCO Follow-Up Support Program based on evaluation.

Q You were selected for the KMCO Post-Deployment Program earlier this year. Could you explain more about this program?

The KMCO Follow-Up Support Program is a system in which, upon completing a two-year dispatch term, if a dispatched officer secures a staff position in an international organization, KOICA provides a partial salary subsidy to that organization, following evaluation and selection processes conducted by both KOICA and the international organization. From the perspective of international organizations, they can hire personnel who have already been field-tested while benefiting from KOICA's subsidy, and individuals receive stable support during the hiring process, which helps improve their employment prospects. I was also able to settle more securely into the international organization through this system in 2025, which greatly assisted in establishing a predictable career plan.

Q The current funding freeze at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is likely to bring about significant changes in the environment surrounding international organizations. I would like to hear how the KMCO program is influencing the process of entering international organizations in this evolving context.

Due to the suspension of U.S. aid, some projects in the Philippines have been put on hold, and there are reports of staff reductions in related agencies. This has made me keenly aware of how uncertain the international development cooperation environment has become. The GGGI Philippines office has not faced a major financial impact, as it does not directly depend on U.S. funding. However, this situation reminded me of the value of the KMCO Program, which is designed to help young Koreans begin their careers in international organizations in a relatively stable environment. The more uncertain the environment, the more easily one's career trajectory can be disrupted. The KMCO Program provides a stable foundation for building experience over a two-year period, even amid such circumstances. During my two years in the Philippines, I was able to focus on my work with a sense of stability and demonstrate my capabilities with greater confidence.

Q As a member of GGGI, is there a story or message related to the climate crisis that you would like to share with the public?

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, is one of the countries most directly and severely affected by the climate crisis. In recent years, extreme weather events have become more frequent, and climate patterns have noticeably shifted. Just in 2025, Super Typhoon Uwan struck in November—typically the dry season in the Philippines—affecting about 7.5 million people and damaging more than 270,000 houses, causing enormous losses to agriculture and livelihoods.

The greatest challenge we observe in the field is that recovery is taking increasingly longer after each disaster, even amid recurring damage. This results from a combination of factors such as insufficient infrastructure, limited financial capacity, and the constraints of existing response systems. Therefore, I have come to realize that strengthening resilience is just as important as prevention in addressing the climate crisis.

The Philippines has a strong interest in Korea's policy experience, disaster response capacity, and green technologies. I believe this creates diverse opportunities for collaboration between the two countries. I hope to see even more opportunities for exchange and cooperation in the years ahead.

Q In this uncertain international environment, what competencies do you think young professionals aspiring to enter international organizations should develop?

Entering international organizations may feel distant and difficult. However, once you actually enter one, you will find numerous connections to your own experiences. Rather than a specific major or career being the "right answer," what matters more is how you can connect your experiences to the agendas and values of international organizations. In smaller country offices, the scope of work can be quite broad, so in addition to professional expertise, it is important to have the versatility and flexibility to handle multiple roles. Equally essential are an attitude of understanding and respect for cultural diversity, the ability to adapt to local work practices, and a genuine interest in and adaptability to the host country.

Kim Jae-hwi, head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team, WFP Cambodia Office

“Now a formal staff member of an international organization through the regular recruitment process”



• Kim Jae-hwi, head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team, WFP Cambodia Office

Q Please introduce yourself and share what initially sparked your interest in international organizations.

My name is Kim Jae-hwi, and I work at the World Food Programme (WFP) in Cambodia, where I currently serve as the head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team. From a young age, I enjoyed learning English, often listening to pop music and CNN news on my own while dreaming of becoming a diplomat. When I was in high school, Korea was swept by what was known as the “Han Bi-ya* wave,” and this nationwide surge of interest in globalization coincided with my personal interests, naturally leading me to pursue a career in international development.

Q What was your first connection with KOICA?

While writing my master’s thesis, I wanted it to be based on a real project. That was how I first connected with KOICA—by working as a KOICA Young Professional (YP) at the Korea Institute for International Development for six months. There, I served as a research assistant, supporting the evaluation of KOICA’s maternal and child health center construction projects in Paraguay and El Salvador, mainly by collecting and analyzing field-level project evaluation data.

Q You are working at WFP through the Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations. What kind of system is this?

What distinguishes the Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations from previous Korean government initiatives to support Koreans’ entry into international organizations is that the recruitment process is conducted by the international organization itself. While programs such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Junior Professional Officer (JPO) scheme, the UN Volunteers (UNV) program, or KOICA’s Multilateral Cooperation Officer (KMCO) dispatch are based on the Korean government selecting and recommending candidates, this system allows international organizations to directly recruit Korean professionals through an open and competitive process. The greatest differentiator and strength is that recruitment takes place through the international organization’s regular hiring process, allowing successful candidates to receive contractual conditions equivalent to those of regular staff or general consultant employees. In simple terms, individuals are recognized as “internal staff members” rather than “external personnel,” which increases the importance and responsibility of their roles within the organization. From this perspective, not only the Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations but also programs such as JPO and KMCO should emphasize to international organizations the need for more strategic recruitment of Korean talent as “internal staff” or with equivalent status. In this regard, the JPO program’s shift several years ago to direct recruitment by international organizations is viewed as a positive development.

Q Could you tell us how you became a beneficiary of the Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations?

Having worked in Africa and other regions for a long time, I often wished that my duty station could be closer to my family in Korea. As part of my career strategy, I was planning to pivot to Asia. Around that time, the WFP office in Cambodia needed to hire a Korean staff member for KOICA project monitoring and evaluation. I believe the office looked into the Future International Talent Pool (FIT Pool) for potential candidates. Since I had already registered in the FIT Pool in 2022 as a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist, I was able to be recruited directly by the WFP Cambodia Office. Even if you are included in this talent pool, it may not lead to any opportunity unless there is an actual recruitment need from a country office or headquarters. In my case, I was quite fortunate—the KOICA Korean Staff Recruitment System for Multilateral Projects with International Organizations was linked to the FIT Pool, and the timing worked out perfectly. Moreover, the KOICA project I am managing at the WFP Cambodia Office has been running smoothly through its first and second phases, which has secured a stable budget for Korean staff recruitment and further enhanced the sustainability of my work.

Q Is there any message or story related to food issues that you would like the public to know as a member of the WFP?

The key message I want to share is that the climate crisis is, in fact, a food crisis. Currently, 350 million people in 82 countries are experiencing acute food insecurity. Yet more than 20% of the total food produced is wasted within food production and supply systems. We have enough food, enough technology, and enough knowledge—so why should so many people around the world still go hungry? Ultimately, the food crisis is not merely a problem of production—it is a matter of distribution and justice. Therefore, addressing the food crisis is not just about producing more food; it is about responding to the climate crisis, ensuring equitable distribution, and contributing to the creation of fair systems. Climate action is, in essence, an act for food justice.

Q What competencies do you think juniors aspiring to work in international organizations should develop?

The last century was driven by the values of free trade and democracy led by the United States, marking an era in which multilateralism was strengthened. However, I believe we are now at a turning point where multilateralism is facing fractures and a new international order is taking shape. International organizations, which exist to coordinate and implement multilateral rules, norms, and values, are now redefining their purpose and relevance in this changing landscape. Therefore, rather than focusing solely on ‘where’ to work—whether in an international organization, a private company, the consulting field, or academia—I think it is more important to focus on ‘why’—what values and issues you want to contribute to—and to develop your competitiveness around that purpose. I think this is something that not only juniors but everyone currently working in the field should do. While working at an international organization, I never once stopped thinking about “how to build my future career” or “what competencies will allow me to make a greater contribution.” Additionally, since international organization staff always work overseas and face international competition, it is necessary to reflect on whether one has the personality and temperament to enjoy working in such an environment.



• Kim Jae-hwi, head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team at the WFP Cambodia Office (first from the left), participated in her first field visit after taking up her post. She was joined by school teachers and local officials operating the school feeding program in Siem Reap Province.

Q What experience do you think was most important in entering your international organization?

To those interested in international organizations or the field of international development, I sincerely want to say this: “Try it firsthand while you’re still young.” Through that firsthand experience, you will gain, day by day, a much clearer sense of whether this path truly suits you or if you should find another direction.

In the future, the work and roles in international organizations will undergo significant changes due to advancements in AI, task automation, and UN reforms, making specialized experts increasingly vital. AI will rapidly replace routine tasks, but designing new programs or initiatives, which require advanced critical thinking, planning skills, and deep expertise in specific fields, will remain the domain of humans. K

*Han Bi-ya is a South Korean international relief worker and bestselling author. She gained national recognition through her travel memoirs and later devoted herself to humanitarian work in crisis regions around the world.



• Cho So-hui, Director of the KOICA El Salvador Office (third from the left), has been promoting various KOICA projects in El Salvador since 2023. The photo shows her attending the groundbreaking ceremony of the El Salvador National Health Education Center in 2025.

Contribution by Cho So-hui, director of the KOICA El Salvador Office

Helping hands for El Salvador's economic reconstruction

This year marks three years since I began living in El Salvador, located on the opposite side of the globe from Korea. Known among coffee lovers as a region producing high-quality coffee, El Salvador remains relatively unfamiliar to most people in Korea. I have previously worked in Paraguay in South America, but I did not know much about El Salvador, which is located in Central America. So when I was assigned here, I did some research and asked my predecessor various questions to learn about this unfamiliar country. The more I learned, the more concerned I became, since many Latin American countries struggle with unstable security.

In February 2023, when I arrived on site, contrary to my concerns, people were freely walking the streets and going about their daily lives without much caution. Seeing the significant improvement in public safety, I could feel that the security capacity-building projects led by the KOICA El Salvador Office had greatly contributed to enhancing safety.

El Salvador has long been a country with a history of serious gang-related incidents and crimes. KOICA has worked in consultation with the Salvadoran government to strengthen the local police's capacities in crime prevention and investigation. Through three phases of the project, KOICA installed over 200 surveillance cameras and trained management personnel. Last year, a CCTV control center was opened, establishing a stable CCTV security system. Additionally, more than 1,000 specialists were trained in areas including dedicated female crime investigation and digital forensic capabilities. As a result, the people of El Salvador are now able to live safer lives.

The people of El Salvador I have come to know are truly diligent and sincere. They start their day at 4:30 in the morning and usually work Saturday mornings, too. Compared to other South American countries rich in resources, El Salvador has a harsh environment and limited resources, so people have had to work hard to build their lives. It reminded me of just how much this place resembles Korea in spirit. Like Korean people, who achieved remarkable economic development with their bare hands from the ruins of war, the diligent locals here felt familiar, and I quickly grew attached to them. Currently, the El Salvador Office has 12 Koreans, including myself, and 10 local staff working together. Although busy covering neighboring countries such as Costa Rica, Belize, Panama, and Nicaragua, we all take care of each other like one family while carrying out various projects for the development of El Salvador. Among these, the dynamic small business development project stands out.

El Salvador, with a weak manufacturing sector, has most of its economically active population working as micro and small business owners. Considering that El Salvador's population is about 6.3 million and there are 1 million micro-enterprises, the majority of people appear to be engaged in small-scale self-employment. In simple terms, it is common for a woman to run a small food stand while also selling handmade accessories and local produce. People here, even with limited education, are eager to start their own businesses as soon as possible. This is why El Salvador is called a "land of self-employed people."

However, small-scale businesses such as restaurants or cafes have limitations in significantly growing the national economy. In response, KOICA is helping strengthen the capabilities of small business owners and support high value-added startups through the dynamic small business development project. For example, KOICA runs a program for prospective entrepreneurs and identifies excellent business ideas through startup funding competitions. In this process, digital education is also provided to help participants effectively manage their businesses. The Digital Startup Center, which opened last year, supports creating prototypes using 3D printers and producing promotional videos with drones. In the case of 3D printing, aspiring entrepreneurs can quickly and precisely create prototypes, which has been well received for reducing costs and saving time. The Digital Startup Center, though newly opened, has already received a great response and produced its first batch of graduates. One graduate, smiling brightly, said, "Thanks to KOICA, I have come one step closer to my dream of starting a business. I am truly grateful to the Korean people." This moment has stayed with me.

KOICA projects are usually planned two years before actual implementation begins. After thorough preparation, a project agreement is signed between the two countries, and the fulfillment of milestones as the project progresses brings an indescribable sense of accomplishment. Over the past two years in El Salvador, several projects, such as security capacity building and dynamic small business development, have come to fruition. The 'World Friends Korea' volunteer program, which had been suspended due to COVID-19, resumed after four years. Witnessing the fruition of these projects and the dispatch of volunteers brought a fresh sense of emotion. Feeling that our efforts have improved the lives of the people of El Salvador fills me with pride as well as a profound sense of responsibility.

Several major projects are planned for this year. The El Salvador National Health Education Center and the El Salvador Bus Information Monitoring Center are set to be completed, and construction will begin on an Innovation Center at the Central American Institute of Technology (ICTA). KOICA needs to start the second phase of the Central American three-country Dry Corridor greenhouse horticulture capacity-building Triangular Cooperation project in Costa Rica and complete, this year, the technology innovation-based startup and industry-academia cooperation support project in collaboration with Costa Rica National University. I am actively planning new projects linked to ongoing initiatives. Over the past two years, I have gained a deeper understanding of El Salvador and the Central American region, and I have worked to identify projects tailored to the needs of Central America. Moving forward, I hope to carry out my entrusted duties smoothly and wish for all the staff at the office to remain healthy and safe.



• Since 2024, a Digital Entrepreneurship Center has been operating to strengthen the capabilities of small business owners in El Salvador. The photo shows a T-shirt made using a 3D printer.

Contribution by Cho Soong-ho, manager of the Department of Evaluation

Sowing seeds in Uganda, the "Pearl of Africa"

Where is Uganda?

Africa is over 10,000 kilometers away from Korea. Exchanges of people and trade are limited. From January to July 2025, Korea's exports to Africa totaled $5.6 billion, accounting for only 1.4% of total exports. The number of visitors to Africa is also far lower compared to Asia, the Americas, or Europe.

When I was assigned to the KOICA Uganda Office in July 2022, the first reaction from people around me was, "Where is that?" Uganda was so unfamiliar that most people barely understood even when I explained that the waters originating from Lake Victoria in Uganda flow all the way to Egypt as the Nile River. Even I knew very little about Uganda before my assignment.

KOICA has 16 offices in Africa, representing 34%—about one-third—of its total 47 overseas offices. This highlights Africa's strategic importance in KOICA's international development work. This is perhaps unsurprising, as 32 of the 44 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) designated by the United Nations are located in Africa. In particular, Uganda, classified as an LDC, has the highest malaria mortality rate in the world and ranks first in Africa in terms of refugees, with about 1.6 million people. Over 70% of Uganda's economically active population is engaged in agriculture. The average annual income per person is about $1,000, roughly 1.4 million Korean won, meaning the monthly income is just over 100,000 won. Uganda is called the "Pearl of Africa," highlighting its beauty, yet the nickname also reflects that the country remains underdeveloped. Among jewels, only pearls are produced by living creatures, specifically oysters. Unlike gold, silver, or diamonds, pearls are not crafted or processed by humans. From one perspective, this signifies that they remain untouched by human hands. On the flip side, it implies that their potential is unrefined, remaining in a raw, natural state.

First development of Uganda's indigenous vegetable seeds

Uganda's economy heavily depends on agriculture, but agricultural technology and farming methods are very underdeveloped. In particular, crop breeding has been almost neglected. Crop breeding refers to improving plant varieties to increase both yield and quality. Good harvests are difficult to achieve with poor-quality seeds. Unfortunately, most farmers in Uganda do not distinguish between seed types. For example, when planting sweet potatoes, they often do so without knowing whether they are sowing orange-fleshed or chestnut-flavored varieties. Since each seed requires different cultivation methods, not knowing the seed type makes proper farming difficult. Moreover, not knowing what kind of sweet potato will grow prevents quality control, making it impossible to sell products at the appropriate price. This is one of the reasons why the income of Ugandan farmers remains low. Due to the lack of proper crop breeding, high-quality indigenous seeds are rare, and imported seeds are expensive. For Ugandan farmers, these costly imported seeds are unaffordable, leaving them with no choice but to plant whatever seeds are available.

Uganda, in particular, lacks indigenous vegetable seeds. To address this, the KOICA Uganda Office launched the "Uganda Seed Value Chain Capacity Building for Key Vegetable Crops" in 2022. The project aims to develop and distribute high-quality indigenous vegetable seeds through KOICA initiatives to boost farmers' incomes, focusing on staple crops with strong daily demand, such as tomatoes, pumpkins, onions, and peppers.

The KOICA Uganda Office has provided large-scale Korean-style greenhouses, tractors, and breeding equipment, and dispatched Korean experts to conduct breeding training. Ugandan researchers are also invited to Korea annually for advanced training. Once completed, the project will register Uganda's first indigenous vegetable seeds, securing their intellectual property rights. Once the seeds are distributed, farmers' incomes are expected to rise, and there will also be potential for exports. Through breeding research and the registration of new varieties, Ugandan experts' skills are likewise expected to reach a global standard.



• Scene from the "Uganda Seed Value Chain Capacity Building for Key Vegetable Crops" currently underway by the KOICA Uganda Office. Researchers are inspecting the growth of various crops under breeding, with a Korean-style greenhouse visible in the background.



• Scene showing Uganda's climate and soil conditions. Uganda offers optimal conditions for agriculture, with a stable year-round temperature of around 24℃, ample sunlight, sufficient rainfall, and fertile soil. Proper distribution of quality seeds is expected to significantly boost the incomes of those engaged in farming.

Not everything went smoothly. When importing greenhouse materials such as pipes and vinyl from Korea, conflicts arose over customs procedures and cost responsibilities (there was no dispute about the quality of the Korean materials). It was difficult to understand why there was no cooperation in importing greenhouse materials for their benefit.

Korea once faced similar challenges, so it is understandable. However, since large-scale ODA projects are funded by the Korean government budget, it was frustrating when projects were delayed over relatively minor customs fees. In reality, the success or failure of ODA projects depends as much on how faithfully the partner country fulfills its responsibilities as it does on the Korean side's diligent execution of its duties. Fortunately, the "Uganda Seed Value Chain Capacity Building for Key Vegetable Crops" overcame various challenges by partnering with a strong collaborator, Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO). Most importantly, tangible breeding results began to emerge, leading to noticeable changes among Ugandan researchers. Breeding involves repeatedly verifying whether the unique traits of seeds are properly expressed over multiple seasons. As the seasons progressed, new candidates for superior seeds accumulated, and researchers who had previously believed that vegetable seed breeding was difficult due to limited budget and equipment began to gain confidence that it was indeed possible. Thanks to the latest equipment provided by Korea, researchers were able to conduct proper testing and research, which motivated some to persevere despite the lack of immediate financial gain. Some even invested their own money, albeit modestly, to improve greenhouse soil in hopes of contributing to the project's success—a rare occurrence in Uganda. It may be a stretch to say that Uganda changed dramatically during the three years I worked there, from 2022 to 2025. Much may remain the same for years to come. However, signs of change were visible, such as the progress among breeding researchers. Korea also once had a per capita GDP of about $1,000, similar to Uganda's current level around 1977–1978. You may refer to archival footage to see what life was like then. It is hard to say that the impoverished and starving conditions of Korea's past were better than today's Uganda. Those were also times when democracy was stifled. Yet Korea has become an economic powerhouse with a GDP of $3,600 and a democratic nation. If Korea could achieve this, isn't it possible for Uganda as well?

I hope Uganda grows as much as Korea has. I wish for not only increased income but also progress in democracy and improvements in social conditions. I hope people can pursue their dreams without fearing death from mosquito-borne diseases or losing their homes as refugees. I also hope KOICA's development cooperation projects can play a significant role in this process. I believe Korea has both the capacity and the willingness to provide such support.



• Participants at the "KOICA Alumni Association Uganda" hosted by the KOICA Uganda Office in October 2024

Grow as you are, Cooperate as we are

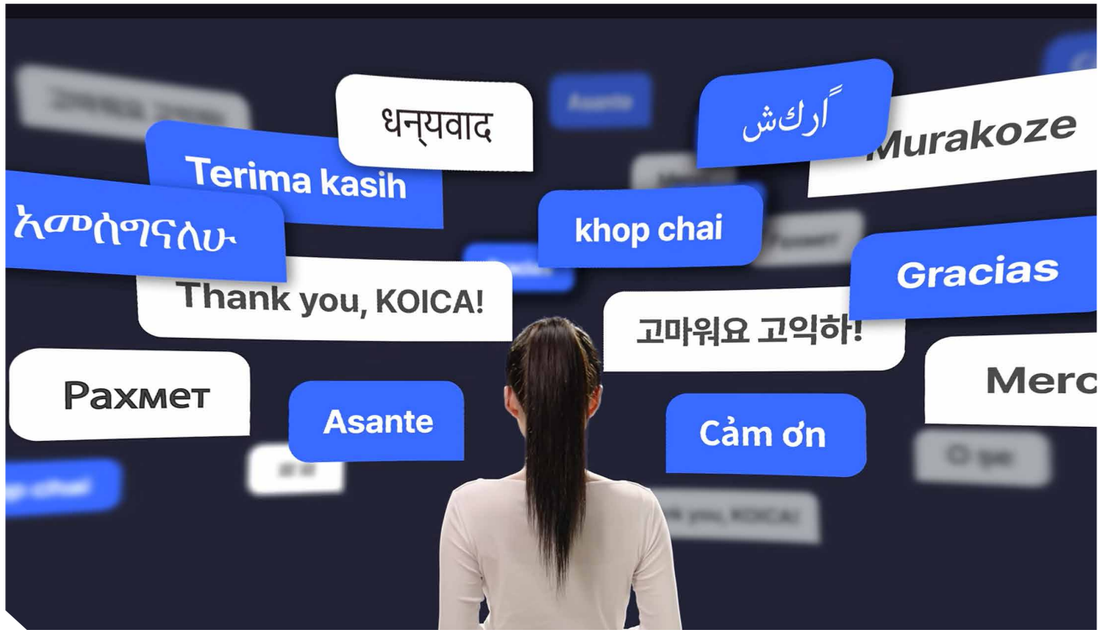
Goikha(KOICA), It's My Pleasure!

"Goikha" was the main character of KOICA's first domestic brand campaign, launched in 2024. KOICA ran a mystery campaign with the intriguing slogan "Finding Goikha," seeking the figure who receives gratitude from around the world. While it sounded like a person's name, Goikha was actually a playful twist on "KOICA." The campaign concluded by revealing that Goikha represents the people of Korea who support and act for international development. One year later, the Goikha campaign returned in 2025 with a brand-new slogan: "Goikha, It's My Pleasure." This serves as a response to the "Thank you, KOICA" messages received from around the world in 2024, expressing that helping and cooperating with various countries through international development cooperation is "something I do because I like it," "my joy," and "my pride." To showcase this, five Goikhas practicing service and sharing in their respective roles were interviewed, and their stories were produced as a series of videos. From November through early December 2025, the videos were sequentially uploaded to KOICA's official social media channels, including Instagram and YouTube, marking the full launch of the 'KOICA, It's My Pleasure' campaign.

Most like me! Most like us!

'Goikha, It's My Pleasure' began with offline advertisements on buses and subways, heightening anticipation for the campaign through the teaser video posted on KOICA's official SNS channels. The teaser video drew significant attention, reaching 210,000 views in just over a week. A public participation quiz event inviting people to guess the meaning of the mysterious figure 'Goikha' saying 'It's My Pleasure' sparked widespread curiosity.

As curiosity about Goikha, who is set to appear in the main video of the 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure' campaign series, began to grow, interviews with five individuals named Goikha were sequentially uploaded to the official channel, further fueling excitement for the campaign. The 50-second video features five individuals named Goikha—broadcaster and model Jung Hyuk, KOICA volunteer-turned-geography instructor Yi Do, KOICA senior volunteer Shim Jae-hwa, social enterprise CEO Jang Mi-ji, and NGO activist and former KOICA Global Supporter Lee Seung-jae—each making a difference in the world in their own unique way. The compelling stories of the five Goikhas—who, undeterred by prejudice or outside judgment, pursue their chosen paths with quiet determination while embracing the values of happiness, challenge, and sharing—resonated deeply with viewers. The video's key message-that "Grow as you are" leads to "Cooperate as we are," ultimately changing the world- was also particularly striking.



• The mysterious figure Goikha, who has been receiving messages of gratitude from around the world, heightened anticipation for the brand's campaign by launching a quiz event asking what the meaning behind his response "It's My Pleasure" is.







• KOICA senior volunteer Shim Jae-hwa, who took on his first overseas volunteer assignment in his 70s, demonstrated the fearless spirit of a former journalist despite being the oldest member of the team. After earning certifications in IT, he went on to teach the subject in Myanmar and Uzbekistan.

"It's My Pleasure" of the five Goikhas featured in the video

The 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure' video series began with broadcaster and model Jung Hyuk. Last year, he served as KOICA's "One-Day PR Chief," winning hearts with his candid and down-to-earth personality. Jung Hyuk previously shared that he grew up receiving help from others due to his family's modest circumstances during childhood. In the video, Jung Hyuk describes himself as "Goikha, who seeks his true self," expressing that "it's deeply rewarding to know I can now give strength and happiness to others." Actively engaging in volunteer work with members of his fan community, he continues to extend a helping hand to those in need, saying that "volunteering is the most genuine way for me to express my heart."

Geography instructor Yi Do, who appeared on Netflix's "Better Late Than Single," is introduced as "Goikha who finds happiness anywhere." As a KOICA volunteer, she visited Vientiane, Laos, three times during her school breaks in 2018 and 2019. Although she initially struggled with the unfamiliar language and unexpected situations, her passion grew so strong after her first visit that she began studying the Lao language. Feeling the warmth of a string bracelet tied around her wrist by a Laotian local wishing her happiness, and finding fulfillment through teaching elementary



• The second episode of the series features Yi Do, who, after participating in educational volunteer work in Laos as a KOICA volunteer, was so devoted to the experience that she began learning the Lao language. Now active as a geography instructor, she shares her firsthand experiences and insights from overseas volunteering with her students in the classroom.

and middle school students, she continued nurturing her connection with Laos while communicating with the world in five languages. Now working as a geography instructor, Yi Do shares in the series video, "I want to be someone who broadens my students' perspectives by sharing the stories of the world I've experienced."

Shim Jae-hwa, a KOICA senior volunteer, former journalist, and author of "Mingalaba: A New Challenge for a Seventy-Year-Old Youth," is introduced as "Goikha who enjoys challenges." He participated in overseas volunteer work in Myanmar in 2014 at the age of 71 and in Uzbekistan in 2024 at the age of 81, making him the oldest volunteer in each cohort. To teach IT in Myanmar, his first overseas posting, he challenged himself to earn certifications in Excel, PowerPoint, and Photoshop—and, after passing them all, went on to teach both IT and Korean at the University of Computer Studies in Mandalay. In Uzbekistan, he was in charge of IT education as well. Despite concerns from those around him—"Can he keep up with younger people's pace? Can he manage life in a challenging overseas environment?"—he fully demonstrated the spirit of challenge he had built during his time as a journalist. Even after retirement, he has never stopped learning, saying that connecting with different generations and diverse worlds through the knowledge he has cultivated is one of his greatest joys in life.

The campaign series video also features the stories of Jang Mi-ji, CEO of Ameality, a social enterprise and global-local culinary education brand, introduced as "Goikha who solves problems," and Lee Seung-jae, introduced as "Goikha who discovers dreams," who is now an activist with the international NGO Good Neighbors International after serving as a member of KOICA's Global Supporters WeKO 5th cohort, each creating change in the world in their own way.

Alongside the video of the five Goikhas, clips submitted by general participants—certifying themselves as Goikhas through selfies and self-cam footage—were combined to create the final video. Through this collaborative production between KOICA and the public (Goikhas), titled 'KOICA, It's My Pleasure,' KOICA aims to spread the message, "Let's experience the joy of changing the world in our own most authentic way," expecting all Goikhas across the nation to feel a deeper sense of pride, confidence, and joy as citizens of Korea.

The KOICA branding campaign 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure,' now in its second year, has entered its final stage with the release of the concluding video on December 5 last year, but KOICA plans to continue discovering more "Goikhas' stories" from everyday people and sharing their tales. Since consistency is vital to building a brand, anticipation builds for how KOICA will evolve and advance its "Goikha" campaign next year. A hint lies in model Jung Hyuk's words appearing in the cookie of this year's final campaign video: "Shall we do it together? Shall we?"





• KOICA presented its 2025 brand campaign, "Goikha, It's My Pleasure." Through a series of videos, the campaign shows how everyone can change the world in their own way. Featured in the videos are Jang Mi-ji (top), CEO of the social enterprise Ameality, and Lee Seung-jae (bottom), a former KOICA Global Supporter (WeKO 5th) and current NGO activist.

'Goikha, It's My Pleasure,' the 2025 KOICA branding campaign
Scan the QR code to learn more about our five Goikhas.



• Participants of the KOICA Global Supporters WeKO 7th Cohort Achievement Sharing Ceremony, "Goikha Cine with WeKO," held on December 5 last year at Lotte Cinema in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do, are seated in the auditorium taking a group commemorative photo.

"Goikha" brand film premiere & KOICA Global Supporters WeKO 7th cohort achievement-sharing ceremony

Goikha and WeKO 7th cohort meet! "Goikha Cine with WeKO"

On December 5, 2025, a very special event was held at Lotte Cinema Hall 1 in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do, under the title "Goikha Cine with WeKO." The event served both as the achievement-sharing ceremony for the KOICA Global Supporters "WeKO" 7th cohort, who had been active for five months since their launch ceremony in August last year, and as a gathering to share the final outcomes of KOICA's 2025 brand campaign, 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure,' carried out under the slogan "Grow as you are, Cooperate as we are." "Goikha" is a fictional character from KOICA's brand campaign, launched in 2024, representing "all of our citizens." Since the WeKO 7th cohort, who promoted KOICA's development cooperation projects and produced creative content by reporting from field sites in partner countries, are also considered Goikha, their worldviews are unified into one. Let's step into the scene where the WeKO 7th cohort meets the protagonists, "Goikhas," from the brand campaign video, "Goikha Cine with WeKO."

WeKO 7th cohort, Goikha changing the world in my own way!

The lobby of Pangyo Lotte Cinema was bustling with four Goikhas, WeKO 7th cohort members, their guests, and KOICA staff. Attendees of the "Goikha Cine with WeKO" event entered the theater holding popcorn and drinks, just as if they were going to watch a real movie.



• The WeKO 7th cohort, who launched in August last year and carried out a five-month KOICA development cooperation promotion project, are enjoying the event by waving KOICA's communication character "PeKO" cheering sticks.

The theater lobby also displayed promotional content created by the WeKO 7th cohort, including an ODA board game, PeKO photo cards, and reverse-tribute event prizes. The event was divided into two main parts—the "Goikha" brand film premiere and the WeKO 7th cohort achievement-sharing ceremony—with global WeKOs from 42 countries joining online, adding further significance to the occasion.

The first part, the brand film premiere, began with social studies star lecturer Yi Do, who appears in KOICA's 2025 brand campaign film 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure,' as she took the stage to deliver a talk on the theme "Be myself."

After the talk, a "Brand Film Guest Visit" talk show followed. Lee Seung-jae, who became an NGO activist after serving in the WeKO 5th cohort; Shim Jae-hwa, a KOICA Senior Volunteer known for his spirit of challenge; Jang Mi-ji, who turned her experience in Honduras into a social enterprise; and Yi Do, who had just finished her talk, took the stage and shared vivid stories with the WeKO 7th cohort about how their self-development led to development cooperation.

Shim Jae-hwa, who said that "dreams" were the driving force that made overseas volunteering possible, shared a new dream of challenging himself as a Korean language teacher abroad and urged the audience to "dream freely and challenge freely." Lee Seung-jae, in his role as an NGO activist, said, "I believe that thinking about how to realize ODA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in everyday life is the first step toward helping neighbors in need on the other side of the globe," leaving words that truly reflected his identity as an activist.

At this event, the final video 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure', about one minute and 30 seconds long, was unveiled for the first time, featuring the stories of five GOIKHAs, interviews with the WeKO 7th cohort, and 1,165 comments from citizens who participated in the "I'm a GOIKHA" event. The closing line of the video—that all of us, each developing ourselves and practicing development cooperation in our own way, are the Goikhas changing the world—left a strong impression.



• Social studies star lecturer Yi Do, one of the spokespersons of KOICA's 2025 brand campaign, delivered a talk on the theme "Be myself." YIDO said, "Through my KOICA volunteer service, I realized that I am someone who can be happy no matter what situation I am in."



• The "Brand Film GV" session with stars from the film 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure.' (From left in the photo) Star lecturer Yi Do, NGO activist Lee Seung-jae, social enterprise CEO Jang Mi-ji, and KOICA Senior Volunteer Shim Jae-hwa shared vivid personal stories of how self-development led to development cooperation.

Beyond proposals into reality, beyond ideas into action!

The second part of the event was a session to share the achievements of the WeKO 7th cohort, who started from their own strengths, interests, and experiences and effectively interpreted and expressed development cooperation in their own unique ways. The WeKO 7th cohort, who successfully carried out a journey in which their individuality led to self-development and their personal growth expanded into development cooperation in their own ways, cheered enthusiastically each time their promotional content appeared on screen. While carrying out monthly promotional missions and completing team missions, the WeKO 7th cohort spent their five-month journey more passionately than anyone else, going beyond simply coming up with creative ideas to actually executing projects and producing highly polished final results.

As a result, they produced and uploaded a total of 2,767 pieces of content, achieved 52.39 million total content impressions, and generated 21.07 million content interactions, contributing significantly to raising public awareness of and interest in KOICA and development cooperation. In the team mission for domestic supporters, with a total of 11 teams participating, the team "Ocknamjeong" won the grand prize for creating an online campaign themed "The Magical Development Cooperation You Create." Their piece, which follows a contributor from Mongolia on a journey to discover the "magic circle" and uncover the value of KOICA and ODA along the way, earned top marks for its distinctive concept and high production quality.

The excellence award went to the team "AKO," which created an audio documentary following a day in the life of local women and youth in Ghana under the theme "KOICA Immersive Audio Experience Project." In addition to the team mission awards, individual awards were presented separately for domestic and global supporters. The grand prize in the individual category for global supporters went to Luana from Paraguay, while Jeon Ba-da received the top honor among domestic supporters.

Attendees expressed gratitude for the everyday changes created by shared concerns and deeply empathized with the necessity and importance of development cooperation in moving the world in a better direction.

"In the field of development cooperation, where on-site experience is crucial, it was so meaningful to meet local beneficiaries whose lives have positively changed through KOICA ODA," WeKO 7th cohort member Park Hyun-jin said. "I am truly grateful that, instead of just reading about these places in text, I could visit them in person and be part of the living reality there by meeting the people on the ground."

The event concluded with remarks by Kim Dong-ho, vice president of the Office of Strategy and Management at KOICA. In his closing speech, he warmly praised the participants, saying, "The achievements you, the WeKO 7th cohort, have created today are not just a simple record of five months, but a truly valuable outcome born when your hearts connected with the world. Your perspectives, experiences, creativity, and passion will be the force that opens up new possibilities for development cooperation." KOICA plans to continue discovering young people's creative ideas around the world, promoting development cooperation in diverse ways, and expanding a culture of participation and awareness through its brand campaigns.



• The WeKO 7th cohort expressed regret, saying, "The five-month journey seemed to pass in the blink of an eye," and pledged to continue enthusiastically supporting KOICA and its development cooperation projects going forward.

Mini Interview

WeKO 7th Cohort Team Mission Grand Prize winners: Kim Ok-bi, Kim Nam-hee, and Lee Jeong-bin of the team "Ocknamjeong"

"Magical development cooperation expressed through the campaign"



• The domestic supporter teams Ocknamjeong, AKO, and Wish World, which won awards in the team mission category, are taking a commemorative photo with Kim Dong-ho, vice president of the Office of Strategy and Management.

Q What kind of team is Ocknamjeong?

We are a team of three: Kim Ok-bi and Kim Nam-hee, who have a strong interest in marketing, and Lee Jeong-bin, who hopes to build a career in development cooperation. Together, we generate diverse ideas through hands-on work and trial and error. As you may have noticed, our team name, "Ocknamjeong," is formed by taking one character from each of our names. Even before joining the WeKO 7th cohort, we had already worked together in a social enterprise startup club and built strong teamwork.

Q What kind of project did you carry out?

We ran an online campaign themed "Using the Magic Circle, The Magical Development Cooperation You Create." We took KOICA's development cooperation stories, which create magical changes in beneficiary countries, and creatively presented them in a fun way using the concept of a "graduate student," through reels and mock-documentary–style videos. We wanted to explain to our peers, in a simple and fun way, that KOICA's work "creates big changes in someone's life," so we used the expression "graduate student," a term widely consumed through memes and online content. To sustain engagement, we designed the campaign based on marketing funnel theory, a framework that analyzes and structures the customer journey from brand awareness to purchase and repeat purchase.

Q Could you share your feelings on winning the Team Mission Grand Prize?

It was completely unexpected, so we felt a bit dazed, but also very grateful and happy. During the campaign, our ideas went through many changes, and we faced a lot of trial and error. Whenever Ocknamjeong wobbled, it was thanks to KOICA's PR team and the people around us who firmly supported and guided us that we were able to win the Team Mission Grand Prize.

Q What was the most memorable moment during your WeKO 7th cohort activities?

The most memorable part was going to Mongolia to carry out the campaign. Hearing directly from beneficiaries at each project site, in particular, made us confident that expressing "KOICA's projects are magic" in our campaign was the right way to frame it. We also deeply felt that development cooperation is not only about helping overseas beneficiaries, but also about supporting Korean companies' overseas expansion and, in turn, contributing to Korea's future competitiveness. K

July 2025



28 Health Centers in Uganda Renovated by KOICA in Collaboration with WHO

On July 4, 2025, KOICA held a completion ceremony for the renovation of 28 health centers in the Iganga District of the Busoga region in eastern Uganda. This marks the final phase of the "Health System Strengthening Project to Improve Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, and Adolescent Health Services in the Busoga Region of Eastern Uganda," which KOICA has been implementing in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ugandan Ministry of Health since 2020. KOICA and WHO renovated 28 health centers in the region. They also supplied medical equipment, established a cold chain system to maintain the quality of vaccines and medicines, and improved the medical environment by securing clean water through wells and rainwater storage systems. Ambulances were deployed and an operations committee was established, creating an emergency transport system. Practical training on maternal and neonatal care and emergency treatment was provided to over 160 healthcare workers, while more than 2,400 adolescents and 680 teachers received education on sexual, reproductive, and health topics.



2025 KOICA Public Data and AI Utilization Challenge Awards Ceremony Held

On July 3, 2025, KOICA held the "2025 KOICA Public Data and AI Utilization Challenge" awards ceremony at the KOICA Development Cooperation History Museum in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. This year's challenge contest allowed participants to freely develop digital services using KOICA's public data and AI and propose data-driven solutions. The Grand Prize went to the Green Giraffe team, which presented "ODA Quest," a customized platform idea that uses a large language model (LLM) to simulate ODA(official development assistance) project planning process step by step.
The Excellence Awards went to the team AUCIEL, which proposed "GROW," a platform idea that utilizes KOICA overseas volunteer experience data to connect global competency analysis with career development, and to the team AI4D, which proposed the "GenAI Chatbot" idea to support private companies wishing to participate in KOICA's Inclusive Business Solution (IBS) and Creative Technology Solution (CTS) partner collaboration programs by assisting them in preparing customized proposals.



First Successful Candidates Pass Uzbekistan's National Technical Qualification Exam

On June 26, 2025, the first successful candidates passed Uzbekistan's national technical qualification exam, which was introduced for the first time with support from the Korean government. Every year, about 500,000 young people enter the labor market in Uzbekistan. In response, KOICA has worked with Uzbekistan's Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction to establish a national technical qualification examination system. In the first exam held in May, about 200 candidates took tests in automobile maintenance, welding, and electricity, and 30 passed.
On that day, Dilmuradov Lazizbek, a graduate of the Shakhrisabz Vocational Training Center, received the very first certificate, taking a step closer to realizing his dream of becoming an electrical technician. This project is part of KOICA's 2020-2026 "Establishment of Urgench Vocational Training Center and Support for Strengthening the Vocational Training System in Uzbekistan." KOICA is establishing its fifth vocational training center in Uzbekistan, and the local government has shown great interest, with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev personally visiting the site. KOICA also plans to establish a teacher training center in Tashkent to systematically enhance the expertise and teaching capabilities of vocational training instructors.



"No More Flood Disasters" - Support for Flood Forecasting and Warning System in Indonesia

On June 25, 2025, KOICA held a ceremony at the Citarum River Basin Management Office in Bandung, Indonesia, to mark the completion of the second phase of the "Project for Flood Forecasting and Warning System in the Citarum River Basin," successfully concluding 12 years of work. The Citarum River supplies 80% of Jakarta's domestic water and is relied upon by 25 million people in the metropolitan area, but frequent flooding has occurred due to topography, urbanization, and deforestation. To address this, KOICA has supported the Indonesian government since 2014 in proactively responding to floods. In the first phase, a real-time flood forecasting and warning system was established in the upper reaches of the basin, and in the second phase, the system was expanded to cover the entire basin, including the downstream areas. Through this, 85 monitoring and warning devices—including automatic rain gauges and water level recorders—were installed, and an integrated control center was operated, enabling the collection, analysis, and visualization of real-time hydrological information. In addition, training and workshops on system operation were conducted for local officials and technicians, and evacuation drills were held for residents.

August 2025



Convenience Store for People with Disabilities Opens at KOICA Headquarters

A special convenience store has opened at KOICA headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. On July 25, 2025, KOICA launched the 4th convenience store for people with disabilities, named 'CU KOICA Store.' The convenience store for people with disabilities is a project promoted through a tripartite agreement among the Korea Disabled People's Development Institute, the Ministry of Health and Welfare and BGF Retail to support the independence of people with severe disabilities and create stable jobs within the local community. The store has a total of five employees with various types of disabilities. In particular, a barrier-free design has been applied to ensure that everyone can access it comfortably. The aisles have been widened to allow easy movement of wheelchairs and strollers, the shelves have been installed below 1,200 mm, and call bells have been provided in hard-to-reach places to enhance convenience.



KDRT Participates in the 2025 ASEAN Disaster Response Exercise

The Korea Disaster Relief Team (KDRT) participated in the 'ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise 2025 (ARDEX*-25)' held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from July 22 to 24. This exercise, organized by the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), is the largest international disaster response simulation exercise in Asia and is hosted biennially by ASEAN member states. This is the first time that KDRT has been invited to participate in this training. About 200 on-site personnel, including search and rescue teams and medical staff from ASEAN member countries and partner nations, were deployed to Cambodia to conduct a simulated response assuming major disasters such as floods, typhoons, and building collapses. Through this exercise, KDRT shared Korea's advanced disaster response capabilities and on-site command system with ASEAN countries and assessed the effectiveness of international cooperation.



Launch Briefing Session for the 5th KOICA Citizen Participation Innovation Team Held

The 5th Citizen Participation Innovation Team held its launch briefing session at KOICA headquarters on July 11, 2025, and has begun full-scale activities. The Citizen Participation Innovation Team is KOICA's flagship citizen participation program, designed to listen to and incorporate the public's voices into institutional innovation and management. Since its inception in 2020, the program is now in its 5th term. This year, a new ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) perspective was introduced, with a total of 30 members selected—10 from each field. In the environmental sector, participants engage in proposal activities focusing on climate change response, while the social sector addresses issues such as education, healthcare, and gender equality, and the governance sector emphasizes transparency and accountability. The Innovation Team will be active for about 18 months until 2026, participating in KOICA's strategy and policy decision-making processes and directly engaging in KOICA's ESG field activities. Through this activity, KOICA plans to promote more effective and responsible international development cooperation centered on the three pillars of ESG.



KOICA Citizen Participation Supporters WeKO 7th Launched

Young people united through KOICA embarked on a journey, carrying shining idea tickets to realize the motto 'Grow as you are, Cooperate as we are.' On August 8, 2025, a launch ceremony for the Global Supporters 'WeKO' 7th cohort, with 100 participants from 42 countries (40 domestic supporters and 60 global supporters), was held at KOICA headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do, Korea. The launch ceremony was held under the theme 'The Beginning of a Journey to Find Myself,' with the concept of boarding flight 'K01 CA' of the fictional airline 'Fly WeKO' and embarking on a journey. The 7th WeKO will be active for about five months, from August to December 2025, participating in activities both online and offline. This cohort operates as "Growth-Oriented Supporters," who plan and execute individual ODA promotional ideas. Domestic supporters focus on promotion and marketing projects, while global supporters handle on-site overseas reporting. The activities of the WeKO 7th cohort can be followed on the official WeKO Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok channels.

September 2025



‘PeKO’ Wins an Award at the 2025 Korea Local Government Public Character Festival

KOICA’s institutional communication character, PeKO, advanced to the finals of the “2025 Korea Local Government Public Character Festival” and won the Event Innovation Award. In this competition, PeKO was selected as one of 12 award winners out of 33 characters from local governments and public institutions nationwide through public voting and expert evaluation. PeKO debuted in 2022 on KOICA’s official social media through card news and Instagram cartoons, and later released emoticons as stickers on Naver OGQ Market, amassing 25,000 downloads. Last year, PeKO established itself as a fandom-based character by winning the Excellence Award at the ‘Popup Store Awards’ for the ‘PeKO Peace Forest’ event. KOICA’s Instagram, Facebook, and blog feature PeKO’s lively and creative monthly mobile wallpapers, memes, and more content.



Seongnam Public Institutions Unite Through Data in the Age of AI

The “2025 Seongnam Public Institutions Joint Public Data Briefing Session” was held Sept. 2, 2025, at COCIETY TOWN HALL near Pangyo Station in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. The event was hosted by KOICA and jointly organized by the Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency, the Korea Petroleum Quality & Distribution Authority, the Korea Employment Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Academy of Korean Studies. This event was the first joint public data briefing in the Seongnam region, held to introduce the specialized data of five public institutions and to explore ways to promote the use of public data in the private sector. KOICA introduced the status of data utilization in the development cooperation sector and award-winning cases from the Public Data Utilization Contest, while the Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency presented the “Social Enterprise Portal” and the Korea Petroleum Quality & Distribution Authority showcased 38 types of data and collaboration cases. Sessions for presentations and consultations by external experts were also arranged. Introduced were the MSDS automatic recognition service by Shin Ji-hyun, who won the Grand Prize at the 4th Ministry of Employment and Labor Public Data Utilization Contest; the private-sector utilization of industrial data by Seo Jin-sook, director at the Korea Industry Intelligence Association; and the Kanana service case by Kakao’s Principal Researcher Jung Hyung-wook. The nine institutions of the Seongnam City Public Institution Council agreed to establish a data cooperation system and promote the release of integrated public data within this year.



Removal of Explosive Remnants from a 400,000㎡ Area in DR Congo

On Aug. 27, 2025, the KOICA DR Congo Office held a closing report meeting for the “Sustainable Mine Action in Support of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Communities Affected by Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo”, conducted jointly with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) under the UN Peacekeeping Department. Despite its abundant resources, the DR Congo’s development has been hindered by explosives planted during civil wars and rebel activities. KOICA removed explosives from about 190,000 square meters of land during the first project from 2018 to 2020. The second project was launched in 2022 to continue clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW), along with manpower training, explosive education, community awareness-raising, and strategic meetings with the National Mine Action Center. Approximately 450 explosive remnants, 9,248 rounds of small arms ammunition, and 36 anti-personnel mines were removed from an area of about 400,000 square meters, and explosive risk education was provided to over 213,000 residents. Thanks to these efforts, the villages were revitalized, agriculture and livelihoods resumed, and residents regained hope for their return.



35th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations··· Chang Won-sam, KOICA President, Visits Mongolia

KOICA President Chang Won-sam visited Ulaanbaatar from Aug. 24 to 26, 2025, to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Korea-Mongolia diplomatic relations and the 30th anniversary of the KOICA Mongolia Office. During the visit, he discussed cooperation measures and inspected project sites. On Aug. 25, he met with Mongolian Prime Minister Gombojavyn Zandanshatar and explained that the Korean government is supporting Mongolia’s ‘VISION 2050’ and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by focusing on governance, urban development, transportation, and agriculture and livestock. In particular, Chang expressed support for Mongolia’s “Billion Tree Planting Campaign” and its bid to host the 2026 UNCCD COP17, and announced plans to conduct a survey of climate change-related projects in the second half of the year. On the same day, Chang signed a record of discussion with Javkhlan Bold, Mongolia’s Minister of Finance, for the “Project for Advancement of Risk Management and Baggage Control of the Mongolian Customs General Administration (2025-2028).” KOICA plans to use this visit as an opportunity to identify ODA needs aligned with Mongolia’s development strategy and to expand cooperation in sustainable development, as well as in the digital and green economy sectors.

October 2025



The 5th MIKTA Development Cooperation Institutions Network High-Level Meeting Held

The “5th MIKTA Development Cooperation Institutions Network High-Level Meeting,” organized by KOICA, was held on Oct. 1, 2025, at Lotte Hotel Seoul in Sogong-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul. Held under the theme “Strengthening MIKTA’s Role in an Era of Complex Crises: Exploring Joint Cooperation Project Models,” the meeting brought together five middle-power countries—Korea, Mexico, Indonesia, Türkiye, and Australia—to discuss ways to strengthen multilateral cooperation and explore joint project models. The participating countries agreed that “trilateral cooperation,” which combines each nation’s strengths, could serve as a distinctive model of collaboration for MIKTA. In particular, KOICA’s ongoing “Project for Quality Maternal and Newborn Health Services” in Kajiado County, Kenya, was highlighted as a successful case, with Türkiye’s Development Cooperation Agency (TİKA) providing additional support through solar power installations.



East Africa’s First 6-Country Skills Exchange Event Held

KOICA hosted the “East African Skills Exchange Event” on Oct. 1-2, 2025, at the Ntinda Vocational Training Institute in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. This exchange event was organized to bring together skilled professionals from six countries—Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania—where KOICA operates vocational training projects, to share knowledge and experiences and to establish a model for interregional educational cooperation. This is KOICA’s first skills exchange event, expanding its leadership beyond country-specific support to the entire East African region. In the main program, the student skills competition, the six national teams used electrical, welding, and plumbing techniques to build eco-friendly small “eco-houses.” The Ugandan team received the highest scores for quality and collaboration en route to winning the grand prize.
KOICA also organized a seminar to share experiences and discuss improvements in vocational training programs. About 100 participants, including representatives from KOICA offices in six countries, industry experts, and other donor countries, gathered to share cases and explore potential cooperation.



Co-hosting the 'AI for Climate Action Forum 2025' in Tanzania

KOICA held the ‘AI for Climate Action Forum 2025’ on Oct. 8-9, 2025, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, together with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat and the Tanzanian government. This forum was the first AI-themed international event held in Africa, organized to leverage AI technology for climate change responses in least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). The forum consisted of seven sessions in total. In Session 1, Cha Sang-hoon, CEO of the Korean startup WI.Plat, supported by KOICA’s innovative technology program (CTS), introduced the AI leak detection system called “NELLO,” drawing significant attention.
In the latter part of the forum, the ‘AI for Climate Action Award 2025’ ceremony was held. A total of 634 solutions from around the world were submitted, and the winning solution was ‘SAFIR (Smart AI-based Farming & Irrigation for Resilience)’ by the team from the Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-Water). SAFIR is an AI-based agricultural solution that analyzes real-time weather and soil data to provide farmers with customized guidance.
During the forum, KOICA operated a promotional booth to introduce Korea’s AI-based ODA projects and conducted a survey. Of the respondents, 93.4% evaluated Korea’s AI technology very positively, and the areas with the highest demand were identified as “agricultural technology” and “water management.”



Awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for ‘Innovative Procurement’ at the 5th Procurement Day Ceremony

KOICA received the Prime Minister’s Award in the category of ‘Contribution to Public Procurement of Innovative Products’ at the 5th Procurement Day Ceremony held on Sept. 29, 2025, at the Seoul Trade Exhibition & Convention (SETEC). Since 2010, KOICA has identified domestic innovative technologies and applied them to address social and economic challenges in developing countries, actively supporting the global expansion of Korean companies through these initiatives. In 2022, KOICA launched the ‘Shared Growth Team’ to establish a comprehensive support system encompassing the discovery and incubation of innovative companies, overseas demonstration linked to ODA, and collaboration with relevant organizations. In the past five years, KOICA has distributed 15 innovative products to 48 countries, achieving approximately 8 million dollars in exports. This year, it is conducting overseas demonstrations of outstanding innovative products from domestic small and medium-sized enterprises at ODA project sites in eight countries, including Mongolia and Algeria. KOICA is also promoting innovative product demonstration projects in non-capital regions of Korea, such as Yeongwol in Gangwon-do, contributing to regional economic revitalization and fostering win-win outcomes both domestically and internationally.

November 2025



2025 KOICA Brand Campaign: 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure' launched

KOICA has launched its second official branding campaign, 'GOIKHA, It's My Pleasure,' following last year. Last year's motto, 'Thank you, Goikha,' conveyed the message that the people are the main force behind ODA, and this year's campaign further expresses that ODA is the source of joy and pride for the people.

The campaign runs until December, featuring online and offline advertisements, a series of videos highlighting five 'Goikha(KOICA)' individuals active in various fields, and a public participation event.

The first teaser video released by KOICA on its official social media channels garnered over 210,000 views in just over a week, receiving enthusiastic attention. Subsequently, a series of brand films was released, featuring five representative 'Goikha' individuals active in various fields, including model Jung Hyuk, former WFK volunteer turned star instructor Yi Do, an 80-year-old senior volunteer, a social entrepreneur, and an NGO activist among KOICA supporters, who demonstrate how they change the world in their own unique ways. If you want to share a 'Goikha moment' that connects 'the most authentic self-development' to 'the most authentic development cooperation,' anyone can participate in the event through the QR code in the image below or via the following link.



'2025 KOICA Climate AI Forum' Held

Amid climate change and technological innovation emerging as key agendas in the international community, KOICA held the '2025 KOICA Climate AI Forum' at the Plaza Hotel in Seoul on November 24, 2025. The event was attended by Chang Won-sam, KOICA President, and about 200 domestic and international experts from GGGI, UNEP, CTCN, and other organizations, who discussed global climate action and the use of AI in development cooperation.

In the first part, KOICA introduced the first-year achievements of the 'AI4ClimateAction' jointly promoted with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Judges of the 'AICA Awards,' an international AI climate technology competition for developing countries, and the winning team from Korea's Integrated Watershed Management Institute shared their experiences from the competition. In the second part, experts from various fields delivered presentations and engaged in discussions on the topics of 'The Future of AI Technology for Climate Action' and 'K-AI for All: Korea's Path to Becoming a Top Three AI Powerhouse.' Particularly attention was drawn to various ways and ideas on how ODA can contribute, including AI infrastructure development and capacity building in developing countries, to help Korea become the AI capital of the Asia-Pacific region.



KOICA Officially Launches 'AI Committee'… Establishes 'Integrated AI Strategy'

KOICA is accelerating the advancement of AX (AI Transformation) at the institutional level by establishing an AI promotion organization within the agency, in line with the Korean government's 'AI Grand Transformation' strategy, and by intensifying efforts to strengthen AI utilization capabilities among its employees. On October 29, 2025, KOICA held the launch ceremony of the 'AI Committee' at its headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do, which will serve as the organization's AI control tower. At the first meeting, the 'KOICA Mid- to Long-Term AI Strategy' was reviewed.

The KOICA mid- to long-term AI strategy includes a plan to broadly apply the 'AI for All' strategy to K-ODA. KOICA has established four core values in its AI strategy: building a foundation for a win-win AI transformation, contributing to Korean-style AI globally, strengthening AI capabilities in developing countries, and pioneering advanced AX for work efficiency. The agency plans to implement this strategy by creating a dedicated AI organization and by appointing a Chief AI Officer (CAIO). KOICA is expanding practical AI capacity-building and participatory innovation programs, hosting AI ideathon competitions to generate ideas for improving actual work processes, and introducing an AX facilitator system to promote a culture of voluntary participation in AI transformation.



Hosting "K-Volunteer Impact Weeks"

KOICA is operating "K-Volunteer Impact Weeks" under the theme of overseas volunteering until December 2025 by conducting public participation events. On November 7-8, at Resone Hongdae in Seoul, the regular briefing session for the second half of the 2025 overseas volunteer group was held under the concept of "Kostaurant - Volunteer's Table." Through various programs such as consulting, hands-on experiences, and tasting, it attracted high interest from the youth demographic. On the 7th, at the KOICA Global Human Resources Education Center in Seoul, a Return Program performance-sharing was held where six teams presented their results, and the Veranda team, which showcased a startup idea using pottery, won the grand prize. On the 14th, at KOICA headquarters in Seongnam, the regular consultative meeting of the implementing agencies of the World Friends Korea (WFK) volunteer group was held, where eight organizations discussed medium- to long-term operational directions. On the 15th, a performance-sharing meeting titled "From KOICA to the World" was held at the KOICA Global Human Resources Education Center in Seoul, attended by returned volunteers and WFK scholarship holders.

December 2025



The 20th Korea Overseas Volunteer Awards Ceremony Held

Hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organized by KOICA and the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC), the 20th Korea Overseas Volunteer Awards Ceremony was held on December 5, 2025, at KOICA headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. The Presidential Citation was awarded to Sister Choi Kyoung-ok of the Caritas Sisters of Jesus, who established and operated an educational institution in Papua New Guinea for over 21 years, developing it into a model school. The Prime Minister's Commendations were awarded to Missionary Jang Se-gyun of the Bethany Exodus Mission, who has carried out integrated support activities in education, healthcare, and women's rights in Kenya for over 24 years, and to Dr. Park Jun-beom, director of Nanuri Medical Center, who has engaged in various medical services in Rwanda for more than nine years. Dr. Park also received the Lee Tae-seok Award. In addition, KOICA overseas volunteers Lee Myung-hee and Lee Woon-sook were honored with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Commendation. The KOICA President's Commendation went to KOICA volunteer Shin Joo-ho and World Friends KOICA advisor Choi Seung-guk, while the KCOC President's Commendation was awarded to Ha Ok-sun, head of Walk Together's Ethiopia Office, and international relief worker Park Hye-jung.



WeKO Achievement Sharing Event Held

On December 5, 2025, KOICA held an achievement sharing event titled "Goikha Cine with WeKO" at Lotte Cinema Pangyo in Seongnam, marking the conclusion of the five-month activities of the 7th cohort of its global supporters group, WeKO. As a "growth-oriented supporters group," the 7th cohort of WeKO independently planned and developed promotional ideas for ODA. They produced a total of 2,767 pieces of content, which reached 52.39 million views and generated 21.07 million engagements. In the first part of the event, participants looked back on KOICA's branding campaign 'Goikha, It's My Pleasure,' which was planned by KOICA and joined by WeKO members. The final campaign video—completed with stories from five representative "Goikhas" along with messages and participation from the public—was unveiled for the first time. The representative Goikhas, Yi Do, Shim Jae-hwa, Jang Mi-ji, and Lee Seung-jae, then took the stage for a guest visit session, sharing behind-the-scenes stories from the filming as well as their thoughts on growth and development cooperation. In the second part of the event, participants joined together in singing "ODA Song," produced by members of WeKO's 5th and 6th cohorts, and watched the activity record video "WeKOmentary" to reflect on their journey. During the awards ceremony, winners were selected in the domestic individual and team categories, as well as the global individual category, for the Grand, Excellence, and Merit Awards. The Grand Prize in the domestic individual category went to Jeon Ba-da (Leskoair), the team category to Team Oknamjeong, and the global individual category to Luana Priscila Hartmann da Silva from Paraguay.



Opening Paths to Learning and Self-Reliance in Iraq

KOICA is strengthening integrated education for refugees and youth employment support in Iraq, where conflict damage is severe, contributing to Middle East stabilization. On November 17, 2025, KOICA celebrated the completion of the renovation of the Zaytun Library—built by the Korean Zaytun Unit in 2008—in Erbil City, Erbil Governorate, upgrading its outdated facilities into a renewed educational and cultural space for local residents.

On November 19, a completion ceremony was held for a vocational training project for vulnerable youth at the Nineveh Agricultural High School in Mosul, Nineveh Governorate in northern Iraq. Mosul's educational infrastructure collapsed after the city was occupied in 2014 by the extremist armed group IS. KOICA, in collaboration with UNESCO, has supported vocational teacher capacity building, curriculum improvement, and the establishment of a career development center. As a result, 306 teachers received training, 1,957 youth and students acquired locally demanded skills such as solar installation, agricultural techniques, and furniture making, and 78 entrepreneurship cases emerged.



'Love in Development' Season 2 Released

KOICA's romantic web drama 'Love in Development' has returned with Season 2, following the huge success of Season 1, which used a blind date concept. Season 1 achieved 1.75 million views in just one week after its release and won the Winner Award at the 2024 A.N.D Award.

Season 2, released in four episodes on KOICA's YouTube channel 'LetsKO (www.youtube.com/@Lets_KO)', features an intriguing story involving the female protagonist Ikho, a KOICA staff member; Ikha, an IT developer she's flirting with; and the new second male lead Oh Daeik, her colleague at KOICA. Going beyond a simple romance story, it effectively portrays the process of characters maturing and developing their relationships through relatable elements like timing issues, misunderstandings, and jealousy that commonly occur in relationship dynamics. In addition, it has been praised for cleverly presenting "development" in IT software and "development cooperation," such as ODA projects, in a friendly way, with the aim of conveying KOICA's activities to the public more easily.

Realizing ‘AI for All’ through Development Cooperation: Leading the Way in Addressing the Climate Crisis

Greetings, readers. The year 2025 has been an eventful one, perhaps more so than any other. The rise of nationalism has led to a decrease in Official Development Assistance (ODA) from major donor countries, while the impact of climate change has also intensified. At the same time, the massive wave of AI transformation has fundamentally changed our society, bringing new opportunities and challenges.

In 2026, climate change and the AI transformation will undoubtedly remain the most significant social forces of change. Against this backdrop, KOICA is actively exploring ways in which AI can contribute to climate change mitigation and drive positive change. Specifically, KOICA launched the AI for Climate Action initiative in 2024 in collaboration with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to bridge the climate response gap between developed and developing countries, strengthening technological cooperation with the international community. Additionally, in 2025, KOICA co-hosted the AI for Climate Action Award, a climate-focused AI technology competition in partnership with UNFCCC, leading the discourse on AI for a sustainable future. In this process, KOICA was able to highlight the efforts of Korean startups solving problems on the ground in developing countries through innovative technology.

During the UN General Assembly and APEC Summit in 2025, the Korean government set forth a vision for Korea to leap forward as one of the world’s top three AI powerhouses and the "AI capital of Asia". This vision promises not just technological development, but a commitment to creating a technological community where nations can grow together. In fulfilling this role, I am certain that KOICA can contribute in various ways.

We are excited to share with you MAGAZINE KOICA vol. 8, which details KOICA’s activities in navigating the climate crisis through innovative technologies. Additionally, we bring you updates from the International Development Partnership Week 2025, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2025.

KOICA will continue to work with diverse partners and the international community as Korea’s integrated platform for grants to tackle global challenges, including the climate crisis. We ask for your continued support and encouragement. Thank you.

President of KOICA

CHANG, Won Sam

KOICA



KOICA is a Better Tomorrow

KOICA, Korea’s representative agency for development cooperation, creates a world where everyone can dream of a happy future through inclusive and win-win partnerships, leaving no one behind, and implements developed-country-style ODA projects.

KOICA

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