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MAGAZINE

# KOICA

2026 VOL.9

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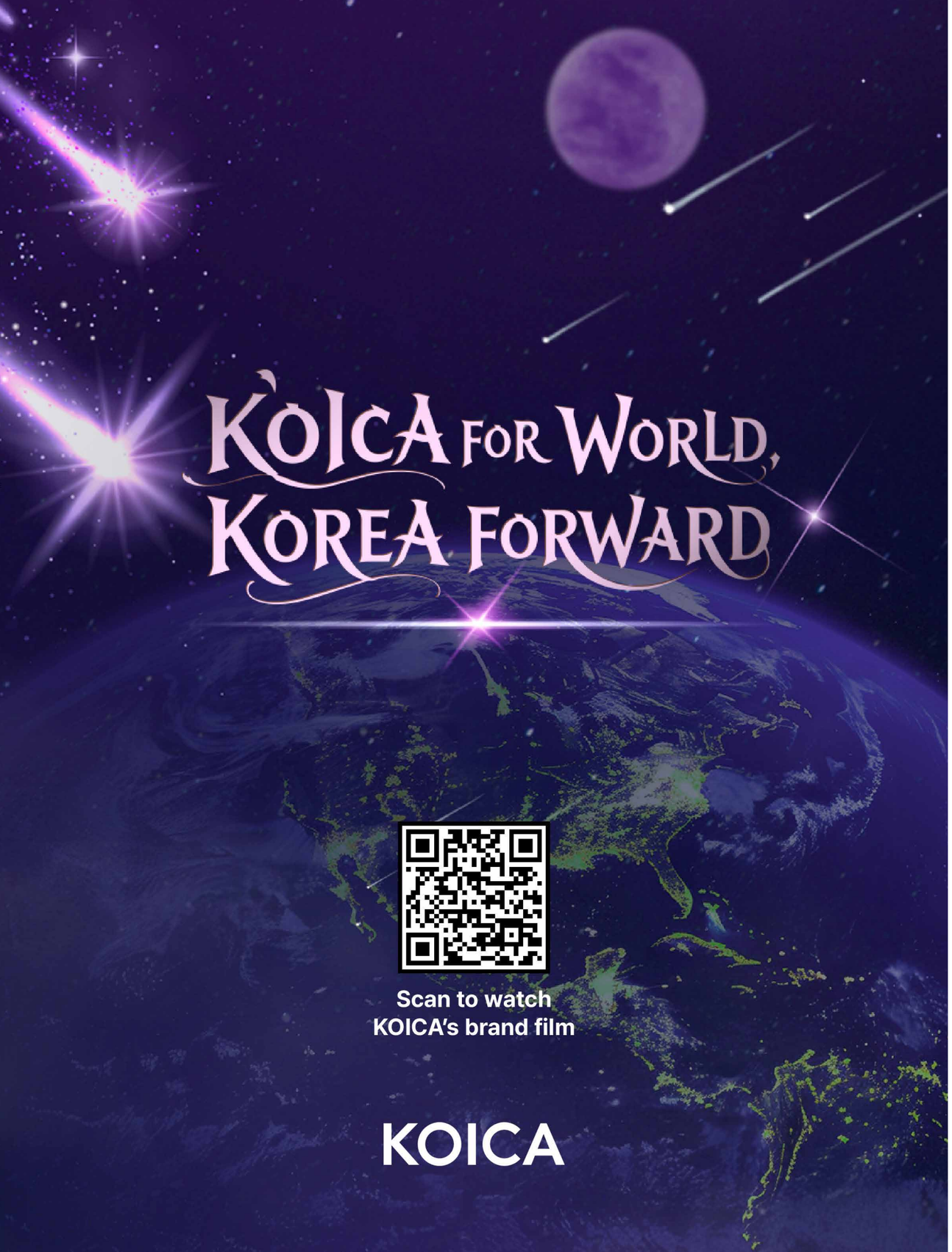



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'Meaning of Peace' Learned in Conflict Zones

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Your voice

# Tell MAGAZINE KOICA what's on your mind!

As someone interested in gender equality, I appreciate your focus on women's empowerment projects. However, I'd like to see more critical analysis of challenges and setbacks, not just successes.

The future of development cooperation is changing rapidly, and your magazine should lead these conversations. More forward-looking speculative pieces about 2030 and beyond would position KOICA as a thought leader.

Continued emphasis on human-centered stories, measurable impact, and practical solutions will help MAGAZINE KOICA remain informative, engaging, and inspiring for readers around the world.

I believe that one of the strongest impacts that KOICA could have is through the local voices. If we get more interviews from the beneficiaries of KOICA's projects in different countries, it will help spread the values and build trust.

Among development magazines, KOICA's is the most accessible to non-experts.

I appreciate the attention given to community impact. More beneficiary testimonials would strengthen the articles.

Amid current global challenges, focus more on projects that fight poverty alongside public health risks.

MAGAZINE KOICA is a brilliant window into international cooperation. I'd love to see a recurring segment that explicitly links each featured project to specific UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**We gladly welcome your feedback**
Let us know what you think of MAGAZINE KOICA VOL.9. We will listen to what you say and strive to improve MAGAZINE KOICA accordingly. Readers whose letters are published in VOL.10 will also receive a gift.

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



UNICEF warned that continued restrictions on girls' education in Afghanistan could lead to a shortage of female teachers and healthcare workers—key contributors to the country's recovery and long-term development.

Global trends in development cooperation

# Afghan girls' education gap puts the future on hold

### Afghanistan's restrictions on girls' education raise concerns over future shortage of skilled professionals

UNICEF has warned that restrictions on girls' education in Afghanistan could lead to long-term shortages of teachers and healthcare professionals. Since 2021, girls have been barred from attending secondary schools and higher education institutions, leaving more than 2.2 million girls out of school.

UNICEF projects that if these restrictions continue, Afghanistan will face a significant decline in the supply of female teachers and female healthcare workforce. This is particularly concerning because many women in Afghanistan prefer to receive medical care from female practitioners due to cultural norms. As a result, a shortage of female professionals could further limit access to essential healthcare services. UNICEF emphasized that investing in education and building human capital are fundamental to the country's recovery and long-term development. The organization also urged the international community to recognize the far-reaching impact of the education gap on Afghanistan's future workforce and public service system, while working together to identify effective ways to support girls' education.

### UNHCR appeals for USD 710.5 million to support 1.2 million Rohingya refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has appealed to the international community for USD 710.5 million in funding to support Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh. The appeal aims to assist approximately 1.2 million Rohingya refugees and members of the host communities, representing a 26 percent decrease from last year's funding appeal.

The Rohingya refugee crisis has persisted since 2017, following a military crackdown targeting the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State. At the time, around 750,000 people fled to Bangladesh, and an additional 150,000 have sought refuge there since 2024 due to the resurgence of conflict in Myanmar.

In 2025, nearly 900 people were reported dead or missing during dangerous sea crossings across the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, underscoring the worsening humanitarian situation.

Amid persistent global humanitarian funding shortages, UNHCR has called for sustained international support to maintain essential services, including food assistance, healthcare, and protection. The agency emphasized, "We must continue to stand by the Rohingya refugees and the communities hosting them until conditions allow for their safe, voluntary, and dignified return."

### WFP halves emergency food assistance in Syria amid funding shortfalls

The World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that it has reduced its emergency food assistance in Syria by nearly 50 percent, cutting the number of beneficiaries from 1.3 million to 650,000 due to severe funding shortages. WFP has also suspended its bread subsidy program, which had supported more than 300 bakeries across the country and provided affordable bread to approximately 4 million people in vulnerable communities. Food insecurity remains a critical challenge in Syria. An estimated 7.2 million people are currently experiencing food insecurity, including 1.6 million facing crisis-level hunger.

WFP explained that the reduction in assistance is a direct consequence of insufficient funding. The agency also warned that continued financial constraints could force it to scale back its operations from 14 governorates to just seven, further limiting access to life-saving assistance. WFP noted that recent reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) by major donors illustrate how declining international aid can quickly lead to cuts to food assistance and social safety nets. The agency emphasized that it urgently requires an additional USD 189 million to sustain its life-saving operations through the second half of 2026.

### 2025 ODA falls by 23.1%, sharpest annual decline on record

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), global Official Development Assistance (ODA) totaled USD 174.3 billion in 2025, representing a 23.1 percent decrease from the previous year—the steepest annual decline since ODA records began.

The downturn marks the second consecutive year of declining ODA, following a drop from USD 223.7 billion in 2023 to USD 212.1 billion in 2024. The OECD attributed the sharp decline primarily to reduced aid budgets among major donor countries.

The United States recorded the largest reduction, with its ODA falling to 56.9 percent of the previous year's level. Other major donors also reduced their aid contributions, including Germany (-17%), France (-11%), the United Kingdom (-11%), and Japan (-6%). As a result, Germany became the world's largest ODA donor in 2025, providing USD 29.1 billion, followed closely by the United States with USD 29 billion.

The OECD projected that global ODA will decline by an additional 5.8 percent in 2026. Bilateral aid to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Sub-Saharan Africa fell by 25.8 percent and 26.3 percent, respectively. The OECD emphasized that the international community must urgently address the changing landscape of donor leadership and the widening development financing gap resulting from shrinking international development assistance.

### From traditional donors to diverse partnerships: a new era in development cooperation

The global development cooperation landscape is undergoing a significant transformation as emerging middle powers expand their influence. According to the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), one of the key trends shaping development cooperation in 2026 is the growing use of "multi-alignment" by countries in the Global South. Multi-alignment refers to a strategy in which countries build partnerships with a wide range of partners based on their national interests, rather than relying on a single major power or geopolitical bloc. This approach is becoming increasingly prominent in international development cooperation.

Traditionally, major donors such as the United States, European countries, and Japan have led global development finance and policy agendas. However, emerging economies—including India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia—are playing a larger role by expanding investment, financing, and technical cooperation. As a result, South-South Cooperation (SSC), which promotes the exchange of knowledge, technology, and development experience among developing countries, is gaining greater importance.

Experts note that the international development cooperation system is shifting away from the traditional donor–recipient model and toward a more multipolar framework involving a broader range of actors. This transition is expected to further diversify both development financing and the ways in which countries cooperate to address global challenges.

### UNICEF expands emergency response to Ebola outbreak, strengthening child protection efforts

UNICEF has expanded its emergency health and protection response to address the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda. As of May 2026, a total of 598 suspected cases and 139 deaths had been reported across the two countries.

UNICEF is supplying vaccines and essential medical equipment, strengthening infection prevention and hygiene systems in schools and healthcare facilities, and conducting public awareness campaigns on disease prevention. The agency is also providing psychosocial support and child protection services to children and families affected by the outbreak. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). UNICEF warned that children and other vulnerable populations in areas affected by conflict and forced displacement face heightened risks of both Ebola infection and disruptions to education. The agency emphasized the urgent need for sustained international health and humanitarian assistance to contain the outbreak and protect vulnerable communities.

### Belgium pledges €30 Million in core funding to UNDP for inclusive development

Belgium has pledged €30 million in core funding to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through 2028. Unlike earmarked contributions, this flexible funding can be allocated where it is needed the most, enabling UNDP to respond rapidly to complex crises such as armed conflict, natural disasters, and forced displacement. UNDP plans to use the funding to advance a wide range of development initiatives, including reducing poverty and inequality, strengthening resilience to multiple crises, supporting climate action, and promoting gender equality.

A key priority will be building more inclusive support systems for vulnerable populations and communities directly affected by crises. By providing flexible core resources, Belgium's contribution is expected to enhance UNDP's ability to deliver timely and effective assistance in rapidly changing humanitarian and development contexts.

Bringing fragmented aid under one vision

# The future of development cooperation through the integrated platform for grant aid

Once-scattered development cooperation efforts and fragmented ODA are now being brought together under a single vision. It is a collaborative network connecting institution to institution, person to person, and the field to the future. Moving beyond the implementation of individual projects, KOICA is now advancing as an “integrated platform for grant aid” that shapes the strategic direction of Korea’s grant aid and brings together its collective results.



Interview with Lee Kyoo-ho, Director-General for Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

# “Moving past fragmented ODA, toward outcome-oriented, integrated aid”



Lee Kyoo-ho, Director-General for Development Cooperation, is an expert with extensive experience in international development cooperation policy and field operations and has played a key role in discussions on establishing KOICA’s integrated platform for grant aid.

Amid the deepening global polycrisis and shifting geopolitical environment, the policy landscape of international development cooperation is also being rapidly reshaped. As new challenges emerge—including the climate crisis, conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, and the reduction of development financing—changes are being demanded not only in the international community’s approach to development cooperation but also in its underlying institutions and governance structures. This trend is having a significant impact on Korea’s ODA system as well.

The most noteworthy recent development is the discussion on establishing a so-called “integrated platform for grant aid,” which aims to consolidate the grant aid implementation system around KOICA. In September 2025, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KOICA formed a Task Force (TF) and have been reviewing institutional improvement measures aimed at addressing inefficiencies caused by the fragmented implementation of grant aid projects and enhancing the strategic alignment and effectiveness of these initiatives. As a result, in December of the same year, the “Plan to Strengthen the Role of KOICA as the Integrated Platform for Grant Aid” was officially announced, marking the beginning of the full-scale implementation phase.

Over the years, Korea’s ODA has faced criticism for a lack of policy consistency and connectivity among projects, largely due to a structure in which multiple agencies implement programs independently. Consequently, the establishment of the “integrated platform for grant aid,” promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KOICA, is expected to serve as a major turning point—one that will not only enhance the strategic alignment and effectiveness of Korea’s ODA but also elevate the country’s standing in international development cooperation to the next level.

At the center of this transformation is Lee Kyoo-ho, Director-General for Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having dedicated many years to the field of development cooperation, he is an expert with extensive experience in both international development policy and on-the-ground operations. In particular, throughout the process of discussing the establishment of this integrated platform for grant aid, he has played a pivotal role in shaping the direction of these institutional improvements and coordinating opinions among government ministries, implementing agencies, and various stakeholders.

On May 26, MAGAZINE KOICA met with Director-General Lee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs government complex in Jongno-gu, Seoul, to discuss the background and significance of restructuring Korea’s ODA system, as well as its future direction.

## There is no such thing as an ODA crisis

**Q. Recent times have seen major shifts in the global landscape of ODA and international development cooperation. With the news of the reorganization of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and related developments, some have gone so far as to diagnose this as an "ODA crisis." What are your thoughts on this?**

I disagree with that assessment. While it is true that the international situation is changing, the field of international development cooperation itself is not undergoing sudden, overnight changes. Looking at the series of developments since last year, they essentially boil down to two main discussions: that “ODA must be made more efficient” and that “there is a shortage of ODA financing.” In fact, these concerns have been discussed since well before the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.



Lee Kyoo-ho,Director-General for Development Cooperation, disagreed with the view that the international development cooperation landscape has been changing rapidly due to the reorganization of USAID, among other factors, and dismissed that perception as an misperception.

**Q. Even so, these changes seem to have come as quite a shock to those working in the field of international development cooperation. Why do you think that is?**

News reported through the media can indeed be shocking. When people see headlines about developed countries increasing defense spending amid escalating geopolitical tensions, or reports that the USAID has been integrated into the Department of State, it is entirely natural for them to feel that way. However, this is a misperception. We must look beyond the surface-level news and examine the underlying reality. The U.S. government has established the Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response (DHR) within the Department of State and has decided to provide USD 3.8 billion in funding to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This stands in stark contrast to the assessment that the U.S. is restructuring its ODA primarily to benefit American companies. Rather, it should ultimately be viewed as an expression of the U.S. government's policy commitment to sustaining humanitarian assistance.

**Q. Do you see the recent global trend toward greater efficiency and integration—such as the UN80 Initiative* and the HDP Nexus**—as being aligned with this "essence"?**

That is correct. Claims that "UN agencies are inefficient and in need of reform" are nothing new. To put the HDP Nexus in simpler terms, its underlying recognition of the problem is that "conducting humanitarian assistance, development, and peace-related projects in a fragmented manner has led to significant inefficiencies, such as overlaps and duplication among projects." Therefore, the goal is to operate them in an integrated manner to enhance effectiveness. Of course, the sudden and significant withdrawal of U.S. funding on the ground is shocking. However, my point is that the overall direction of discussions in the field of international development cooperation has not changed.

**Q. Amid these major global trends, what role should Korea's ODA play? What is the stance of our government, which has recently been expanding the scale of its ODA?**

The official stance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that "ODA must play a major role in implementing national priorities, such as diplomacy toward the Global South and establishing Korea as a globally pivotal state with shared responsibilities." The reason is clear: to elevate Korea into a global leader. To exert leadership in the international community, a nation must secure global support, and doing so requires the provision of global public goods. Global public goods largely consist of markets, security, and aid—and realistically, aid is the area in which Korea can make the most meaningful contribution to the international community.

* The UN80 Initiative is a large-scale reform program across the entire United Nations system, launched to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the UN's founding. Its core objective is to create a "UN that achieves greater results with fewer resources."

** The HDP Nexus is an approach to international development cooperation that aims to integrate humanitarian, development, and peace activities rather than pursuing them separately.

## Fragmented grant aid may burden partner countries

**Q. What are your thoughts on the opinion that national interest should come first?**

We need to rethink what national interest truly means. Securing short-term gains by helping a few Korean companies expand overseas does not represent the entirety of the national interest. Elevating Korea's global standing and being recognized as a leader that contributes to the international community also constitute a significant national interest. From that perspective, compared with Korea's aspiration to move beyond being a "recipient-turned-donor country" and become a true global leader, the current scale of the aid budget remains insufficient. After all, it still accounts for less than 1% of the total government budget. Of course, this does not mean that we should drastically increase the budget overnight. It should be expanded gradually and strategically, while simultaneously building a robust system that ensures both effectiveness and efficiency.

**Q. Having long experienced both policy planning and frontline operations, what do you see as the most fundamental limitation of Korea's current ODA system?**

The biggest issue is the fragmentation of grant aid. As of 2025, 41 different ministries, agencies, and administrations have been implementing their own grant aid projects based on their respective institutional circumstances. With the total number of projects exceeding 1,600, there has been a proliferation of small-scale, one-off initiatives, making it difficult to accumulate meaningful long-term results. From a nationwide perspective, there is simply no clear set of priorities for grant aid.

On the other hand, advanced donor countries have clear priorities and distinct identities, not only in their diplomacy but also in their aid policies. For instance, Canada centers its aid around gender equality, while Japan focuses its philosophy on infrastructure and human security, planning and implementing projects accordingly. Moving forward, Korea's aid must also take this path. We need to establish specific and detailed goals aligned with our national strategy, and then allocate resources around those core objectives to maximize outcomes and make our impact truly visible.

**Q. Some argue that, rather than integrating ODA, allowing each ministry or agency to maximize its respective expertise would be more effective in enhancing ODA outcomes. What are your thoughts on this?**

Whether sectoral expertise or development cooperation expertise is more important is a long-standing debate. However, my stance is clear: development cooperation expertise must undoubtedly come first. ODA, after all, takes place on the ground in developing countries. Therefore, without a development cooperation perspective that truly understands the realities on the ground in developing countries, no amount of sectoral expertise will ever yield successful results. Simply providing funds or technology



without establishing priorities tailored to the local context will never achieve the ultimate goal of ODA—reducing poverty in developing countries.

**Q. Could you explain with specific examples why a development cooperation perspective that understands the local context is so critical?**

Let me give you an example. Imagine we dispatch top-tier medical teams from Korea, introduce state-of-the-art robotic surgery equipment, and build a massive 500-bed hospital in a highly underdeveloped rural village in a developing country that completely lacks basic infrastructure. Would this actually provide substantial benefits to the local residents? On the contrary, building a small local clinic that can function as a primary care facility is much more likely to improve residents' quality of life. Only when local people receive genuine, practical assistance and build goodwill toward Korea can these efforts be translated into meaningful diplomatic achievements.

**Q. So it is a localized, field-centered approach to international development cooperation.**

Exactly. Advanced donor countries and the international community have already shifted toward "locally led international development cooperation," a consensus that was solidified as early as 2015 with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). The core principle is that donor countries should not act solely based on their own judgment; instead, they must work closely with local actors who are already engaged on the ground to promote the development of partner countries. That is the only way to achieve transformative outcomes and ensure that they are sustained over the long term. Ultimately, this is what leads to development effectiveness. Given this global reality, it is disappointing that we are still engaged in domestic debates over whether "sectoral expertise should take priority."



Lee Kyoo-ho, Director-General for Development Cooperation, pointed out that, unlike developed countries, Korea lacks clear, specific priorities for its grant aid and emphasized the need to establish detailed targets aligned with national strategies.

**Q. Could you share your personal experiences in which you directly witnessed or felt the importance of such partnerships on the ground?**

This dates back to when I was dispatched to the field as part of a relief team following the 2023 Türkiye earthquake. At the time, countries around the world were providing humanitarian assistance and operating temporary shelters and relief camps. However, the site that the Turkish government continues to praise as one of the best-managed examples to this day is the "Korea–Türkiye Friendship Village," which was jointly established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KOICA, and Korean NGOs. Our NGOs worked by building partnerships with local NGOs. I heard that the process was incredibly challenging and demanding, but in the end, achieving localization through collaboration with local NGOs enabled them to produce the greatest results and earn high praise from the community.

**Q. What, then, do you think is currently lacking on our part?**

As I emphasized earlier, the core issue is the fragmentation of our country's grant aid. This problem goes beyond our own internal inefficiencies; it also places a significant administrative burden on partner countries. When you meet with local government officials on the ground, their frustration is palpable. This is because 10 to 20 different ministries, agencies, and offices from Korea often approach partner countries independently, each presenting its own individual project proposals. A prime example is the Philippines, where every foreign aid project must be approved directly by the President's Office. If 10 Korean ministries carry out separate projects in the Philippines, the Philippine government must go through this lengthy approval process 10 separate times. On one occasion, an official from a Philippine ODA-related agency even asked me directly, "The administrative burden is simply too heavy; could KOICA please consolidate all these projects and present them to us at once?" This is a harsh reality experienced not only by the Philippines but also by many other partner countries.

**Q. If KOICA becomes the single integrated window, it would significantly reduce the administrative burden on partner countries.**

Indeed. From our government's perspective, the benefits are immense. This is because we will be able to communicate our strategic priorities to partner countries with far greater clarity and impact.

**Q. On the flip side, if KOICA becomes the single integrated window, wouldn't it become more difficult to coordinate and address the diverse and specific needs on the ground in partner countries?**

We must clearly acknowledge that ODA cannot solve every single problem faced by a partner country's government. On the contrary, because local needs and competing interests are highly complex while our resources remain limited, we must design and implement projects in close alignment with our government's strategic priorities. Of course, projects must be tailored to local contexts. Now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established four key priorities for our grant aid: ▲building innovative ecosystems through vocational education, ▲improving maternal and child health, ▲addressing climate change and expanding green energy, and ▲promoting innovative rural development. By moving forward with a clear standard of focusing heavily on these areas, we can deliver truly tangible results.

## Resolving the fragmentation of grant aid is just the beginning; a results-oriented ODA system is necessary

**Q. Beyond resolving fragmentation, what is the most critical structural challenge that Korea's grant aid must address to advance to the next level?**

It is about improving the effectiveness of development cooperation. To achieve this, I believe it is both critical and urgent to establish a systematic, integrated performance management system. Until now, grant aid projects have been evaluated primarily based on input metrics—essentially focusing on "how much budget was allocated"—making it nearly impossible to determine their actual impact or results. While KOICA scientifically measures project outcomes, many projects managed by other ministries and agencies still rely primarily on simple satisfaction surveys as their main performance indicators. While KOICA has a systematic performance management system in place, indicators and criteria are still developed and measured at the individual project level, making it difficult to determine the extent to which broader national strategic goals are being achieved.

**Q. Specifically, what kind of institutional changes or system implementation do you have in mind?**

For example, if we evaluate a maternal and child health project, we should be able to track exactly how many mothers and infants were saved over a five-year period. Based on such hard data, we can set future targets, analyze the factors behind any increases or decreases in performance, and continuously accumulate valuable data. On top of that, I believe we also need to fundamentally overhaul our contracting system. Currently, projects are planned based on input metrics, such as the grade of the development experts deployed and the number of hours they log, but we must transition entirely to results- and output-oriented contracting. Only then can everyone engaged in development cooperation, including KOICA staff, focus on the core mission of achieving project outcomes and truly strengthen their capabilities.

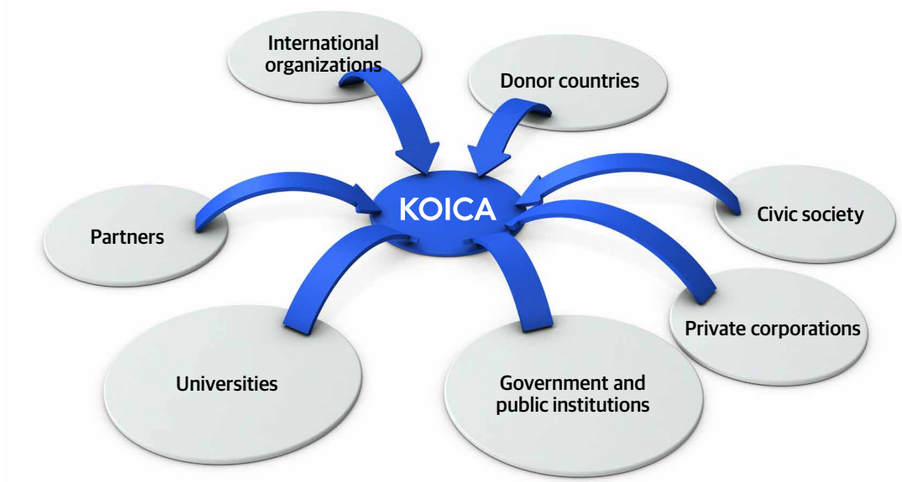
**Q. What advice or words of encouragement would you like to share with young people who are currently working in international development cooperation, or those who dream of pursuing this career path?**

Even if it is challenging and demanding, I want to encourage you to go out into the field and experience it firsthand. When you recognize that education is a serious issue in a partner country, I hope you grow into a true international development cooperation expert—one who tries hard to understand whether the problem stems from a simple shortage of school buildings, children being unable to attend school because they have to work for a living, or the journey to school being too dangerous, and who then designs practical, real-world solutions. K

For more diverse and detailed insights on development cooperation from Lee Kyoo-ho, director-general for Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, please scan the QR code to watch the interview video.

From an integrated grant aid platform to AI-powered ODA

# The future of Korea's ODA envisioned in the 4th Comprehensive Strategy




KOICA is set to play the role of an "integrated grant aid platform," connecting multiple institutions with civic and international organizations. The platform refers to a structure that links fragmented projects, finances and stakeholders into one system and operates it strategically.

The 'Comprehensive Basic Plan for International Development Cooperation' is the highest-level national strategy in the ODA sector, established every five years in accordance with the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation. According to the 4th Comprehensive Strategy for Development Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the 4th Comprehensive Strategy), which will be implemented from this year through 2030, KOICA will serve as an "integrated grant aid platform" based on one of its core strategic objectives: establishing an integrated system. With the newly incorporated strategic goals for AI and cultural ODA in the 4th Comprehensive Strategy, the scope of Korean development cooperation is expected to expand rapidly.

### The 3rd Comprehensive Strategy focused on building a systematic development cooperation model

The 3rd Comprehensive Strategy, implemented from 2021 to 2025, was focused on strengthening the strategic nature and expertise of Korea's ODA. At that time, the government outlined the direction of K-development cooperation through four strategic goals—▲Inclusive ODA, ▲Mutually Beneficial ODA, ▲Innovative ODA, and ▲Collaborative ODA—and sought to build a more systematic development cooperation model beyond the simple expansion of aid. "Inclusive ODA" emphasized human-centered development cooperation, such as supporting the poor and vulnerable and strengthening access to health and education, in alignment with the pandemic situation at the time. Meanwhile, "Mutually Beneficial ODA" focused on expanding economic- and diplomacy-linked cooperation in which partner countries and Korea could grow together. Furthermore, cooperation in future-oriented sectors such as ICT, science and technology, and climate response was strengthened through "Innovative ODA," while the expansion of partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations was pursued through "Collaborative ODA."

Particularly during the 3rd Comprehensive Strategy period, the formulation of sector-specific strategies—such as the Green ODA Strategy, Science, Technology, and ICT Strategy, and Agriculture Strategy—began in earnest, giving concrete form to the implementation directions of Korea's ODA by sector. However, as the implementation of individual projects by different agencies increased, a lack of linkage between projects and fragmentation were identified as limitations. This subsequently became the background for the emergence of "establishing an integrated system" as a core strategic objective in the 4th Comprehensive Strategy.

### Serving as an "integrated grant aid platform" connecting government agencies, the private sector, and international organizations

The 4th Comprehensive Strategy emerged from the recognition that Korea's ODA lacked strategy and integration relative to its scale. Its strategic goals are ▲Realizing inclusive values, ▲Expanding mutually beneficial win-win cooperation, ▲Implementing innovative development, and ▲Establishing an integrated system. The last one of these is the most notable goal, as it aims to shift the focus of Korea's ODA. While it previously emphasized quantitative expansion and the formulation of sector-specific strategies, it will now pivot toward linking fragmented project structures and reorganizing them to be performance-oriented.

Currently, 37 implementing agencies are executing more than 1,500 projects in the grant aid sector alone. In this process, issues such as overlapping projects among different agencies, inefficiencies, and a lack of on-the-ground coordination have been continuously raised. Accordingly, the government states in the 4th Comprehensive Strategy that it will streamline implementing agencies around competent organizations, abolish small-scale, one-off, and low-performance projects, and pursue the establishment of an integrated ODA system. This means shifting away from simply increasing the number of projects toward a structure that strategically connects various projects and agencies. Consequently, attention is also being drawn to the changing role of KOICA. Moving forward, KOICA will transcend its status as a mere project-executing agency to serve as an "integrated grant aid platform" that connects various implementing agencies, the private sector, and international organizations. The integrated grant aid platform refers to a structure that binds scattered projects, financial resources, and participating actors into a single system for strategic operation. Moving away from an individual project-oriented approach, its purpose is to create more multidimensional changes by restructuring interconnected projects into program-level units.

There are three major changes expected when KOICA performs the role of an integrated grant aid platform. First is the integrated implementation of projects. Projects will be implemented in a linked manner under strategic goals such as strengthening health system resilience and enhancing technological, digital, and innovative capabilities. Second is the strengthening of collaboration among implementing actors. KOICA will broaden the scope of cooperation by connecting diverse participants, including public institutions, local governments, private companies, civil society, and international organizations. Third is the integrated presentation of performance. Alongside the performance of individual project units, performance will be managed with a focus on changes at the thematic, strategic goal, and sub-sector levels.




AI ODA is expected to assume a growing role in development cooperation areas where Korea has long thrived, such as climate, public health and agriculture.

### Paving the way for future-oriented ODA with AI and cultural ODA

According to the 4th Comprehensive Strategy, the direction of Korea's ODA is rapidly expanding from focusing on simple infrastructure support to "future-oriented development cooperation" that encompasses advanced technology and culture. In particular, AI-based development cooperation and cooperation in the cultural and tourism sectors have been officially incorporated as major strategic tasks for the first time. In particular, the proportion of AI ODA within K-development cooperation is expected to increase moving forward. The government is approaching AI beyond simple technical assistance, integrating it with various sectors such as climate, health, agriculture, and disaster response.

Cultural ODA was also heavily emphasized in the 4th Comprehensive Strategy. By specifying the "expansion of cultural and tourism cooperation" as a key task, the government presented a direction to move beyond existing economic- and infrastructure-centered development cooperation and nurture the cultural sector as a new pillar of cooperation.

The competitiveness of Korea's future ODA depends not on how many projects are implemented, but on how effectively they are connected to create sustainable change. The 4th Comprehensive Strategy serves as the starting point for this transformation, and KOICA will stand at the center of this effort to deliver results-oriented ODA that the public can truly experience.

Contribution by Moon Sang-won, Director General of Department of Development Strategy and Portfolio Management

# A new future created by KOICA programs and platforms




ODA Paradigm Shift

Having developed with help from the international community, Korea has established itself as a partner on development journeys for others. It has steadily increased the scale of its assistance and refined its systems, establishing itself as an important development cooperation partner in the international community. However, it is now time to take a step further. Beyond simply asking how much aid it has provided, Korea must be able to clearly explain to its people and partner countries why we partner with that country and what tangible changes that aid has brought about.

Within this changing landscape, Korea's ODA is reaching a new turning point. Moving forward, Korea should not stop at simply increasing funding amounts or the number of projects, but should strategically focus on creating tangible results. The "Integrated ODA" emphasized in the "4th Comprehensive Strategy for Development Cooperation," recently adopted by the government through the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), is at the heart of this change.

### What is strategic, results-oriented ODA?

Recent ODA is raising more important questions than simply how much budget was invested or how many projects were implemented. It asks whether resources were effectively allocated to areas of genuine need and whether meaningful changes have occurred on the ground as a result. "Strategic ODA" refers to the principle of "selection and concentration," which focuses resources on the intersection between Korea's diplomatic and economic strategies and the development needs of partner countries, rather than dispersing resources across all countries and sectors. In other words, it is an approach that places greater emphasis on the consistency of resource allocation and the clarity of policy objectives than on expanding the scale of aid.

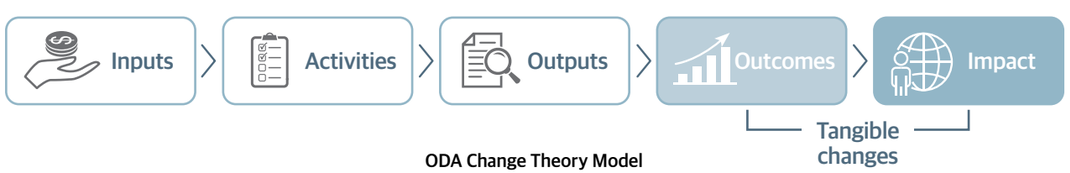
"Results-oriented ODA" goes beyond simply executing budgets and completing projects. Based on the Theory of Change, it is an approach that demonstrates what actual changes a project has brought to the lives of residents in partner countries, and what outcomes and impact it has created for local communities and the nation. In other words, it is an accountability-focused method that asks "what has changed" rather than "how much was spent."

### Why is "Integrated ODA" important, and how can it be achieved?

Strategies and outcomes cannot be realized by declaration alone. To put the strategic, results-oriented ODA discussed earlier into practice, the institutional prerequisite of "integrated ODA governance" must first be established.

Currently, some 40 ministries and agencies participate in Korea's ODA, each with its own expertise. While such a multilayered structure adds breadth and depth to our ODA, this setup also makes it more important to make an effort to push strategic priorities, budget allocation, implementation, and evaluation in one direction. These conditions will help integrated ODA to take the next step.

First, it is about setting strategic priorities at the whole-of-government level. The intersection of areas in which Korea has an edge and developmental needs for partner countries must be clearly defined, and it must be reflected in actual budget allocation and project selection. Only then can resource allocation become the result of prior choices rather than ex-post aggregation. For instance, since 2023, Bangladesh has been the largest recipient of Korea's ODA. Only when it can be clearly explained to the people how the size of ODA to each country is connected with our strategic priorities can the direction of Korea's ODA become more persuasive for the Korean people and our partners alike.

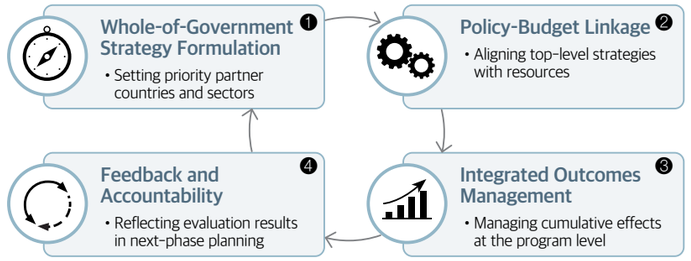



ODA Change Theory Model

Second, it is the strong linkage between policy and budget. To prevent top-level strategy and actual budget allocation from operating separately, they must be designed together from the outset. No matter how outstanding a strategy is, if the budget is managed separately, it is difficult to realize it in practice.

Third, it is the integration and management at the program level. It is necessary to look beyond individual projects to the program level. This is because multiple projects implemented in the same country and sector can create greater change when interconnected. This is the process through which projects collectively create an "epic" that goes beyond merely listing the "indicators" of individual projects.

Fourth, evaluation results must be reflected in subsequent policies and projects. Evaluation should not end with the review and scoring of completed projects, but should be linked to the planning of future projects and the reallocation of budgets. Through this, evaluation becomes a key tool for policy learning and improvement, as well as a means of ensuring accountability to the public.




Four Key Conditions for Integrated ODA Governance

### KOICA's role at the center of change

Within this integrated ODA system, KOICA's role is becoming even more important. KOICA must expand its role beyond being a simple project and budget execution agency to become a "strategic implementing agency" that realizes Korea's development cooperation strategy in the field. In other words, KOICA should not merely execute assigned projects, but should play a role in translating national strategic priorities into field-level operations and designing linkages across programs. Moreover, it must go beyond the success or failure of individual projects by bundling and managing multiple projects into a single portfolio at the country and sector levels, thereby maximizing aid synergies and articulating actual changes in partner countries.

Additionally, KOICA must serve as a "local cooperation hub" by directly engaging with partner governments and other donor agencies through its overseas offices in more than 48 countries, helping to ensure that all Korea's ODA projects are implemented in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Furthermore, KOICA must play a pivotal role in ensuring that experience and performance data accumulated in the field are fed back into government policy decisions and budget adjustments, thereby enabling continuously improving, performance-oriented, and accountable aid.

### Future tasks

The paradigm shift in Korea's ODA does not begin with creating new slogans, but with reforming the institutional foundations that support them.

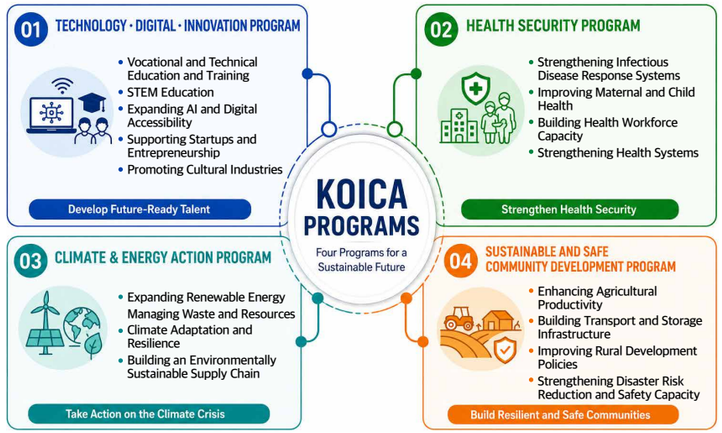
When policy and budget, projects, and evaluation are organically connected at the program level, Korea's ODA will establish itself as a policy that delivers tangible change to partner countries and their residents, and as a source of national pride for the Korean people by fulfilling global responsibilities.



While operating its Project for Establishing a Flood-Forecasting and Early Warning System for the Citarum River in Indonesia in 2021, KOICA directly engaged the Indonesian government and the donating agency in the country and served as the base for on-site cooperation. The photo shows a meeting on the second project for the system.

Integrating education, health, and climate crisis response into one

# A new era of development cooperation opened by 'KOICA Program'




Four Pillars of the KOICA Program

### The Beginning of the KOICA Program

Korea's ODA projects have often been implemented separately by sector, such as education, health, agriculture, and climate. While this approach has had the advantage of leveraging specialized expertise in each field, it has also presented challenges, as projects have often been disconnected from one another. Furthermore, while the number of projects has increased, critics have pointed out that it was difficult to comprehensively demonstrate how much these projects actually transformed the lives of local residents. In response, the government and KOICA recognized the need to move away from conventional approaches and establish a more integrated, strategic ODA framework. This has led to the introduction of the "KOICA Program."

### Moving Beyond Individual Projects Toward a Unified Goal

The KOICA Program is not simply about bundling multiple projects together. Rather, it is an approach in which a goal for the partner country is defined first, followed by selecting and utilizing the appropriate assistance methods tailored to the local context. For example, if the goal is rural development, it provides educational support where needed, while delivering technical cooperation or infrastructure development in other areas. In other words, the core of the program approach lies in configuring solutions tailored to the field to achieve the goal, rather than focusing on the project itself. The KOICA Program is broadly structured around four main pillars.

The first is the "Technology, Digital, and Innovation Program." It focuses on nurturing youth talent through vocational and technical training, STEM education, expanding AI and digital accessibility, building employment and entrepreneurship ecosystems, and fostering cultural industries. The second is the "Health Security Program." It strengthens the health safety nets of developing countries by establishing infectious disease response systems, improving maternal and child health, training healthcare personnel, and reinforcing health systems.

The third is the "Climate and Energy Action Program." Its goal is to respond to the climate crisis through the expansion of renewable energy, waste management, climate adaptation and mitigation, and the establishment of eco-friendly supply chains. The fourth is the "Sustainable and Safe Community Development Program." It focuses on creating stable local communities by improving agricultural productivity, building distribution and storage infrastructure, enhancing rural development policies, and strengthening public safety and security capabilities.

One of the major features of the KOICA Program is a "results-oriented" approach. Going forward, priority will be given to managing the actual changes achieved rather than focusing on the size of the budget or the number of projects. Another notable aspect is the approach to cooperation. KOICA plans to expand cooperation through an "integrated platform" that brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including government ministries, corporations, universities, public institutions, international organizations, and civil society. In the AI sector, IT companies and universities will participate together, while in the climate sector, energy companies and international organizations will collaborate. Starting in 2026, KOICA will develop country-specific program plans for the 48 partner countries where its overseas offices are located and gradually implement new projects based on these plans.





Plus Interview

Lee Ho-hyun, Deputy Director at the Ministry of the Interior and Safety

## "Presenting a new solution for rural development in Bangladesh through inter-ministerial collaboration"



Lee Ho-hyun

**Q What is the objective of the innovative rural community program being conducted in Bangladesh?**

The goal is to draw on Korea's experience in rural community development through the Saemaul Undong to empower village residents to lift themselves out of poverty. Specifically, the program seeks to integrate the policy capacity of the partner country's government with the self-reliance of local communities, thereby internalizing the Saemaul values of diligence, self-help, and cooperation and embedding them into the Bangladeshi government's official policies.

**Q What is the reasoning behind the launch of this program?**

In line with the government's vision for more integrated and effective ODA, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Gyeongsangbuk-do, and KOICA signed an MOU on Saemaul-based development cooperation in 2024. The program officially began when the Rural Development Administration subsequently joined the initiative, transforming it into a collaborative inter-agency program. In particular, Bangladesh has prior experience with the 'Comilla Model', which emphasized community participation as a core strategy for alleviating rural poverty in the 1960s. The expectation that combining the development experiences of both countries could create an innovative and highly effective rural development model provided the impetus for launching this program.

**Q Could you introduce some of the key projects?**

First, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and the Saemaul Undong Center provide customized Saemaul policy consulting and high-level invitational training for Bangladesh to boost government-level interest and momentum, while establishing a foundation for community self-reliance through Saemaul curriculum development and local training programs. This creates the enabling environment required for the subsequent projects of KOICA and the Rural Development Administration to create synergies with community capabilities and generate tangible results. Next, KOICA strengthens the capacity of working-level public officials while delivering tangible results centered on residents and leaders empowered through Saemaul education. These outcomes include improving living environments through community organization, enhancing farmers' ICT utilization capabilities (digital transformation), and implementing youth-led income-generating projects. Meanwhile, the Rural Development Administration develops and disseminates climate-smart agricultural technologies based on empowered governments and rural communities. By strengthening the capabilities of agricultural extension workers and training farmers, it scales these technologies in the field, thereby improving agricultural productivity, creating high value-added outcomes, and securing the project's economic sustainability.

**Q What is the response from local governments and residents?**

The interest from both the Bangladeshi government and local residents is remarkably high. Even during the early stages when the formulation and preliminary design survey team visited the country to conduct consultations—following the submission of the project proposal by the Bangladeshi side—many stakeholders participated with great enthusiasm. In particular, because the Bangladeshi government places rural development and sustainable agriculture at the forefront of its policy priorities, the direction of this project naturally aligns with its goals, which is why it has been so well received.

**Q What kind of change do you expect the KOICA Program to bring to Bangladesh's rural development project?**

First and foremost, it will shift the paradigm from "receiving aid" to "self-directed development." The most important objective of this project is to build a model through which the Bangladeshi government can introduce, institutionalize, and scale the Saemaul development policy nationwide. To achieve this, an integrated rural development model that connects the central government, local authorities, and villages has been embedded in the design. Once this model takes root, the operational mechanism of Bangladesh's rural development administration is expected to evolve to the next level. In particular, once this model is proven effective in Bangladesh—a large agricultural nation with a population of 170 million—it could serve as a scalable model for expansion into neighboring countries. Moving beyond simple assistance to a single country, this is expected to become a catalyst through which Korea's accumulated development experience can be shared as a global asset for the international community. K

Validate quickly and scale up

# Integrated ODA platform changes public Partnership projects

KOICA's Public Partnership Program is rapidly evolving in line with its integrated platform strategy for grant aid. In particular, the Quick-Development Experience Exchange Program (Q-DEEP) is positioning itself as a core platform for swiftly identifying future-oriented projects by validating on-site demand. The Korea Transportation Safety Authority is conducting a feasibility study for a project to foster the drone industry in Ghana as part of Q-DEEP.

### Accelerating the linkage to the main project··· Boosting the implementation capacity of development cooperation

Public Partnership Program is an initiative that supports institutional improvement and capacity building in developing countries by combining the sector-specific expertise of domestic government ministries, public institutions, and local governments with KOICA's experience in implementing ODA projects and its on-site network. KOICA provides project funding, project consulting, local network building, and project and performance management support to institutions selected through an open call. Once selected, the Public Partnership Program enters into an agreement and launches the project within the same year. This differs from country programs and projects, which typically take two to three years to launch after going through project identification, preliminary and feasibility studies, and government deliberation. Public Partnership Program is divided into Q-DEEP and main projects, with budget support of up to KRW 400 million for Q-DEEP and up to USD 5 million for main projects. Public Partnership Program is the only program that enables KOICA to launch a project worth up to USD 5 million within the same year. In this sense, it can be regarded as a highly agile ODA cooperation model. Moving forward, KOICA plans to further enhance project quality by providing capacity-building training to institutions selected under the Public Partnership Program, ensuring stable project implementation and performance management.



An employee of the Korea Transportation Safety Authority is conducting capacity-building training on the structure and maintenance of pesticide-spraying drones for members of a local drone organization in Ghana.

### Completion of Ghana's drone sector development roadmap through Q-DEEP

In 2025, the Korea Transportation Safety Authority participated in Q-DEEP to develop a mid- to long-term strategy for Ghana's drone sector. This project serves as a pre-feasibility study aimed at establishing a development roadmap for Ghana's drone industry and identifying priority projects for future implementation. The project commenced in 2024 at the request of the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA). Following local field surveys and policy consultations, the Korea Transportation Safety Authority identified key areas of cooperation, including drone regulation reform, the establishment of safety management systems, pilot training, and the development of an industrial ecosystem. The project covered the entire territory of Ghana. In particular, drone safety management and measures to establish an industrial foundation were reviewed, with a focus on the capital city of Accra. Furthermore, considering that drones can operate across borders into neighboring countries due to their inherent characteristics, the potential for connectivity with the wider West African region, including Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Burkina Faso, was also examined.

The core of the project goes beyond simple technical assistance, focusing instead on building a sustainable drone industry ecosystem. The plan includes the development of a drone regulatory framework, the establishment of a drone safety management center, the training of professional pilots, and support for startups and industry-academia collaboration. Through this project, Ghana has laid the foundation for applying drone technology across a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, logistics, and disaster response. In the healthcare sector, the project also highlighted the potential to expand drone-based delivery systems for blood, vaccines, and emergency medical supplies. Drones can deliver emergency medical supplies within 20 minutes even in areas with limited road infrastructure, and that is expected to improve access to healthcare services. In the agricultural sector, drones are also expected to be utilized for precision farming, pest control, and crop monitoring.



Plus Interview

Cho Ju-yong, Researcher at the Korea Transportation Safety Authority

## "Deeply grateful to KOICA for all-out support through local network"



Cho Ju-yong

**Q Why did the Korea Transportation Safety Authority participate in KOICA's Q-DEEP and how did the opportunity come about?**

Recently, while the use of drones has been expanding rapidly across a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, logistics, and disaster response, many developing countries still lack adequate legal and regulatory frameworks, specialized human resource training systems, and the necessary foundations for safety management. Paying close attention to these challenges, the Authority selected Ghana—a country with strong interest in and significant growth potential for the drone industry—as a partner country. Beginning with online meetings with the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority in 2024, the two sides have continued their exchanges and gradually built a foundation for cooperation by sharing their respective experiences through invitational training programs in Korea and on-site training programs in Ghana.

**Q What has Q-DEEP achieved in relation to Ghana's drone project?**

The goal of this project is to develop a mid- to long-term roadmap that will enable the Government of Ghana to independently foster and manage its drone industry. Rather than simply presenting ideas, the project also focuses on identifying follow-up projects for future implementation and conducting feasibility studies to support their realization.

In particular, the project proposes directions for improving the laws and regulations necessary for the development of the drone industry, while also focusing on establishing certification systems and training programs to cultivate specialized personnel. Through these efforts, the project aims to create a solid foundation for the sustainable growth of Ghana's future drone industry.

**Q What kind of support did you receive from KOICA during the implementation of Q-DEEP?**

KOICA provided extensive guidance on the direction development cooperation projects should take and on effective ways to collaborate with local governments. In particular, the KOICA Ghana Office actively supported communication with government agencies and other stakeholders by leveraging its local network, serving as a reliable partner in addressing the various challenges that arose during project implementation. Thanks to this support, we were able to implement the project more effectively and build much stronger relationships of trust with our local counterparts.

**Q In what direction should KOICA's integrated platform for grant aid evolve in the future?**

Recently, KOICA has accelerated the pace of project implementation by streamlining its project cycle from the previous "Q-DEEP –Pilot –Main Project" structure to a simplified "Q-DEEP –Main Project" model. While the former multi-stage approach offered advantages in terms of stability and thorough validation, it also had limitations in responding quickly to policy shifts and technological changes in the field.

Especially in rapidly evolving fields such as digital technology, mobility, and smart solutions, timeliness is a critical factor in project success. In that sense, I believe the current streamlined structure is better positioned to respond to field demands more quickly and enhance overall project effectiveness. Going forward, ODA projects should move beyond simply managing procedures and place greater emphasis on the tangible changes and outcomes they generate on the ground.

**Q Following Q-DEEP, you have decided to pursue the main project, 'Development of Ghana Drone Professionals and Establishment of Korea-Ghana Drone Certification Mutual Recognition Framework.' What are the future plans for this project?**

We plan to focus on building a sustainable ecosystem that will enable Ghana to independently operate and further develop its drone industry. In particular, we will place top priority on advancing the 'Development of Ghana Drone Professionals and Establishment of Korea-Ghana Drone Certification Mutual Recognition Framework,' which was identified as a high-priority follow-up project during the implementation of Q-DEEP. Rather than ending with one-time assistance, the project aims to establish a comprehensive education and training framework, along with a qualification and operational system, and ultimately develop it into a mechanism through which drone qualifications are mutually recognized between Korea and Ghana, similar to an international driving permit system. Furthermore, we are also exploring the possibility of expanding this model to other African countries in the future. K

From Q-DEEP to the main project

# How tailored weather information changed Peruvian farms



Chung U-ran, senior researcher at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Climate Center (APCC) (center), delivers a lecture on "Improving Understanding of Local Climate and Weather Conditions and Their Application to Agriculture" in Acora, Peru.

A Korean-style climate information service model is entering full-scale field testing in Peru, where agricultural losses caused by the climate crisis are becoming increasingly severe. The initiative is being led by the APCC Consortium—comprising the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Climate Center (APCC) and Weatherpia Co., Ltd.—which brings together specialized expertise in climate and weather services. The APCC Consortium identified local needs through the 'Quick-Development Experience Exchange Program (Q-DEEP)', the first stage of KOICA's Public Partnership Program, and is now translating those findings into the implementation of the 'main project'* aimed at strengthening climate resilience in Peruvian communities.

## The reality of Peru's climate crisis revealed through field investigations

This project is particularly significant because it analyzes local climate risks, establishes a climate information service framework that farmers can use in practice, and validates the system as a scalable model with the potential for future expansion across Latin America.

The APCC Consortium laid the groundwork for the project by conducting field surveys in Peru during KOICA's Q-DEEP phase. Between 2024 and 2025, the consortium visited key regions, including Lima, Motupe, Acora, and Acocro, where it consulted with approximately 30 organizations ranging from central and local government agencies to universities, international organizations, and farmers' associations. Through these consultations, the consortium assessed local farmers' exposure to climate risks and identified their climate information needs. The findings were clear. Rural areas in Peru were already experiencing the direct impact of the climate crisis, yet climate information tailored to farmers' practical needs remained limited. Climate data was fragmented across multiple institutions, and existing information delivery systems were not sufficiently integrated with on-the-ground agricultural practices. In particular, the lack of meteorological observation infrastructure in high-altitude and rural areas made it difficult to obtain the timely, localized information needed for effective agricultural decision-making.

To address the challenges identified during the Q-DEEP phase, the APCC Consortium launched the second-stage main project, titled the "Project for Improving national climate information services for enhancing climate resilience of rural communities in Peru." The project's core objective is to establish and enhance the Agricultural Climate Management Platform (PGA) between 2025 and 2027 across three distinct regions of Peru: Motupe in the northern coastal area, Acora in the high-altitude Andean region, and Acocro in the inland mountainous region.

In the Motupe region, the mango and avocado industries have been severely affected by recurring floods and droughts associated with El Niño. In 2023 alone, the mango industry suffered losses of approximately USD 8.5 million, while nearly half of the avocado harvest was deemed unfit for export. In the Acora region, agricultural water shortages are worsening due to the decline of glaciers and reduced rainfall. Meanwhile, Acocro is regarded as a representative climate-vulnerable area, where droughts, wildfires, and torrential rainfall occur concurrently.

## Establishing a tailored climate information platform for farmers

The PGA is not merely a climate information system; it is a community-based platform through which meteorological agencies, local governments, farmers, and agricultural institutions collaboratively generate, share, and utilize climate information.

The APCC Consortium plans to enhance the functions of the PGA in Motupe and Acora, where the platform is already in operation, by strengthening agro-meteorological services and improving observation and data systems. At the same time, it will establish a new PGA system in Acocro, the newly added target area. An official from the APCC Consortium said, "In particular, by implementing the project simultaneously across diverse climate environments—including the coastal lowlands, the high-altitude Andean region, and the inland mountainous region—we aim to validate a climate information service model that can be adapted and applied to a wide range of climatic conditions."

The project is broadly implemented in four stages: "climate data collection, information production, field delivery, and farmers' utilization." Rather than simply providing weather forecasts, the emphasis is placed on delivering customized climate information that farmers can practically apply to real-world agricultural activities. First, the APCC Consortium plans to collect climate data such as temperature, precipitation, and humidity for each region using Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) and related equipment. Currently, rural areas in Peru lack sufficient observation infrastructure, making it difficult to conduct detailed analyses of regional climate variability.

The collected data will be reprocessed into customized agricultural information. For example, rather than a simple forecast stating that "there will be little rain," the system will provide practical guidance for farming, such as "the risk of pests and diseases may increase" or "this is a period requiring irrigation." To achieve this, there are plans to integrate agricultural meteorological data from the Peruvian Meteorological Service, which is currently dispersed across multiple systems, into a single unified platform.

Information delivery will also be conducted with a strong focus on the field. The APCC Consortium plans to utilize the mobile messaging platform WhatsApp, along with regional workshops and farmer training programs, to ensure that farmers can easily understand climate information and apply it to actual farming practices. At the same time, it aims to enhance the sustainability and ownership of project outcomes by strengthening the scientific and technical capacity, as well as the regional networks, of the Peruvian Meteorological Service, the primary institution responsible for producing climate information.

## Moving beyond simple support, toward "farmer-participatory climate ODA"

In particular, a key strength of this project lies in its farmer-participatory approach. The APCC Consortium plans to introduce training programs based on PICSA (a participatory training methodology that helps farmers interpret climate information and develop their own farming plans), enabling farmers to directly understand climate information and apply it to agricultural decision-making. An official from the APCC Consortium said, "Rather than simply receiving information, we aim to help farmers interpret climate information themselves and make their own decisions regarding sowing times, crop selection, and water management strategies."

Local residents have also responded positively. In a survey conducted among farmers in the Acocro region, more than 95% of respondents said they are experiencing the impact of climate change, and 97% expressed willingness to participate in climate information training and platform development. In particular, many respondents noted that while the climate information currently available does not provide practical support, region-specific, tailored information would be highly beneficial for their farming activities.



A scene from the "Commemoration Ceremony for the Selection of the Automatic Observation System Installation Site" held at a farm in Ayacucho, Peru.

The APCC Consortium does not view this project as a support initiative limited to Peru. Based on data accumulated from diverse climate environments—namely coastal, high-altitude Andean, and inland mountainous regions—it aims to establish a climate information—based agricultural resilience model that can be expanded across the wider Latin American region in the future.

This case also serves as a representative example of how KOICA's Public Partnership Programs are becoming increasingly field-oriented. A structure in which field demand is validated through Q-DEEP and then linked to the Main Project to test practical applicability is now being actively implemented. The APCC Consortium selected Peru as its first field site, and this pilot initiative is now being introduced into the daily lives of local farmers.

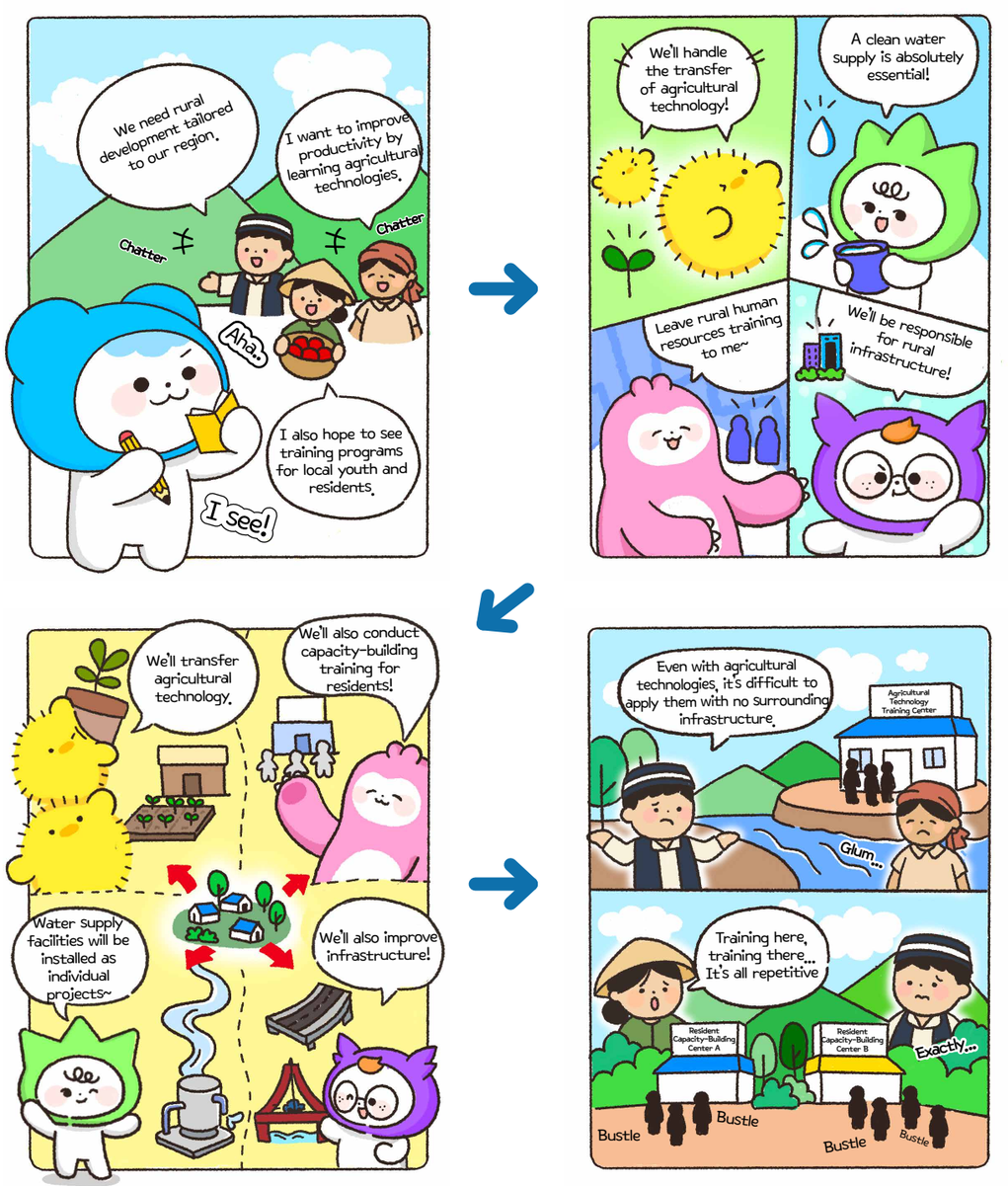


At a farmer capacity-building workshop held at a community center in Acocro, Peru, a local farmer practices using a crop calendar under the guidance of officials from the APCC Consortium and the Peruvian Meteorological Service.

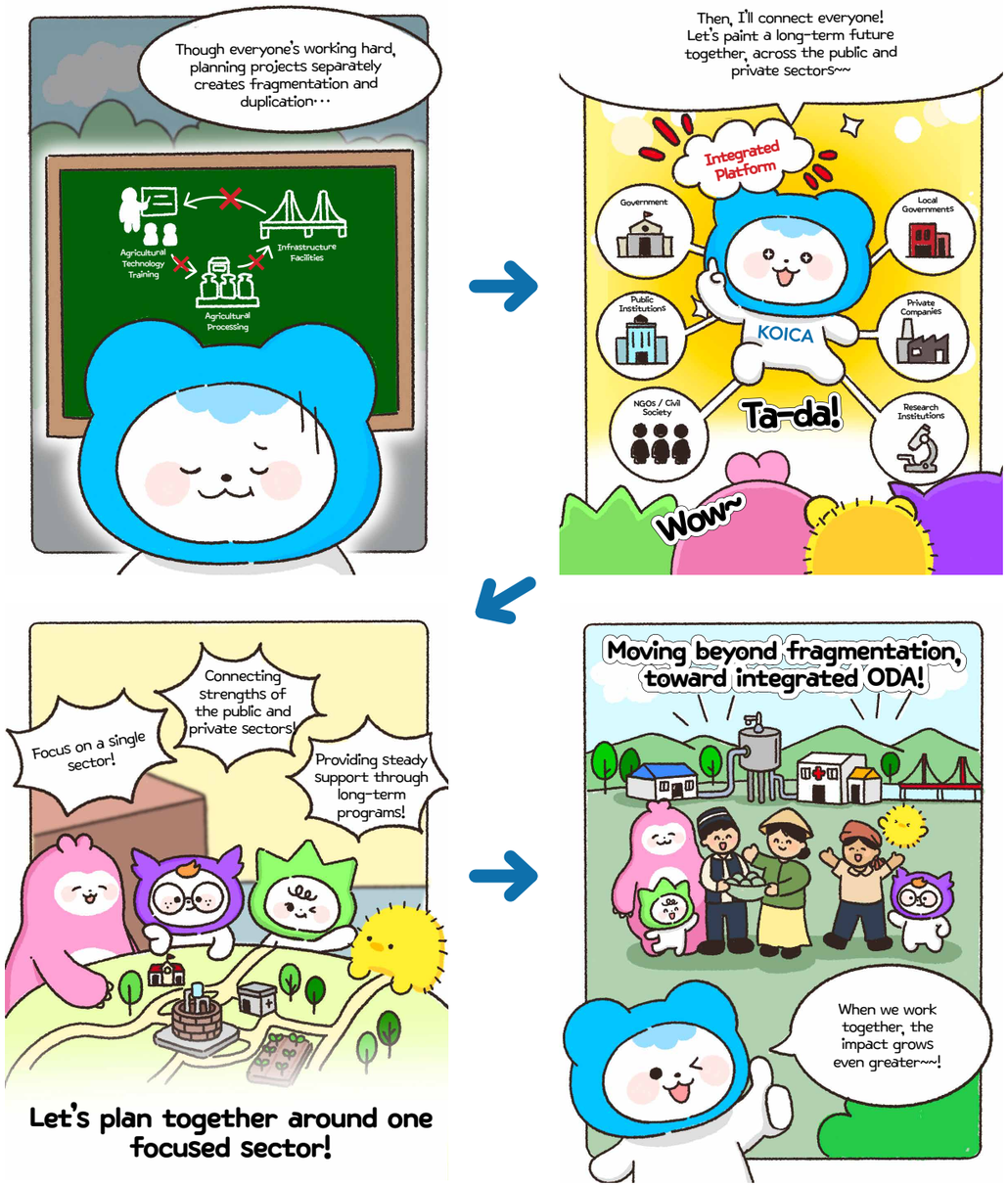
* Selected as a pilot project in 2025, but equivalent to a main project under the reorganized 2026 program structure

Integrated ODA in cartoon

# Together, not alone: the power of integrated ODA




You may be wondering, “We are doing so well but why aren’t we making enough impact?” The answer lies in “connection.” Integrated ODA connects scattered projects into a single, comprehensive picture. Let’s find out how to create greater change together with KOICA’s characters.



Separate fellowship programs, now united

# KOICA integrates fellowship programs



Participants from Korea and Mongolia taking part in drills during the KOICA-National Fire Agency fellowship program on Strengthening Disaster Response and Emergency Medical Service Capabilities in Mongolia in September 2025.

Korea's fellowship programs, a cornerstone of ODA capacity development, are undergoing a major transformation. At the heart of this reform is the integration of previously fragmented fellowship programs, which were managed by different ministries, into IEM-CIAT, a centralized training platform led by KOICA.

In 2025, more than 30 ministries and agencies independently implemented over 300 short-term fellowship programs. Although the total budget amounted to approximately KRW 60 billion, the fragmented and small-scale nature of their management raised persistent concerns about overlapping programs, inefficiency, and dispersed outcomes. In response, the government has officially decided to consolidate small-scale, short-term training programs and has begun establishing a unified training system centered on KOICA.

## From project identification to performance management—all in one platform

The most significant change is the unification of the project implementation structure. Starting this year, fellowship programs from selected ministries have been transferred to KOICA as part of a pilot initiative. Beginning in 2027, all short-term training projects will be identified through KOICA's channels, and budget allocation will be fully centralized. Projects previously identified by individual ministries will be consolidated under a unified budget framework called "Ministry Fellowship Support" and managed through a single platform. The project identification process will also be restructured. Previously, the N-2 approach, which required project preparation to begin two years before implementation, resulted in a lengthy planning process and limited the ability to respond to changing circumstances. By transitioning to the N-1 approach, which shortens the preparation period to one year, the gap between project identification and implementation has been significantly reduced. This change is expected to enable more timely responses to field needs, reduce the risk of project changes, and ultimately enhance partner countries' satisfaction.

Under this unified framework, KOICA is currently accepting proposals for new Ministry Fellowship Support projects for 2027. Project proposals from government ministries and metropolitan local governments will be accepted until Aug.14 this year, and the final projects will be selected following preliminary reviews and project evaluations. Detailed submission guidelines are available on the KOICA website.




In September 2025, participants from Korea and Mongolia gathered for the KOICA-National Fire Agency Local fellowship program on Strengthening Disaster Response and Emergency Medical Service Capabilities in Mongolia.

The operational approach will also shift to a 'collaborative division-of-labor model.' KOICA will oversee the entire project cycle—including project identification, institution selection, implementation, and performance management—while individual ministries will contribute their policy expertise through curriculum development and expert instruction. Meanwhile, diplomatic missions and overseas offices will be responsible for conducting local needs assessments and selecting participants, further strengthening field-level outcomes.

In parallel, the performance management system will also be integrated. The entire process—from participant selection to post-training follow-up—will be managed through a single system, with greater emphasis on knowledge sharing and sustaining outcomes through alumni networks. This integrated approach aims to move beyond one-time training and establish a framework that drives tangible policy improvements and stronger partnerships.

This overhaul is more than a simple reorganization of projects; it represents a fundamental shift in the approach to talent development ODA. It marks the transition from a 'fragmented training' model centered on individual institutions to an 'integrated talent development' model aligned with national strategies. The direction of this transformation is clear: to bring together fellowship programs that were once operated separately and reshape them into a system built on collaboration rather than fragmentation.



Plus Interview

Kim Youn-lee, Manager, Capacity Enhancement Program Team 1, KOICA

## "Reducing redundancy, maximizing synergy"



Kim Youn-lee

**Q Tell us more about the fellowship programs implemented by KOICA and other government agencies.**

Various government ministries and agencies, including KOICA, implement a range of fellowship programs to share Korea's unique development experience and expertise with partner countries, thereby helping address their development challenges and promote sustainable economic and social development. These fellowship programs can be broadly divided into two categories. The first is invitational course in-country training, in which participants are invited to Korea for short-term programs, typically lasting around two weeks. This category is further divided into country-specific program, designed for participants from a single partner country, and multi-country program, which brings together participants from two or more partner countries. The second category is the scholarship program, which supports participants from partner countries in pursuing master's or doctoral degrees.

**Q What is the KOICA-hosted training platform, IEM-CIAT?**

IEM-CIAT is an integrated training platform that combines the Korean government's unified training brand, IEM (Inclusive Education Modules), with KOICA's fellowship program, CIAT (Capacity Improvement and Advancement for Tomorrow). It is a collaborative system through which KOICA and government ministries jointly manage the entire project cycle, from project identification and implementation to performance management. Under this platform, KOICA supports government ministries in identifying projects and helps ensure that the actual needs of partner countries are reflected in project design. Specifically, KOICA first surveys government ministries to identify potential training project proposals. It then shares these proposals with partner countries through Korean diplomatic missions and KOICA overseas offices to assess whether there is corresponding demand on the partner-country side for the proposed projects. KOICA then shares the survey results with the relevant ministries. This enables ministries to develop project proposals based on their areas of expertise, while partner countries benefit from a single, unified communication channel, reducing the burden of repeated coordination. Selected projects will proceed with participant recruitment and selection through KOICA's overseas network, and the fellowship programs will be implemented in close collaboration with the relevant ministries and implementing agencies. After participants complete the training and return to their home countries, KOICA will support the continued management of pro-Korea alumni networks and knowledge-sharing activities through its alumni associations, creating a sustainable environment in which participants can share the knowledge and experience gained during the training with their organizations and local communities.

**Q What are the advantages of integrating fellowship programs under KOICA rather than under individual government ministries?**

KOICA has extensive experience in implementing global fellowship programs since its establishment, as well as a strong field network with partner countries through its overseas offices in 48 countries. In addition, it has the infrastructure to deliver a wide range of training, including the KOICA Training Center and its online training platform, CIAT-ON. Therefore, under the IEM-CIAT integrated platform, government ministries and public agencies will be able to leverage KOICA's established systems and global network, allowing them to focus on designing high-quality training content that is more closely aligned with the needs of partner countries.

**Q What are some of the benefits of IEM-CIAT?**

We expect positive outcomes in three major areas. First, the platform will reduce the fragmentation of ODA fellowship programs and strengthen whole-of-government cooperation by preventing overlapping initiatives. By integrating performance and risk management systems, it will enable more systematic and efficient project implementation. As a result, the Korean government's competitiveness in global capacity development through ODA is also expected to be strengthened. Second, by combining the policy and sector expertise of each ministry with KOICA's extensive experience in ODA and fellowship program management, the platform will reduce administrative burdens while enhancing both the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.

Finally, by establishing a single channel for identifying training needs in partner countries and delivering demand-driven, tailored fellowship programs, the platform is expected to increase satisfaction in partner countries and further strengthen pro-Korea networks. K

Interview with 3 KOICA veterans who built 35 years of KOICA

# From hospital construction to museum design: success in development cooperation

Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, Iraq, India, Cameroon… During a conversation with the three veterans who took on countless challenges to build the KOICA we know today, so many countries were mentioned that it was hard to keep count. With their wealth of field experience, they shared countless stories of miraculous changes. These compelling episodes were presented during a YouTube talk show celebrating the 35th anniversary of KOICA's founding.

**Participants**
**Kim Young-ran,** senior director general of Strategic Management Directorate (31 years of service)
**Ra Kap-chae,** director of the Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team (18 years)
**Chang Woo-chan,** director of the Southwest Asia Team and the Pacific Islands Team (21 years)




Three KOICA veterans smile as they hold up drawings depicting what they imagine themselves to look like in 10 years. From left: Chang Woo-chan, director of the Southwest Asia Team and the Pacific Islands Team; Kim Young-ran, senior director general of Strategic Management and Ra Kap-chae, director of the Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team



Old KOICA headquarters in Hyehwa-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul

## Fond memories of days in Hyehwa-dong

Together, these three development cooperation veterans have spent a combined 70 years at KOICA. Having moved between field missions and headquarters over such a long journey, what moments do they remember most vividly? They sat down to talk about KOICA's past, present, and future. As the veterans looked back on their early days, memories of Hyehwa-dong naturally came back to life. The KOICA headquarters, now located in Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, were based in Hyehwa-dong from 1991 to 2008. Ra Kap-chae, head of the Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team who joined the organization in 2008, recalled those days, saying, "I used to run into senior colleagues often on my way home from work. They never just passed by—they always treated me to dinner."

Kim Young-ran, senior director general of Strategic Management Directorate, added her reflections on those days.

"I remember seniors and colleagues gathering along the paths of Daehak-ro, having long, lively conversations. There were even times when it took me four hours to get to Hyehwa Station on Subway Line 4, right in front of the office. Back then, new employees were required to sit in on all department head meetings. It was a way for us to gain a broad understanding of the organization's work," Kim said. "Thanks to that, I was able to learn about development cooperation and overall organizational operations, although I had no choice but to work overtime to complete my own tasks. Leaving the office after such a grueling day felt like starting an entirely new day all over again. It was physically exhausting, but it was a time when the bonds between seniors and juniors were strong, and there was a rich culture of togetherness."

Chang Woo-chan, director of the Southwest Asia Team and the Pacific Islands Team, said he visited the former headquarters in Daehak-ro again this past February with his contemporaries to celebrate their 20th anniversary of joining the organization. "The main building back then was designed by a renowned architect. We walked through different parts of the building, took commemorative photos, and shared old stories and memories from our early days as newcomers."

## People before projects: lessons learned in the trenches

Since development cooperation requires transforming both people and systems, even a single project takes a long time to complete. Kim had the rare experience of participating in the entire lifecycle of the Philippines—Cavite Friendship Hospital project.

"I moved back and forth between the field and headquarters, participating in the entire process from the first phase of the project through to the third phase. Even within KOICA, this was a rare case. The emotion I felt on the opening day of the Korea—Philippines Friendship Hospital in Cavite was beyond words. The moment I walked through the hospital doors with officials from the Cavite provincial government, the Ministry of Health, and hospital staff, I felt as if something was being created out of nothing—like the moment my daughter was born," Kim said. "Today, it has grown beyond a simple public hospital to become a representative model hospital in the Philippines, even taking on community health education. Looking back, it was 'people' who truly built that hospital. The experience of building trust and working together toward the same goal remains my most precious memory of development cooperation to this day."




Ra Kap-chae, director of the Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team, says while working at the Hyehwa-dong office, he often ran into his seniors on his way home and ended up having dinners with them.

When Chang was dispatched as a KOICA country director to India, an Indian businessman he met gave him advice that left a lasting impression: "India is a difficult country even for Indians. The key to surviving in India is not skill, but patience."

"India was on a completely different level from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Iraq, and Ghana, where I had previously served. With a population of 1.4 billion, its decision-making structure was highly complex, and dealing with central government officials was no easy task," Chang said. "While I had previously focused on identifying and driving new projects to produce tangible results, India was one continuous waiting game. Although immediate results were not visible, I had to persevere with the belief that I was building the foundation for full-scale ODA cooperation and that my efforts would eventually bear fruit. I learned the value of patience, which is far more important than simply pushing a project for-






Chang Woo-chan, director of the Southwest Asia Team and the Pacific Islands Team, recalls he experienced culture shock while working in India but it was also a valuable experience that taught him virtues of patience. The photo shows Chang during his time in India.

ward."

Reflecting on his time leading the KOICA Cameroon Office just three years after joining the organization, Ra recalled his experience with the project to establish the Yaoundé Emergency Center (CURY). He noted that, at first, he believed operating an emergency medical center in Cameroon—something not easy to manage even in Korea—would be impossible.

"It was a project approved before my arrival, requiring responsibility for everything from design and construction to the supply of medical equipment. However, Cameroon's situation at the time was extremely challenging. Patients had to pay patients had to pay in advance and secure their own medical supplies before receiving treatment. It was an emergency medical center for patients requiring immediate treatment, so it was fundamentally difficult to make sense of in that context," Ra said. "As the project moved forward despite these challenges, someone appeared who completely changed its trajectory. Dr. Jeong Joong-sik, an emergency medicine specialist, joined as an expert, relocating with his wife and four-year-old child. He established the operating system and supported medical staff training. He stayed for six years and eight months to run the center. I witnessed firsthand how enormous a difference a single expert can make."

As the project he once expected to fail came to be regarded as a representative healthcare success story for an entire country, he realized a vital truth: the success or failure of a development cooperation project is determined not by budgets or facilities, but by people.

"Simply building facilities and providing equipment does not create change. In the end, it is the people who quietly dedicate themselves behind the scenes who change the world," Ra said.

## Beyond limitations, the power to create possibility

Perhaps those who work in unfamiliar lands to strengthen the institutional, economic, and technological foundations needed by partner countries must possess something extraordinary. Chang shared the secret to surviving so long in development cooperation, joking, 'I have a pretty strong stomach, so even when we all eat the same food, I'm the only one who doesn't get sick. Whether it's food or culture, you have to be able to digest it well in the field.'"

"While AI can collect and analyze information, distinguishing truth from falsehood and making final decisions remains a human responsibility," Chang continued. "The ability to understand others' perspectives and emotions, mediate conflicting views, and communicate effectively to move forward will become even more essential in the future."

The field of development cooperation requires connecting the complex circumstances of diverse stakeholders with the limited capacities of suppliers to achieve optimal results. At the same time, supported projects must take root locally and continue to function sustainably. In this context, Kim emphasized the vital importance of local adaptability.

"Building relationships based on respect for and understanding of local culture is a core competency in development cooperation. The realities on the ground in developing countries often defy existing information and assumptions. Rather than striving for 'upfront perfection,' we need an approach of acting quickly, verifying in the field, and continuously making adjustments," Kim said. "When selecting target sites for the remote hospital construction project in Iloilo, Philippines, we restructured the project by interviewing stakeholders, reflecting the needs of beneficiaries, and expanding the role that local governments could manage. I still remember refining the project through site visits more than two or three times a month and conducting workshops with local healthcare personnel.

Ra shared an anecdote about how he cultivated a seed of possibility through problem-solving during the implementation of the National Museum construction project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To secure a significant budget increase for a project that was underfunded from the outset, he began by completely redefining the implementation strategy.

"Although the burden of audits and accountability issues was significant, I established a new project review committee composed of experts to examine the plan, secured the validity of the budget increase, and used this as a basis to obtain final approval," Ra said.

After finally securing the budget with great difficulty, he improved the method for selecting the design firm. For a facility destined to become a national landmark, awarding the contract solely based on the lowest price lacked justification. Consequently, for the first time in a KOICA project, a design competition method was introduced, allowing the final design firm to be selected based on design quality and capability alongside cost.

"Since it was the first attempt, I built the procedures from scratch by reviewing case studies from other organizations and seeking expert consultation," Ra said. "As a result, a design that fit beautifully with the local culture and environment was selected, and it continues to receive positive reviews to this day."

When concerns arose regarding the museum's operational sustainability after construction, he noted that the area lacked large-scale venues such as hotels or banquet facilities. He incorporated the idea of adding a multipurpose event space into the design to maximize its usability. Today, it is actively used for major national events and banquets, including weddings.

## No one left behind: Speaking on the future of KOICA

Even over the span of 35 years, the value of people-centered development cooperation has remained unchanged. Chang noted that this is because "KOICA employees have a strong inclination toward pursuing the common good." He observed that, in working to reduce poverty and inequality in the global community, many individuals find greater meaning in creating a better world than in personal achievement.

"Our mission is to ensure that no one is left behind and to provide a ladder so that everyone can have opportunities for growth and development, regardless of the country, region, or gender they were born into," Chang said. "To realize this mission, we must not only deliver results but also share the value and meaning of development cooperation with the public to gain their support."

He also offered advice on KOICA's future direction, emphasizing that its activities




Chang believes the ability to understand others and to communicate in positive manners will become even more important in development cooperation.

should be promoted not only as a means of supporting the growth of developing countries, but also as a vital instrument of public diplomacy that builds trust and cooperation among nations.

Ra advised, "The experience of directly implementing and managing development cooperation projects in the field is a unique capability of KOICA," emphasizing the need for a knowledge management and learning system to ensure that field experience and expertise are not lost, but instead accumulated and shared as assets for the entire organization.




Kim Young-ran, senior director general of Strategic Management Directorate, says the field of development cooperation is fraught with unpredictability, making it important not to get caught up with perfect preparation and to instead make an effort to constantly adjust strategies on the fly.

"KOICA members need creative thinking, a spirit of challenge, and the courage to try new things. Why are we doing this work? Is there a better way? We must continuously ask these questions" Ra added. "Even in the distant future, I hope KOICA will be remembered as an institution with deep expertise in development cooperation and as an organization that excels at implementing projects directly in the field."

Kim emphasized that, within the rapidly changing ODA environment, we must pay close attention to the growing demands for efficiency and tangible results, in addition to values and philosophy.

"KOICA members have cultivated their expertise with a deep sense of pride, and it is thanks to them that Korea's ODA has grown to where it is today. Building upon this foundation, we must now respond proactively to change, collaborate with diverse partners, and deliver distinct, impactful results," Kim said. "I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has dedicated themselves to advancing Korea's ODA over the past 35 years, and I look forward to continuing to create a better world with these enduring values."

The senior colleagues who have shaped KOICA's past will continue to serve as a reliable pillar for the next 35 years, supporting the growth of their juniors and wishing for KOICA's continued development and success. K

Scan the QR code to watch the video of an interview with these three KOICA veterans.

35th anniversary special: “Top 10 news stories for KOICA”

# Seeds of hope, fruits of change and growth

KOICA celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. Over the years, KOICA has consistently worked toward sustainable development in the field of international development cooperation, bringing about meaningful change. MAGAZINE KOICA has compiled KOICA’s key milestones into the top 10 news stories, highlighting how the organization has planted seeds of hope and reaped the fruits of change and growth around the world.

## 01 First step in Korea’s ODA history The official launch of KOICA




On April 1, 1991, KOICA, an organization dedicated to ODA, was officially launched. This monumental event marked the beginning of Korea’s ODA history in earnest. At the time of its founding, the organization consisted of its headquarters, a project support group, and six overseas offices, inheriting 158 personnel from existing ODA agencies. Since then, KOICA has expanded its organizational capacity through open recruitment.

## 02 The integrated volunteer group of the Korean government The launch of World Friends Korea (WFK)



The public-participation volunteer project began by taking over the Korea Youth Overseas Volunteer Program from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. In 2009, it launched “World Friends Korea (WFK),” the unified brand for the Korean government’s volunteer programs, by integrating overseas volunteer groups that had been dispersed across various government ministries. As of June 2026, around 1,050 volunteers in 53 countries are assisting their global neighbors and enhancing Korea’s brand value.

## 03 Nurturing future leaders of developing countries Expansion of global fellowship programs

KOICA has been running fellowship programs to nurture future leaders of developing countries. Beginning with the “Capacity Development Fellowship Program” in 1991, which invited 362 participants from partner countries, KOICA introduced the “KOICA Long-term Degree Fellowship Program” in 1997 to help participants develop into key personnel for policymaking and institutional reform in their home countries. Today, through its fellowship program brand “IEM-CIAT,” KOICA is creating a virtuous cycle of global talent development.

## 04 Raising public awareness of ODA Building hubs for communication and education

In 2010, KOICA established the ODA Education Center, the first educational institution in Korea specializing in development cooperation. It also opened the Global Village Experience Center, a cultural education space where visitors can learn about and gain a deeper understanding of the cultures of partner countries. The facility has since been renovated into the Development Cooperation Exhibition Hall, which promotes global citizenship. In 2015, KOICA opened the Development Cooperation History Hall, which systematically documents the history of Korean ODA and KOICA’s achievements.

## 05 Initiating advanced-nation ODA Joining the OECD DAC

Building on its efforts to expand and advance ODA, Korea joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)—a forum of major donor countries for development cooperation—on Jan. 1, 2010. This marked the international community’s official recognition of Korea as an advanced donor country. It was the first time in history that a country had transitioned from an aid recipient to a formal DAC donor country.

## 06 Value of global co-prosperity takes roots in local Communities Opening International Development Cooperation Centers




KOICA has established International Development Cooperation Centers at six national universities across the country since 2016. Serving as regional hubs for ODA projects, these centers provide customized education, briefing sessions, and consulting services for local talent, institutions, and businesses. Through these efforts, KOICA has enhanced understanding of international development cooperation among students and residents in non-metropolitan areas and expanded opportunities for ODA participation nationwide.

## 07 Joining hands to solve global issues Expanding public-private partnership networks

As the scale of international aid has grown and methods of development cooperation have diversified, combining the flexibility of the private sector with its on-site expertise has become essential. In response, KOICA launched its NGO support program in 1995 and introduced the Public-Private Partnership program in 2009. In 2012, it launched the Development Cooperation Alliance, establishing a collaborative network that brings together diverse actors, including civil society organizations, universities, and private enterprises.

## 08 Rushing to disaster sites The outstanding performance of the KDRT




When large-scale disasters strike around the world, the Korea Disaster Relief Team (KDRT) rushes to the scene. Since its establishment in 2007, the KDRT has embodied humanitarian values by playing a vital role in responding to major disasters, including the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa, the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the 2018 Laos dam collapse, the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye, and the 2023 wildfires in Canada.

## 09 Saving the world with K-quarantine Implementing the ABC Program for crisis response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, KOICA implemented the “ABC Program,” a crisis response initiative aimed at strengthening resilience through development cooperation. In 2020 alone, KOICA invested a total of USD 75 million to swiftly provide diagnostic kits, masks, and ultra-low-temperature freezers for vaccine storage to 116 countries worldwide.

## 10 Expanding Korea’s economic territory Leading co-prosperity through ODA

KOICA has achieved significant results in addressing challenges in developing countries while nurturing domestic startups through the “Creative Technology Solution (CTS)” program, which incorporates the ideas of young innovators and cutting-edge startup technologies into development cooperation, as well as the “Inclusive Business Solution (IBS)” and “Innovative Partnership Solution (IPS)” programs, which create business opportunities. Since launching these programs with 10 companies in 2015, KOICA has expanded the initiative to include seven programs, with a cumulative total of 76 projects and 62 participating companies as of 2020, fostering domestic enterprises while enhancing the effectiveness of ODA projects.

A sustainable future through culture

# From promoting Korea to empowering partner countries—cultural ODA

Siem Reap, Cambodia. On one side of the Angkor archaeological site, local technicians are carefully reassembling collapsed stones, one by one. This is the site of the "Preah Pithu Temple Conservation and Restoration Project," jointly promoted by KOICA and the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation. This project is not merely about restoring a ruined temple. The Cambodian technicians who have mastered restoration techniques alongside Korean experts are building the capacity to independently preserve their own cultural heritage through local technical training and invitational training programs.

## Reframing cultural ODA strategies with a focus on partner countries

Helping partner countries foster sustainable development based on their own culture, rather than merely building cultural facilities or introducing Korean culture, is the direction pursued by Korea's "Cultural ODA." Culture serves as the foundation that reflects a nation's identity, while also functioning as a resource that can drive economic and social development. For this reason, understanding and respecting the culture of partner countries is regarded as a crucial factor in enhancing the effectiveness of development cooperation projects.

There are two key factors behind Korea's focus on cultural ODA. One is that the growing international popularity of Korean culture, or K-culture, has strengthened Korea's soft power and expanded the potential for culture-based projects in development cooperation as well. The other is experience. Korea is a country that has been nurturing its cultural industries since the late 1990s, recognizing the economic value of culture. This experience is a practical asset that can be shared with partner countries.



KOICA is implementing cultural ODA through various activities, including taekwondo and Korean language education, with a focus on developing countries. The photo shows local children participating in a class where they create the Korean national flag and hanbok during activities of the 5th Uzbekistan Project Volunteer Group held this year.

It is in this context that the government has designated the cultural sector as a core area of grant aid. Culture has become important not only as an independent field of development cooperation but also as a means of enhancing outcomes in other sectors. The core of cultural ODA lies in respecting the history, traditions, values, and unique cultural identities of partner countries. It focuses on helping more people access and enjoy culture, building the foundation of cultural and creative industries, and supporting the preservation and use of cultural heritage. It is more about enabling partner countries to shape their own futures through their own cultures, rather than simply "delivering Korean culture."

While Korea's cultural ODA has been pursued through various agencies, it has faced limitations due to small-scale projects being scattered across multiple locations. In response, the government has decided to pursue cultural ODA more strategically by identifying projects tailored to the needs of partner countries, linking multiple projects into unified programs, and strengthening public–private partnerships.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Strategy for Cultural ODA in Grant Aid"* was developed with this awareness. Under the vision of "Investing in Enhancing the Diversity and Creative Innovation Capacity of Future Generations," the ministry set "Improving Access to Culture for Youth and Strengthening Innovation Capacity in Cultural and Creative Industries" as its strategic objective. The core fields are cultural and arts education; cultural infrastructure; institutional reform and talent development in the cultural and creative industries; and the protection of cultural and natural heritage, along with the establishment of a sustainable tourism ecosystem. This means creating a foundation where young people in partner countries can have easier access to culture, engage in creative activities, and connect those experiences to industries and jobs.

The government-wide "Development Cooperation Strategy in the Cultural Sector"** takes an even broader approach. With the goal of "realizing cultural values centered on partner countries and creating a sustainable, mutually beneficial ecosystem for cultural cooperation," it sets out several key tasks. These include building the foundation for cultural and artistic development, supporting cultural and creative industries, implementing lifestyle-oriented, introducing ODA+ (which integrates cultural elements into existing projects), protecting cultural heritage alongside tourism development, and expanding multi-stakeholder partnerships. A distinguishing feature is that it does not limit cultural ODA to culture and the arts or cultural heritage, but also encompasses lifestyle, sports, and language education.

While the two aforementioned strategies present a government-wide direction, KOICA proposes an implementation plan*** focused on translating these strategies into field-level projects, drawing on its strengths and expertise in Korea's core cultural ODA sectors. As intermediate objectives to achieve the strategic goals of the Korean government's "Strategy for Cultural ODA in Grant Aid," KOICA has established three core initiatives: revitalizing cultural and creative industries, expanding the value of cultural and natural heritage, and building sustainable tourism ecosystems.



Since 2014, KOICA has been working with UNESCO on projects for the digitization, archival development, and preservation of records at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

## Cultural cooperation expanding into content, tourism, and heritage

The revitalization of cultural and creative industries is reflected in the overseas volunteer program. Long before the term "K-culture" became widely used, KOICA had already been consistently dispatching volunteers to teach Korean culinary arts, taekwondo, and the Korean language. Since last year, a project volunteer group has also been dispatched to Uzbekistan to conduct Korean language education and continue people-to-people exchanges. This approach allows local youth and residents to learn from one another and engage through language, food, and sports.

In the field of expanding the value of cultural and natural heritage, the Cambodia project is a prime example. The Preah Pithu Temple Conservation and Restoration Project, which began in 2015, later led to that of Elephant Terrace. Moving beyond mere monument restoration, it is now strengthening Cambodia's capacity to preserve and manage its cultural heritage through local technical training and invitational training programs. Furthermore, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum project demonstrates that the significance of cultural heritage preservation extends beyond physical restoration. Since 2014, KOICA has been working in partnership with UNESCO to digitize Khmer Rouge records and build a comprehensive archive. This project represents technical cooperation to preserve fragile records, while also helping future generations confront and understand the painful legacy of Cambodia's modern history. Preserving a nation's historical memory, identity, and the value of peace is also a crucial direction in which cultural ODA is expanding.

A prime example of building a sustainable tourism ecosystem can be found in Hue, Vietnam. As the capital of Vietnam's last dynasty, the Nguyen Dynasty, the city possesses rich cultural and natural tourism resources, including the Imperial Citadel and the Huong River. Starting with the establishment of an urban development master plan in 2011, KOICA has progressively continued its projects to include the refurbishment of the Huong River waterfront area, the creation of a cultural tourism database and smart streets, and the development of a cultural complex and pedestrian bridge on Da Vien Island. The Hue City project demonstrates the direction of cultural ODA by linking cultural tourism resources to urban development and regional economic revitalization.

At the center of cultural ODA are the cultures and people of partner countries. Korea's experience in developing its cultural industries and KOICA's expertise in development cooperation are utilized to help partner countries design their own futures based on their own stories and heritage. This is why cultural ODA is gaining attention as a new channel of development cooperation, moving beyond simple cultural introduction.

* Strategy for Cultural ODA in Grant Aid (2026-2030)" (April 2026, jointly developed by relevant ministries)

** Development Cooperation Strategy in the Cultural Sector (Approved by the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), May 2026)

*** Cultural ODA Implementation Plan (June 2026, KOICA)

Aid leans on AI

# AI ODA changes the development cooperation paradigm




KOICA plans to continuously expand its support for capacity development and strategic cooperation with the international community so that developing countries can address their own challenges and achieve AI-driven transformation. The photo shows the "2025 KOICA Climate AI Forum" held in Seoul last year.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a core tool in the field of ODA for analyzing and addressing socio-economic challenges faced by developing countries. Accordingly, KOICA is actively promoting the introduction of AI to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of its ODA projects.

### The shift toward AI-driven ODA begins in earnest

KOICA is actively advancing its development cooperation strategy centered on AI. In line with 'The 4th Comprehensive Strategy for Development Cooperation for International Development Cooperation.' Korea's highest-level ODA strategy, this vision goes beyond the simple introduction of technology to promote AI-based development cooperation aiming to fundamentally transform the ODA paradigm. The Korean government has expressed its commitment to cooperating with the international community to realize a "Global AI Basic Society," in which all of humanity can equally benefit from AI. The goal is to build a future that ensures equal opportunities for all countries and individuals through the advancement of AI. From this perspective of inclusive and shared prosperity, KOICA plans to strengthen Korea's AI competitiveness while also contributing to the establishment of AI sovereignty in developing countries. Specifically, KOICA will support developing countries by providing AI policy roadmap consulting and building data collection infrastructure, enabling both Korea and partner countries to advance their AI transition through mutual prosperity. KOICA plans to identify small-scale, Korean-style AI models equipped with appropriate technologies tailored to the energy environments of developing countries, while also leading global initiatives and building partnerships to address global challenges through AI. KOICA also aims to support capacity development so that developing countries can achieve their own AI transformation, while simultaneously strengthening its internal AI capabilities and utilization to improve operational efficiency.

### 'AI ODA' already in operation on the ground

KOICA has long implemented ODA projects that enable digitally marginalized groups to access AI technologies, while also expanding tailored AI and software education for young people. For example, it has supported mathematics and science education for adolescent girls in Ghana and Tanzania, and established a Coding Academy in Rwanada. It is not limited to the education sector. AI technologies have been applied and expanded across diverse fields, including healthcare, agriculture, and climate. A primary example is the "AI-driven early diagnosis and sustainable healthcare capacity building project" currently underway in Peru, in partnership with the Korea Health Industry Development Institute and the medical AI company Lunit. KOICA has also continued to support Korean AI technology companies addressing challenges in developing countries through its Creative Technology Solution (CTS) and Inclusive Business Solution (IBS) programs. Selected as an IBS company, AIWORKX has launched a project to develop a Khmer-language AI agent that enables people in Cambodia to access AI services in their native language. WI.Plat participated across all stages of the CTS program* and commercialized an AI-based solution in Indonesia that analyzes acoustic data to detect water leaks. Building on this achievement, it was selected as an IBS company and is now implementing a project to expand leak management infrastructure, strengthen human capacity, and scale the solution nationwide. KOICA's AI ODA efforts are expanding beyond individual projects into strategic cooperation with the international community. In 2024, KOICA partnered with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to launch the "Climate Future Partnership (AI4ClimateAction)," taking a leading role in fostering international collaboration to expand the use of AI for climate action in developing countries. Since last year, in collaboration with the UNFCCC, KOICA has played a central role in bridging the climate AI gap through a range of initiatives, including forums for sharing knowledge and experience in climate AI both domestically and internationally, as well as global competitions to identify innovative AI-based climate solutions.

* CTS consists of three stages: Seed 0 (capacity building), Seed 1 (ODA testbed), and Seed 2 (technology commercialization).





Plus Interview

Yoon Seok-won, CEO of AIWORKX

# "AI ODA goes beyond simple aid to build a sustainable industrial ecosystem"



Yoon Seok-won

**Q What kind of company is AIWORKX?**

AIWORKX is a specialized solution provider supporting the full AI development life cycle, from data construction and model development to AI agents and AI/software verification. The company pursues a human-centered AI approach, building an inclusive AI ecosystem by employing diverse groups, including persons with disabilities, and providing social services such as AI-powered care calls for older adults living alone and North Korean defectors. Selected for KOICA's IBS program, AIWORKX has been implementing the "AI Ecosystem Development and Digital Job Creation in Phnom Penh" project in Cambodia since March this year.

**Q What inspired your focus on language AI and localized AI technology?**

Currently, the global generative AI ecosystem is developing primarily around major languages such as English, Chinese, and Korean. In contrast, Khmer is considered a representative low-resource language. For instance, according to Common Crawl, a non-profit web archive that collects and stores publicly available internet data, English accounts for approximately 41% of the dataset, whereas Khmer accounts for around 0.009%, highlighting a severe shortage of training data for AI development. In other words, expanding AI accessibility for languages and countries that are relatively underrepresented in global AI development is a key objective of this project.

**Q What changes will this project bring about in Cambodia?**

It is not simply about introducing AI technology, but about laying the foundation for an AI industrial ecosystem in Cambodia that can grow in a self-sustaining way. Through this project, AIWORKX plans to build Khmer-based AI data and services and enable local youth to directly participate in AI data construction, AI agent operation, and digital service development. Through this, I believe a new form of digital jobs linked to future industries can be created, rather than simple repetitive tasks. Another major change is the expansion of AI accessibility. Until now, the global AI ecosystem has developed primarily around English and a small number of developed countries. Yet, if local language-based AI services become available even in countries with low-resource languages like Cambodia, citizens will be able to more easily benefit from AI across various fields such as education, public administration, welfare, and healthcare. In the long term, this is expected to foster an AI ecosystem in which local universities, government agencies, startups, and young talent in Cambodia all participate together.

**Q What kind of support have you received from KOICA, and what support do you expect to receive in the future?**

AIWORKX will receive a project budget of approximately KRW 2.5 billion over the next five years through KOICA's IBS program. Rather than the financial support itself, what is more important is the opportunity to work with KOICA to build Cambodia's AI ecosystem from a long-term perspective. I believe the greatest advantage of KOICA projects is that they do not simply support short-term initiatives, but instead build a cooperative framework together with local governments, educational institutions, public institutions, and enterprises. An AI ecosystem cannot be built in a short period of time; data, talent, industry, and policy must grow together, making long-term partnerships essential. Furthermore, KOICA's global network and experience in public cooperation are proving to be a significant asset in advancing the project at the local level.

**Q Is there anything else you would like to ask or expect from KOICA?**

I hope KOICA will expand its initiatives to identify more social ventures that apply AI for the public good and strategically support their growth in the global market. Beyond simply exporting technology, I believe a "Korean-style AI impact model"—one that creates jobs and addresses educational and social challenges—can be shared and scaled across many countries worldwide. In particular, AI is no longer a technology exclusive to certain companies or countries; it is becoming a core infrastructure that shapes the quality of life and the inequality of opportunity for all of humanity.

Therefore, I believe that enabling developing countries to share in the benefits of AI is one of the most important challenges of our time. K

2026 UNFCCC Climate Week

# “Global cooperation necessary to enhance AI accessibility in developing countries”

The “2026 UNFCCC Climate Week” was held from April 21 to 25 at the Yeosu Expo Convention Center. It is a major international event held annually ahead of the Conference of the Parties, bringing together governments, businesses, and civil society organizations from around the world to discuss ways to accelerate climate action. As part of the “Climate Future Partnership (2024-2027),” KOICA, in collaboration with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, held an official Climate Week session on April 23 under the theme “Leveraging AI for Climate Action in Developing Countries.” At the official session, representatives from governments and development cooperation agencies, AI experts, and climate tech startup officials gathered to share innovative examples of AI-driven climate action in developing countries and explore various avenues for cooperation to bridge the climate gap.




KOICA, together with UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, hosted an official session during the 2026 UNFCCC Climate Week under the theme, ‘Leveraging AI for Climate Action in Developing Countries.’

In its report “Governing AI for Humanity,” published in September 2024, the U.N. highlighted AI as a tool for addressing shared challenges for humanity and emphasized the need for international cooperation. In response, the UNFCCC officially endorsed the “AI4ClimateAction” initiative as a platform for cooperation in leveraging AI to address climate change at the Conference of the Parties held in 2023. The following year, KOICA entered into the “Climate Future Partnership” with the UNFCCC and has since served as a key partner of the initiative.

The official Climate Week session on April 23 at the Grand Hall of the Yeosu Expo Convention Center, themed “Leveraging AI for Climate Action in Developing Countries,” continued discussions on bridging the AI technology gap between developed and developing countries. “AI is a practical and powerful tool for climate action, but it is not something that everyone can easily access and utilize,” UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary Noura Hamladji said in her opening remarks. “Close coordination and collaboration from the international community are needed to prevent the gap between developing countries with limited AI accessibility — in terms of data, infrastructure, and other resources — and developed nations from widening further.” In his keynote address, Lee Yun-young, director of KOICA’s Office of Development Strategy and Asia-Pacific, referenced “SAFIR,” an AI-based agricultural and irrigation solution developed by the Integrated Watershed Management Institute (IWMI), which won the top prize at last year’s international AI technology competition, the “AI for Climate Action Award 2025 (AICA Award 2025).” Lee emphasized that empowering partner countries and strengthening the independent capacity of local technology experts are at the core of a sustainable partnership. Pedro Ivo Ferraz da Silva, chair of the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee (TEC), introduced the “AI Initiative for Climate Action” under the UNFCCC technology mechanism and presented the activities of the TEC at the session. Ferraz da Silva also presented AI-based climate modeling research outcomes alongside case studies on drought and flood prediction using satellite data and machine learning, and explained how AI can contribute to agricultural optimization and food security, resonating with the audience. “It is more important than ever to generate tangible impact through innovation,” he said. “We will ensure the implementation of responsible AI solutions is carried through.”

### AI: A New paradigm for addressing the climate crisis

Following the opening ceremony, two discussion sessions were held. The first session, themed “AI for Climate Action: Solutions Across Diverse Sectors,” began with the participation of AI innovators and representatives from global corporations, international organizations, and startups. Jo Yu-ri, senior researcher at Seoul National University, served as the moderator. Alisa Luangrath, leader of the International Cooperation Team at IWMI and the first presenter of the session, elaborated on real-world applications of “SAFIR,” a standout case from the “AICA Award 2025.” Luangrath noted that “while 70% of Laos’ population is engaged in agriculture, less than 50% actually utilize irrigation facilities,” and highlighted the real-world challenges brought on by the climate crisis, including fluctuations in rainfall due to climate change despite conditions suitable for double cropping, difficulties in cultivating field crops, and the inability to use irrigation facilities for three to four months during the dry season. She went on to explain that the solution was developed with goals extending beyond hardware to the development of software-related skills, including establishing irrigation infrastructure through SAFIR, addressing the lack of decision-making frameworks, and strengthening the management capacity of village organizations to effectively operate SAFIR. Lee Ju-hee, team leader at “VERYWORDS,” an e-mobility-based carbon neutrality platform company established in 2017, took the floor as a presenter. Lee said the company began selling electric motorcycles in Cambodia in 2025 and projected that it would reduce 680,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. With support from KOICA, VERYWORDS established Cambodia’s first electric motorcycle manufacturing facility at the Kien Svay Industrial Complex, approximately 20 km from Phnom Penh, and is leading the e-mobility market by lowering electric motorcycle prices through a subscription-based battery model, among other initiatives. The company is also applying AI technology to battery diagnostics and the development of user safety guidelines. Andreas Galatoulas, data & AI lead at the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), presented a case study on Ecuador’s early warning system, while Yoon Seok-won, CEO of AIWORKX, delivered a presentation titled “AI-Based Climate Response Solutions and Strategies for Application in Developing Countries.” Yoon, who emphasized that “AI is not merely a technology but a new paradigm for addressing the climate crisis,” proposed lightweight AI models and cloud-based platforms as solutions to overcome the data shortages and infrastructure gaps faced by developing countries. He also introduced projects that leverage AI in the agricultural sector to analyze soil and climate data, helping reduce damage from droughts and floods while improving productivity. In addition, he shared various case studies,



UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary Noura Hamladji emphasized the need for stronger and closer multilateral cooperation within the international community during her opening remarks.



In his keynote address, KOICA Director Lee Yun-young said, “We will contribute to building AI frameworks by sharing Korea’s AI Basic Act and the diverse experiences the country has accumulated thus far with partner countries.”



The moderator and presenters of the first session, which featured presentations and discussions on AI-driven solutions across various sectors, pose for a commemorative photo.



Alisa Luangrath, leader of the International Cooperation Team at IWMI, who claimed the top prize at the 'AICA Award 2025' with 'SAFIR,' an AI-based smart agriculture solution optimized for Laos, is presenting real-world cases of SAFIR's application in Laos through KOICA's pilot project.

including AI solutions for optimizing urban power grids and reducing carbon emissions in the field of energy management. Yoon also offered policy recommendations, emphasizing the need to develop customized AI models tailored to the needs of developing countries and calling for the establishment of international norms to address AI ethics issues, including data privacy and algorithmic transparency. The second session, moderated by DI Lab CTO Choi Ye-ji, brought together representatives from international organizations, developing countries, and donor agencies to discuss collaborative approaches under the theme, "Bridging the Gap: Demand Response and the Scaling of AI Use for Climate Action." The session also featured lively discussions on ways to narrow the AI divide between developed and developing countries. Tomoko Furusawa, head of the Partnership and Liaison Office at the Climate Technology Centre and Network, opened the session as the first presenter. "The reality in developing countries is that the lack of climate-related data makes it difficult to train AI models," she said. "International data-sharing platforms and standardized data management frameworks are needed to address this challenge." She further stressed that narrowing the AI utilization gap requires developed countries and international organizations to strengthen the AI capabilities of developing nations through data, technology, and financial support. She also emphasized that, beyond simply providing AI solutions, the training of local experts and the development of technological infrastructure must go hand in hand, reiterating her view that "AI is not a technology exclusive to developed countries, but a global asset to be shared by all humanity," she said.

Speaking as the second presenter, Kim Gyungah, Manager of the Climate and Economic Development Team at KOICA, stressed that "'AI for Climate' cannot be separated from 'AI for Development,' making locally driven capacity building—rather than simple technology transfer—essential." "This aligns closely with the Korean government's vision of a 'Global AI Basic Society,' which holds that the benefits of AI should reach all nations and communities as a universal public good," Kim added. Kim went on to propose that, considering how 75 to 83 percent of field sites in Africa and Latin America rate AI infrastructure as poor and 50 to 60 percent report data quality as inadequate, a phased financing model is essential—one that uses ODA grant aid to support initial proof-of-concept costs while linking performance-based public-private partnerships and bridging finance to achieve commercial sustainability. She further emphasized that only through collaboration among all stakeholders—including governments, local communities, the private sector, development partners, and research institutions—can AI become a truly practical tool for countries on the frontlines of the climate crisis.



Kim Gyungah, manager of Climate and Economic Development Team at KOICA, speaks on the need to strengthen the climate response capacity of developing countries through collaboration among diverse stakeholders, noting that AI-based climate action has moved beyond the stage of potential and entered the phase of practical implementation.

Ethel Namuri, ICT Manager at the Papua New Guinea Climate Change and Development Authority remotely via video, likewise emphasized that "AI is a practical tool for the survival and sustainability of developing countries." She also underscored that AI must not remain confined to prediction alone but should be closely integrated with real-world response systems. The official side event, "Leveraging AI for Climate Action in Developing Countries," co-hosted by KOICA and the UNFCCC, concluded after more than four hours of lively discussion and public deliberation. The sessions were enriched by the diverse perspectives of the presenters and the showcase of AI-driven solutions for climate action. Participants unanimously agreed that AI is a core tool for climate response and that international support spanning technology, infrastructure, education, policy, and cooperation is essential to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries and enable the effective use of AI. They also shared a common commitment to moving beyond discussion and toward the accelerated implementation of AI-driven climate action.





Plus Interview 1

Ethel Namuri, ICT Manager at the Papua New Guinea Climate Change and Development Authority

# AI and early warning system help people survive



Ethel Namuri

**Q Could you please explain the types of climate-related disasters Papua New Guinea is currently facing, and share any specific examples of affected regions or residents?**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is experiencing increased climate variability through changes in temperature and precipitation, increased intensity of tropical storms, increased coastal erosion and saline intrusion and inundation caused by sea-level rise. PNG is particularly vulnerable to the climate change impacts posed to ecosystems, agriculture, health, transport, infrastructure, livelihoods, and economy, with climate change threatening the lives and safety of PNG's population. Climate change has already begun to cause considerable impact, triggering climate-related hazards, such as heat waves, landslides, storms, and floods, alongside slow-onset impacts of increased disease and droughts.

**Q What have been the biggest constraints in the climate disaster response process, such as shortages of data, technology, and personnel?**

Limited infrastructure: Connectivity gaps, unreliable electricity, and limited digital infrastructure restrict the deployment of AI systems—especially in our rural and island communities.

Data scarcity and fragmentation: AI depends on data, yet in PNG, climate and environmental data are often incomplete, data systems are not integrated across institutions and community-level data are underutilized

Technical capacity constraints: There is a shortage of: AI and data science expertise, local research ecosystems, skilled practitioners to deploy and maintain such solutions

Fragmented financing: Historically, climate initiatives have been project based and short term, limiting scalability and sustainability.

**Q From an ICT perspective, what functions are you most looking forward to in areas such as early warning systems and climate data analysis?**

I'm excited about creating partnerships with the development partners, private sector and innovators who are willing to support PNG in developing context-appropriate, low-cost AI solutions for climate action especially for disaster preparedness or early warning systems and climate data analyses.

Many AI tools require high computational power and extensive data hence limiting our use. However, Innovators and other stakeholders willing to support PNG need to focus more on interoperability and scalability and partner with governments and NGOs to pilot and scale solutions.

**Q What changes do you anticipate in the lives of local residents through the introduction of AI-based climate technologies?**

Depending on the type of support, I would expect local communities and civil society to be involved in the implementation. They should take the lead in co-designing solutions grounded in local knowledge, participate in data collection, validation, and governance and ensure accountability and equity in AI deployment.

**Q In the collaboration process with Korea and international organizations, what elements (e.g., localization, education) do you consider important?**

I consider the support on capacity building and education to be important, because this is not just about technology deployment. Without knowledge transfer and capacity-building, local institutions struggle to maintain AI systems independently.

**Q What is the biggest remaining barrier that has yet to be resolved, and what do you expect the international community to do to address it?**

Bridging the gap is not just about technology—it is about trust, collaboration, and long-term commitment.

Papua New Guinea has already demonstrated leadership in climate advocacy and nature-based solutions on the global stage. The next step is to lead in how emerging technologies like AI can be grounded in local realities and scaled for real impact.

If we align our investments, empower our communities, and build the right partnerships, AI can become not just a tool—but a catalyst—for resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development.

The future of climate action in Papua New Guinea is not only about surviving change. It is about shaping it.

Plus Interview 2

Interview with Pedro Ivo Ferraz da Silva, Chair of the UNFCCC TEC

# "Now is the time to implement, moving beyond discussion"


Pedro Ivo Ferraz da Silva

**Q What is the difference between the 'Climate Future Partnership (2024-2027)' signed between KOICA and the UNFCCC and previous climate cooperation initiatives?**

The key difference is its strong focus on implementation. While discussions on the role and use of AI and digital technologies in climate action are actively ongoing, the partnership with KOICA provides a solid foundation for an implementation-oriented climate cooperation framework.

**Q A public forum was held during an official session of the 3rd UNFCCC Climate Week under the theme "Delivering AI for Climate Action in Developing Countries." Is there a specific reason for emphasizing AI-based climate action?**

In 2024, we saw the highest recorded global temperature increase to date. Around the world, extreme climate events have been observed with increasing frequency and intensity. In light of the rapidly worsening climate crisis, it is essential for the international community to move beyond discussion and work together to develop faster, more effective, and practically implementable solutions. AI will accelerate climate action and serve as a powerful tool applicable to sectors affected by climate-related challenges. In particular, discussing the use of AI for climate action in developing countries is especially important. Developing countries often lack the full range of resources—such as technology, infrastructure, and data—needed to develop and adopt effective climate solutions. In order to enable them to implement such solutions, initiatives like "AI for Climate Action" play an essential role.

**Q Why is the participation of private companies and startups important for delivering AI for climate action in developing countries?**

The participation of private companies and startups is essential, not just an option. While governments can support innovation and provide the conditions for it, it is companies that actually develop technologies and drive innovation. Whether they are state-owned enterprises or private companies does not matter. The participation of startups within developing countries must also go hand in hand. Local startups are regional experts who understand the climate challenges, local characteristics, environments, and realities of their communities better than anyone else, making them essential partners in co-creating solutions to the climate crisis. As members of the local community, they are well-positioned to connect problems with solutions, with a strong understanding of how to develop and implement measures to address climate issues.

**Q How is the UNFCCC TEC planning and designing "practical linkages" between AI technology providers and developing countries?**

A technological system that precisely connects where there is demand and where supply can be provided based on AI-driven data is called a "matching mechanism." Developing countries are directly affected by climate change, and yet they face severe shortages of financial resources, technology, and infrastructure needed to respond effectively. Conversely, even when developed countries, international organizations, or private companies have the resources available to provide support, they often fail to allocate them efficiently because they do not know precisely what is needed and where. The AI-based matching mechanism helps bridge this significant information gap. To explain in more detail, first, while the process through which developing countries secure climate finance from international organizations or global investment firms is highly complex, the AI matching mechanism helps address this issue. Governments and local organizations in developing countries often struggle to prepare complex funding proposals, while investors hesitate to invest due to difficulties in assessing risk. In this context, AI can analyze data on local climate risks in developing countries, projected carbon reductions, and project feasibility, and automatically connect them with global green funds or Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) capital that best matches the nature of the project. Second, because the nature of the climate crisis varies by region, tailored solutions are required, and the AI matching mechanism helps address this. Some areas face droughts, while others experience rising sea levels or flooding. In this context, AI analyzes local meteorological data to accurately assess a region's vulnerabilities and then searches a global climate technology database to match the most suitable technologies for the area's specific soil and climate conditions. Third, fostering local experts and sharing knowledge are essential for responding to climate change. By identifying the specific knowledge areas required by climate policy officials



Pedro Ivo Ferraz da Silva, Chair of the UNFCCC TEC, described Korea as a country with a deep understanding of developing nations, noting that it is the most ideal partner for an "implementation-oriented" partnership.

and local researchers in developing countries, the mechanism automates and optimizes knowledge transfer and partnership building by matching them with global climate change experts, research institutions, and educational programs.

**Q Should the AI matching mechanism be implemented quickly in order to deliver tangible results?**

The AI matching mechanism is like a digital broker and problem solver for climate action in developing countries. It minimizes resource waste and identifies the optimal pathway to ensure that the most appropriate resources—finance, technology, and expertise—are delivered to where they are needed the most, as quickly as possible. At last year's Conference of the Parties (COP30) held in Belém, Brazil, the UNFCCC officially launched the "Belém Technology Implementation Programme" to support the technological needs of developing countries. One of the programme's core elements is facilitating partnerships and matchmaking. Through the AI-based matching mechanism, the UNFCCC is collaborating with global financial institutions such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to ensure that identified projects can receive actual funding. Furthermore, it is pursuing multi-stakeholder partnerships to establish a governance system within the international negotiation process that efficiently and transparently matches each country's climate technology needs with available financing. With the formal launch of the Belém Technology Implementation Programme marking an important step forward, we look forward to forging practical linkages that will translate into tangible technology implementation.

**Q What is the most anticipated achievement over the next two to three years in AI for climate action in developing countries?**

It is implementing pilot projects introducing AI technology more widely and on a larger scale in developing countries. One of the most important success stories is the development of early warning systems that can predict climate risks such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and wildfires. Since only 40% of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) currently have operational early warning systems, increasing this coverage is the most urgent priority. My home country, Brazil, also experienced severe flooding that submerged cities due to heavy rainfall in April and May 2024. If there had been an early warning system, it could have prevented the loss of national infrastructure and reduced casualties.

**Q What is the significance of the partnership between KOICA and the UNFCCC in global climate governance?**

Korea has transformed from a country that received aid from the international community into one that now provides aid, achieving rapid growth in a relatively short period. Many developing countries around the world wish to emulate Korea's success story. Korea is a nation with a deep understanding of developing countries, and it is well suited to this "implementation-oriented" partnership that requires concrete action. Collaboration with Korea, which leads in AI technology and excels at developing cutting-edge solutions, enables the acceleration of technology development and transfer—a key means of implementation in responding to climate change. AI has a dual nature: it serves as a powerful tool for addressing climate challenges, while also leaving a significant environmental footprint of its own. As partners for the climate future, the UNFCCC and KOICA must jointly explore solutions and mitigation measures to reduce the environmental impact of AI, including its consumption of energy, water, and materials. Furthermore, I hope we can collaborate on ways to practically apply climate solutions offered by numerous companies, institutions, and organizations in developing countries. K

KOICA Corporate-Training-Linked Internship Program

# Companies learn, trainees grow

If future leaders from developing countries and Korean companies become one team, what kind of changes will unfold on the ground? KOICA is launching a new program that connects master's and doctoral trainees from developing countries with Korean companies. This new public-private partnership model—where local expertise meets Korea's innovative technology—is attracting considerable attention.

### Program where companies and trainees grow together

KOICA operates the "KOICA Corporate-Training-Linked Internship Program," which connects talented individuals from developing countries with Korean companies. The program matches master's and doctoral trainees participating in KOICA's scholarship program with Korean companies involved in KOICA's corporate partnership programs. A key feature of this program is that it provides practical benefits to both companies and trainees. Companies can deepen their understanding of local regulations and cultures by working with policy experts from their target countries, while trainees can strengthen their expertise and gain hands-on field experience by participating in development cooperation projects implemented by Korean companies.

Eligible companies are those currently participating in KOICA's "Creative Technology Solution (CTS)" or "Inclusive Business Solution (IBS)" initiatives.



The "KOICA Corporate-Training-Linked Internship Program" matches master's and doctoral trainees from developing countries with Korean companies participating in KOICA's corporate partnership programs. Through this program, trainees gain expertise and practical field experience, while companies have the opportunity to better understand local regulations and cultures through trainees from their target countries.

Trainees are selected from a pool of master's and doctoral students enrolled in the KOICA Fellowship Program, with the pilot phase focusing primarily on doctoral candidates. The internship lasts from a minimum two weeks to a maximum two months. Participation is generally conducted in person, although remote or hybrid arrangements may also be permitted depending on factors such as workplace accessibility. However, unlike conventional employment-oriented internships, this program is designed as a non-employment educational program in which trainees engage in practical learning activities under the guidance of corporate mentors.

The program's operational process is also systematically designed. KOICA supports the matching process by considering the competencies required by participating companies as well as the educational backgrounds and professional experience of the trainees.

Thereafter, participating companies submit job descriptions, and trainees apply by completing application forms. Final participants are selected through document screening and, where necessary, interviews.

Through this program, KOICA expects to strengthen the localization capabilities of participating companies while enabling talented individuals from developing countries to gain firsthand experience with Korea's innovative technologies and development cooperation practices. Furthermore, KOICA aims to establish a foundation that ensures collaboration between companies and trainees extends beyond a one-time experience and evolves into long-term business partnerships and policy cooperation.





Plus Interview

Yoon Kyung-ho, Head of the Management Support Team at TagHive

# "Highly recommended for companies looking to enter developing countries"



Yoon Kyung-ho

**Q What motivated TagHive to participate in the KOICA Corporate-Training-Linked Internship Program?**

TagHive has developed an AI-powered education platform called "Class Saathi" and currently provides its solutions to more than 15,000 classrooms, primarily in Korea and India. TagHive is also expanding its business into emerging education markets such as Vietnam, Malaysia, and South Africa. The African market, particularly Nigeria and the broader West African region, holds tremendous potential in terms of population size and demand for education. However, obtaining in-depth information on local educational environments, policies, and school infrastructure has not been easy. We realized the limitations of relying solely on desk research, as it is difficult to gain a true understanding of local conditions through documents alone. That was when we learned about the "KOICA Corporate-Training-Linked Internship Program." The opportunity to conduct market research alongside a doctoral candidate who is also a serving civil servant in a developing country, with firsthand experience in that country's education sector, was extremely appealing. This was the primary reason we decided to participate.

**Q What specific tasks or projects did the trainee participate in?**

A trainee from Nigeria, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in Public Administration and Public Management, was assigned to our Management Support Team and completed a six-week internship as a market entry and localization researcher. Specifically, the trainee conducted a market feasibility study that analyzed the size, growth trends, regulatory environment, and digital infrastructure of the Nigerian education market. The trainee also carried out a comparative analysis of the market entry strategies adopted by local and global competitors. In addition, the trainee assessed whether our platform, "Class Saathi", could be effectively used in Nigerian classroom environments with limited access to electricity and internet connectivity. He also prepared a product optimization brief outlining UI/UX improvement recommendations and localization strategies. At the conclusion of the six-week internship, the trainee presented a comprehensive West Africa market entry strategy report to our executives and staff members, including the CEO, incorporating all of these findings.

**Q What was the most impressive quality the trainee demonstrated during the internship?**

It was his "living, local knowledge." The insights shared by the trainee, who had firsthand experience working as a civil servant in Nigeria's education sector, were far more practical, realistic, and specific than anything we could have learned from reports or online sources. For instance, his firsthand insights into the psychological resistance teachers may experience when adopting new technologies, as well as the reality of unstable electricity and internet connectivity in schools, were extremely valuable in shaping the direction of our product improvements. In addition, his analytical rigor and systematic approach as a doctoral researcher were equally impressive. He seamlessly applied academic methodologies such as PESTLE and SWOT analyses to real-world business challenges. As a result, he went beyond simply compiling data and produced high-quality analytical outputs that executive management could use directly for decision-making. Furthermore, his fluent English communication skills enabled in-depth discussions with our executives and staff without any language barriers. Above all, we were highly impressed with his ability to adapt to the dynamic and often uncertain environment of a startup and to carry out tasks independently with a high degree of initiative.

**Q How did this program contribute to your company's development cooperation projects or overseas expansion?**

As an educational technology company, TagHive aims not simply to export products, but to contribute to the practical resolution of educational challenges in recipient countries. In that sense, this program significantly deepened and broadened our perspective on the African market. We plan to use the Nigerian market entry strategy and localization directions shared by the trainee as the primary reference material when we begin planning our West Africa business in earnest. In particular, cooperation methods with local educational authorities and strategies for identifying local partners were areas that would have been difficult for us to explore independently, but through the trainee's network and experience, we were able to establish a clear direction. Furthermore, rather than ending as a simple, one-off cooperation, we have de-

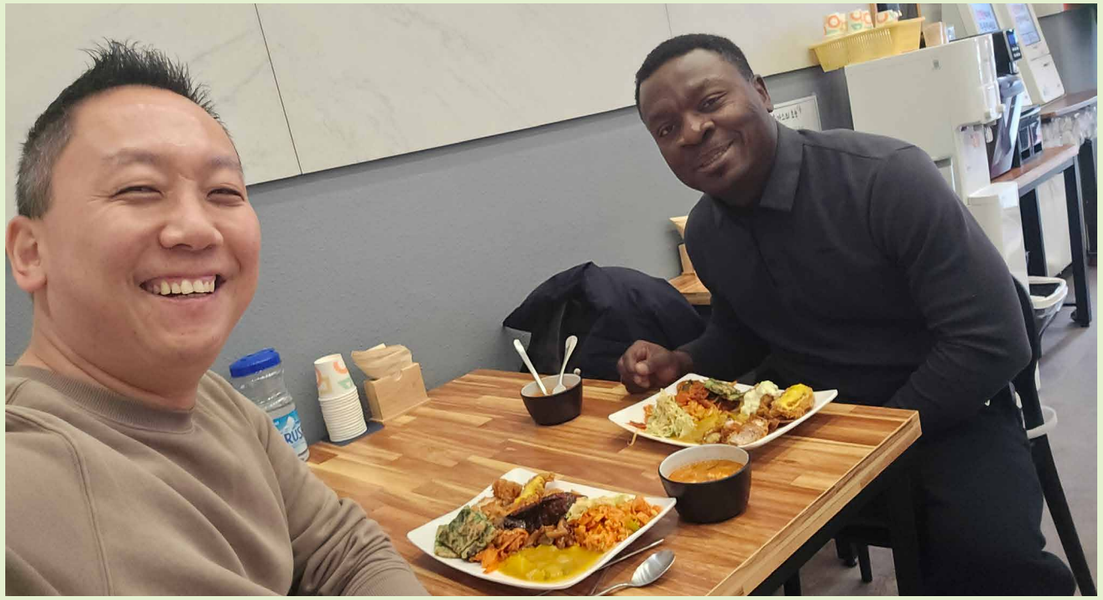
cided to maintain an ongoing relationship even after the trainee returns home, particularly in terms of networking with Nigerian educational authorities and potential partners. In essence, this internship has laid the groundwork for long-term business cooperation.

**Q Was there any aspect in which the trainee was helpful in understanding local demand or assessing the business direction?**

It was very helpful in a concrete way. One of our biggest concerns was whether Class Saathi could function properly in African classroom environments where the internet connection can be unstable. With firsthand experience in Nigerian schools, the trainee went beyond the general statement that "infrastructure is poor" and provided specific details on what level of infrastructure can be expected across different types of schools and regions. This served as a direct basis for reviewing specific technical directions, such as strengthening the product's offline mode and ensuring compatibility with low-end devices. In addition, the insights rooted in their on-site experience—such as the biggest barriers local teachers face when adopting new digital tools and how parents and local communities respond—were extremely valuable. This kind of information is difficult to find even in the most comprehensive market research reports, making it a truly valuable asset for us.

**Q What kind of message would you have for other companies considering participating in this program?**

For a company considering localized technology that can be applied immediately in developing countries, I highly recommend participating in this program at least once. Based on our experience, this program is not just about hiring an intern. KOICA trainees are highly skilled professionals who already have experience working as civil servants in their respective countries and are currently pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in Korea. Because they are professionals with a deep understanding of local policy environments, administrative structures, and sociocultural contexts, companies can gain insights from local experts without additional cost. Of course, since the six-week period is not very long, it is essential to clearly define what the company aims to achieve in advance and prepare accordingly so that the trainee can contribute effectively from the outset. We also feel that if we had prepared the initial materials for the trainee more systematically in the early stages, the process could have been even more efficient. Above all, I believe the true value of this program continues even after the internship ends. The ability to maintain a connection with the local network after the trainee returns home is an asset that cannot be obtained through short-term consulting or market research services. For companies seeking to enter developing markets, I strongly recommend making active use of this program.



Yoon Kyung-ho (L), head of the management support team at TagHive, is having a meal with Michael Amushitan, his trainee from Nigeria.



KOICA

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Four new KOICA employees pose with drawings depicting their visions of themselves 10 years in the future. From left: Jin Hee-yeon (Procurement Team I), Cheong Ui-seo (Emergency Response Team), Kim Chae-won (Southeast Asia Team I), and Kim Ho-yeon (Middle East Team).

Opening the door to the next 35 years of Korea's ODA :
Interviews with four new employees

# Curious about secrets to success in the KOICA recruitment process?

**Q Is there any difference between the KOICA you imagined before joining and the organization as it has turned out to be in reality?**

Jin Hee-yeon I had expected a rather rigid atmosphere typical of public institutions, but the work environment has turned out to be much more dynamic. Seeing everyone handle a constant stream of unexpected issues with such dedication made me realize how dynamic the organization truly is, and that I need to keep learning and growing every day.

Cheong Ui-seo Since this is my first job, I had some vague concerns about working life. However, the supportive atmosphere, where colleagues and team members genuinely look out for one another, has been a great source of strength. After joining, I was also deeply impressed by how academically oriented the organization is, with employees constantly engaging in learning. Because the work requires not only specialized knowledge in development but also a deep understanding of stakeholders and partner countries, continuous learning feels like a natural part of the job.

**Q What inspired you to pursue a career at KOICA?**

Cheong Ui-seo I have always believed that people should be able to live safely without harming one another, to help each other willingly, and to enjoy peaceful daily lives. KOICA is an organization that turns those values into reality.

Although I had no prior experience in development cooperation, I worked as an intern reporter at a broadcasting station before joining. I came to see that KOICA's work is fundamentally about listening to various stories, understanding different perspectives and contexts, and communicating in ways that build cooperation. My experience of observing the wider world, engaging with people, and learning to mediate between viewpoints has naturally carried over into my current role.

Kim Ho-yeon Through my experience as an intern at an international organization in the field of development cooperation, I became familiar with KOICA's projects and its important role. I was deeply drawn to the opportunity to represent Korea while contributing to the sustainable development of partner countries and addressing global challenges. I came to believe that KOICA offers an ideal environment to steadily build professional expertise and continuously broaden my capabilities through hands-on project experience. I was convinced that it was the right place for me to grow into a development cooperation professional and contribute to the international community.

**Q What core competencies should you have in order to join KOICA?**

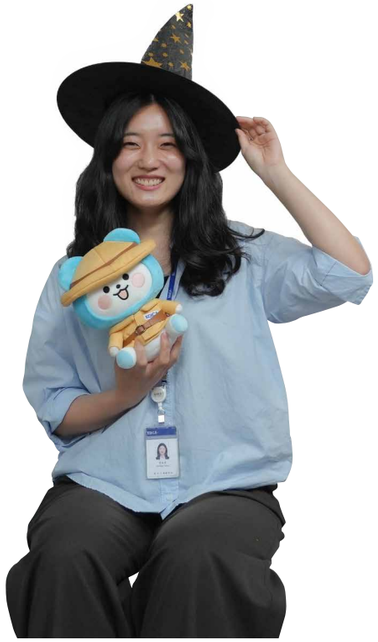
Kim Chae-won I believe it is drive. Rather than waiting for perfect conditions, it is essential to take initiative and turn available opportunities into action. A year ago, I did not imagine that I would even be preparing to join KOICA, but by making the most of each opportunity—from passing the document screening to the written exam—I was able to achieve the result of final selection.

Jin Hee-yeon It is the ability to execute. In the past, I tended to delay starting tasks due to an obsession with perfect preparation. Now, I prioritize swift execution over perfection. While preparing to join the agency, I first worked through National Competency Standards (NCS) questions to identify my weaknesses, and I studied by translating texts first and then refining them. This approach significantly improved both my learning speed and overall progress.

## "Intensive interview practice: Main-point-first answers"

**Q Could you share some practical tips for prospective applicants who aspire to join KOICA?**

Cheong Ui-seo I would like to talk about the interview. Interviewers are humans, after all, and they would feel tired after a long day of interviewing people. To make sure they could pay attention to my answers, I tried hard to get my point across in my answers.



Jin Hee-yeon (Procurement Team I)

Jin Hee-yeon Preparing for the English composition and translation exams was challenging. I regularly selected articles and source materials to translate and write in English, then used AI tools to receive feedback and refine my expressions. I addressed my weaknesses through repeated practice. At the same time, I studied KOICA's research publications to understand current trends in international development and to gain insight into its key focus areas and strategic directions. I highly recommend making active use of the KOICA Development Cooperation Career Center (job.koica.go.kr). It was very helpful in strengthening my practical skills, particularly in writing cover letters, preparing for interviews, and structuring essays. In particular, I improved my efficiency by learning practical techniques such as using AI tools for study and effectively organizing writing structures.

Kim Ho-yeon Before submitting your application, it is important to prepare in advance any additional qualifications that may earn extra points, such as certifications or a second foreign language, as competition tends to be intense. For the written exam, I first thoroughly mastered the fundamental problem-solving methods for each NCS subject and question type, and then developed practical test-taking intuition through repeated practice with mock exams. I also took exams at other public institutions to assess my time management and practical test-taking skills. For the essay exam, I regularly read newspapers to stay informed about current affairs and broaden my perspective. I also closely studied KOICA reports and national strategic documents related to grant aid. For the English composition and translation sections, I selected articles from foreign

and Korean media to translate on my own, then used AI tools to receive feedback and refine my expressions and sentence structures. I also participated in many interview study groups, where I consistently practiced starting with the main point, ensuring that the core message was delivered first in every answer.

Kim Chae-won I believe it is essential to have a clear personal answer to the question, "Why do you want to work in development cooperation?" By reflecting on my own experiences and capabilities, I continually questioned and clarified why I specifically wanted to work at KOICA. Through this process, I was able to build a consistent rationale grounded in my actual experiences, rather than relying on a vague or superficial motivation. I think this process is essential for creating strong material for a cover letter and for staying composed when facing unexpected interview questions. Also, when preparing for the written exam, it is crucial to practice completing answers by hand within the time limit, as the actual exam takes much longer than one might expect.

**Q If you could message your past self who was preparing to join the agency, what would you want to say?**

Jin Hee-yeon "You're doing well. You're on the right track, so just keep going."

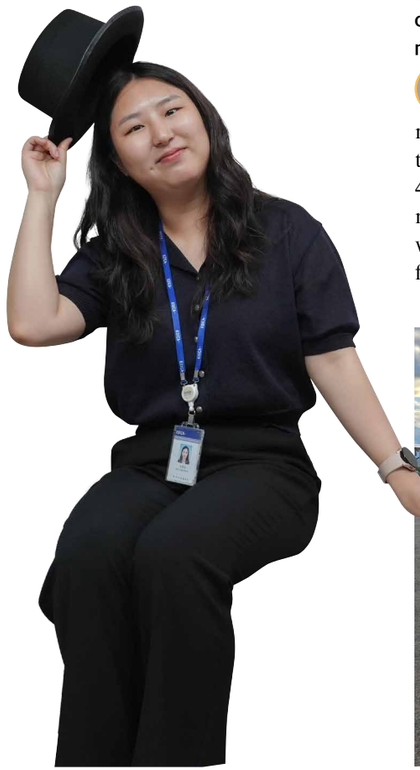
Kim Chae-won "You don't need to feel so anxious; everything will be okay."

**Q As a new employee, what do you see as the most appealing aspect of KOICA that you would like to share?**

Kim Ho-yeon I believe it is the wide range of learning and hands-on opportunities that support employees' growth. Programs such as foreign language training support and master's or doctoral degree programs are highly structured. Above all, since KOICA operates overseas offices in 48 countries around the world, I think its greatest appeal is the opportunity to work at these field offices, take direct responsibility on the ground, and lead projects firsthand.

**Q Was there a "magical" moment you experienced after joining KOICA?**

Jin Hee-yeon Working in the Procurement Team, I handle many inquiry calls. At first, I became very nervous and flustered whenever I was asked about matters I was not yet fully familiar with. However, as I repeatedly carried out the tasks and gained experience, I became able to calmly identify the core issue and organize the necessary information clearly. Seeing myself grow in both confidence and accuracy has been a truly meaningful and "magical" experience.



Kim Chae-won (Southeast Asia Team I)

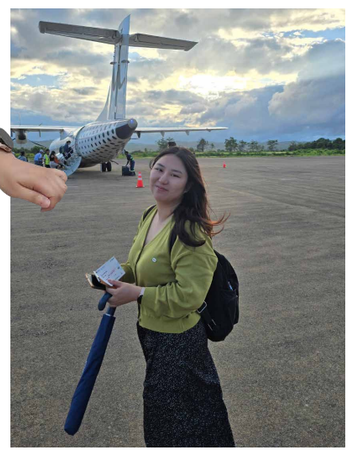
## "As an integrated platform for grant aid, KOICA's role will become increasingly vital"

**Q As a new employee, which of KOICA's long-established values are you most proud of?**

Jin Hee-yeon I find it highly impressive to see how various organizations collaborate toward a shared goal to achieve meaningful development in partner countries. Observing how KOICA responds flexibly and works closely with partner countries to deliver more practical outcomes has made me reflect on our role in enhancing development effectiveness. I am truly proud to be part of KOICA, an organization that drives tangible changes through cooperation.

**Q As KOICA marks its 35th anniversary, what do you think the organization will look like over the next 35 years?**

Kim Chae-won KOICA is the control tower and think tank of Korea's grant aid system. In line with the direction set out in the recently announced 'The 4th Comprehensive Strategy for Development Cooperation' I believe KOICA's role will become even more important in the future as an integrated platform for grant aid that organically connects the expertise of various actors, including government ministries, public institutions, and the private sector.



Kim Chae-won at an airport during a work trip to Myanmar



Cheong Ui-seo (Emergency Response Team)

Cheong Ui-seo Many of KOICA's projects aim to strengthen the capacity of partner countries—helping them reach a stage of self-reliance where KOICA's support serves as a stepping stone. Ultimately, the goal is for these countries to no longer need assistance. I hope that 35 years from now, today's partner countries will no longer be recipients, but equal partners that engage in close, mutual cooperation and jointly design sustainable systems as members of a global community.

**Q What do you think we will be like when we meet again at KOICA in 10 years?**

Jin Hee-yeon I have given some thought to my area of specialization, and I am particularly interested in the healthcare sector. In 10 years, I envision myself as a healthcare specialist working at an overseas field office, leading educational programs and emphasizing to communities that personal hygiene is essential.

Cheong Ui-seo I am deeply interested in the field of humanitarian assistance. I hope for a world free of war and disasters, although I recognize that this may be difficult to fully achieve. Still, I hope that in 10 years, the risks of disasters and conflicts will be significantly reduced.

Kim Chae-won I expect to be working at an overseas field office. I am not yet sure which partner country it will be, but I imagine myself managing cultural ODA projects and working closely with local partners.

Kim Ho-yeon I expect to be posted to a country in the Middle East as a Deputy Director. By then, I hope to be fully integrated into the local community, working so closely with local people that I feel like part of it, and creating meaningful moments in development cooperation.



Kim Ho-yeon in Jordan during his first work trip.

**Q Please share a message of advice for future KOICA new employees.**

Kim Ho-yeon I hope you navigate that challenging journey with grace, so that we can one day meet here again as colleagues.

Cheong Ui-seo To our future colleagues at KOICA, let's support one another and grow together.



Kim Ho-yeon (Middle East Team)

Scan this QR code to watch our delightful interviews with these new faces.




Since its foundation in December 2020, Kazakhstan Agency of International Development (KazAID) has worked with the international community on a wide range of projects, including building schools in Gaziantep Province of the earthquake-stricken Türkiye in 2023. The photo shows officials from KOICA and KazAID during their joint fellowship program.

Contribution by Arken Arystanov, Former Chairman of KazAID

# Building strong partnerships together



Arken Arystanov

### An introduction to KazAID and its mission

Kazakhstan Agency of International Development "KazAID" is an operator of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of official development assistance (ODA) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. KazAID's mission is to promote sustainable development and inclusive growth in partner countries by providing results-oriented technical assistance.

We are responsible for the implementation of Kazakhstan's ODA policies. Currently, KazAID mainly focuses on the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Our priority areas include healthcare, digitalization, education, public administration, entrepreneurship and other fields defined in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On official development assistance".

Since its establishment, KazAID has implemented projects in various domains, including transparency reporting, earthquake risk reduction and agriculture. Our Agency's activities include capacity-building seminars and infrastructural initiatives. One of the most important projects is the construction of a school in Gaziantep, Republic of Türkiye, in an area affected by earthquake in 2023. We also assist in transferring e-government components and in the provision of humanitarian aid.

In 2024, we launched our programs "Dostyk: Digitalization", "Dostyk: Diplomacy" and "Avicenna*: Healthcare". "Dostyk" is translated as "friendship" from the Kazakh language, emphasizing the friendly relations and openness for joint growth of the countries of the region. This year, KazAID is holding "Avicenna: Healthcare" program for students and medical specialists, as well as a seminar on usage of mobile operators' data for statistical purposes.

### The direction in which KazAID is heading

Our Agency was created by the Government in December 2020. Since ODA is a newly developing area of Kazakhstan's diplomatic service, the initial efforts were directed at establishing links with foreign and international partners and a relevant database. Until recently many government agencies and private entities within Kazakhstan were not aware of KazAID and the notion of ODA.

Being a young organization, throughout the last 5 years KazAID has mainly focused on creating capacity-building opportunities. We believe that it is important to share Kazakhstan's experience in different fields with the countries of our region. In future, we would like to expand the scope of technical assistance and increase the number of infrastructural projects.

At the moment, our priorities are the countries of Central Asia. We hope that eventually we will be able to broaden our geographical outreach.

* Avicenna is the Latin spelling of Ibn Sina, a preeminent physician in the Muslim world in the Middle Ages. His name represents medical and public health cooperation.

### The current status and achievements of the cooperation between KOICA and KazAID, with a clear connection between the two institutions

KazAID and KOICA have established constructive relations among themselves. The history of cooperation goes back to the time before the creation of our Agency. In 2013, representatives of Kazakhstan's public sector participated in "Special training for the delegation's visit to South Korea for the preparation of the establishment of KazAID", organized by KOICA. The Kazakhstan delegation was introduced to Korea's ODA system, its development cooperation policies, as well as to KOICA's strategy and activities.

Since then, KazAID and KOICA signed their initial Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of ODA in November 2021 in Seongnam, Korea. To reaffirm our mutual commitment to collaborate in this domain it was resigned in September 2024 in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan. To ensure the effectiveness of our collaboration, we have developed two Action Plans. The first one has been successfully implemented, while the latter guides our current mutual activities. The document is directed at the development of our partner countries, in addition to further facilitation of KazAID staff's capacity building.

Our first ever joint seminar was held on digitalization of the public administration field in September 2022 for the participants from the Kyrgyz Republic. That event allowed to share Kazakhstan's and Korea's knowledge with the representatives of Kyrgyzstan's public sector responsible for the implementation of the digital policies.

In 2025, KazAID and KOICA's partnership gained new momentum. In August, we conducted a seminar within the scope of the joint 3-year program "Capacity Building in Digital Transformation and cooperation for Central Asian countries". In the context of the "Dostyk: Diplomacy" program, an expert from KOICA gave insights into implementation of water resources management projects. In the same year, KazAID staff had an opportunity to build their capacity in project management through the participation in the secondment organized in KOICA Headquarters, as well as engaging in the program "Capacity Building for International Development Agency in Emerging Donors and GPEDC Learning & Accelerating Program (2025)".




KazAID and KOICA have maintained a long-term cooperative relationship through active exchanges. The photo shows KazAID staffers attending a special fellowship program for new donors hosted by KOICA.

It is also important to mention that the agencies hold regular meetings and pay visits to each other. KazAID is always ready and open to discuss collaboration with KOICA.

### The significance of the collaboration with KOICA for KazAID

There are lots of common features between Kazakhstan and Korea. Kazakhstan, like Korea of many years ago, after being a partner country for some time transitioned into a donor country and is now a part of South-South cooperation. Considering Korea's international impact and achievements, its experience in the field of ODA is quite significant for us.

Collaborating with KOICA is important for KazAID in sharing global knowledge with the representatives of the region and facilitating the development of the partner countries of both Kazakhstan and Korea. The joint work and opportunities to exchange experience in project management show the increasing level of interaction between KazAID and KOICA.

We hope to continue the result-oriented cooperation and friendly ties that have been established between KazAID and KOICA. We highly appreciate the knowledge and best practices that the experts from the Republic of Korea are willing to share with the participants from Central Asia.

Moreover, we value KOICA's openness to share its experience and knowledge on different processes, including project management, that supports the institutional growth of KazAID and allows to engage in professional development opportunities for our staff.

Contribution by Kim Sun-young, Assistant Manager (Gender Specialist), Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team, Department of Humanitarian Assistance

# The meaning of "peace" learned in conflict zones: On the sense of everyday safety and resilience to rebuild lives



Assistant Manager Kim Sun-young (R) is welcomed by villagers during her inspection of a project on supporting immigrants in the conflict zones of Oromia and Somali in Ethiopia.

I have often witnessed how the value of "peace" is embedded in everyday language while traveling across various fragile and conflict-affected regions. This was evident in the conflict-affected regions of Afar, Oromia, and Somali in Ethiopia; in interviews with Syrian refugees I met in Jordan; and in Isiolo and Turkana counties in Kenya, where large numbers of people were displaced due to the climate crisis. For people in these regions, peace was not an abstract or grand concept. It was the simple reassurance of "getting through today safely" and knowing that "my family and livestock were safe."

## The pain of families separated across borders: from Nigeria to Jordan

As a member of KOICA's Conflict, Fragility, and HDP Nexus Team, I came to reflect on the value of peace in conflict settings while managing a joint project with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in three northeastern states of Nigeria. In partnership with the ICRC, KOICA advanced the "HDP Nexus" strategy—linking humanitarian, development, and peace efforts—by strengthening basic health services for local communities, facilitating family reunification, and providing psychosocial support in areas where health infrastructure had collapsed due to the prolonged activities of armed groups such as Boko Haram. Through this process, I came to deeply appreciate the importance of psychological recovery through family reunification, which allowed me to more fully empathize with those in Jordan who were waiting for missing family members. In particular, a story I heard in October 2025 from a Syrian refugee living at a project site in Jordan about a family separated by conflict still remains vivid in my memory. They were receiving psychosocial support through a joint project by KOICA and the ICRC, and I had the opportunity to share in the pain of families separated by conflict. The ICRC provided regular psychological counseling and information to help ensure that families waiting to learn the fate of their missing loved ones would not lose hope. One Syrian refugee I met in the field said, "Being able to share the pain of separation and having a place where I could speak freely was a great comfort." One male beneficiary shared that he had felt immense pressure due to the hardship of making a living and the pain of losing his family, but through the ICRC's psychosocial support, he was able to move beyond the expectation of having to be "strong" as the head of the household, express his emotions, and treat his family with greater gentleness and understanding. This was a process of finding inner peace by sharing his pain. A female beneficiary who had been struggling with trauma related to her missing husband and younger brother also shared that, through group sessions with other refugees who had gone through similar experiences, she found great comfort in realizing that her pain was connected to the suffering of others. In particular, it was striking to see the change in one woman who had been reluctant to speak about her missing father but, through the group sessions, became able to share her emotions more openly and comfortably.

## Sowing the seeds of resilience: active agents in Ethiopia's displacement settings

Another memorable moment came when I managed a joint project with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ethiopia on "building the socioeconomic resilience of displaced populations in conflict-affected areas." Most of the people I met in the field were from the Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia, and they had lost family members in their hometowns and endured prolonged violence. However, they were not merely passive beneficiaries. They were active agents—midwives, traders, teachers, and others—who were collectively thinking about how to rebuild their communities. In particular, Somali traders often shared their hope of "someday opening even a small shop again." Residents of the displacement site discussed and set their own priorities for community development. As a result, they identified the installation of water tanks, the repair of primary schools, and the provision of desks and chairs as top priorities and carried out the project accordingly. They also laid the groundwork for resolving local conflicts independently by selecting and training women peace ambassadors to mediate disputes and support peacebuilding within the community.

I made several visits to the site with Korean NGOs and the performance management team, working to build trust with the residents. During my final visit, a small shop had newly opened in the displacement settlement, and I was able to see firsthand how residents were beginning to sustain their livelihoods by purchasing goods there myself. Through this experience, I was once again reminded that displaced people are active agents who rebuild their own lives and restore their communities. I also came to understand in the field that the role of development cooperation is to create an environment in which their resilience can take root and grow.

## The Reality of Those Who Lost Peace and Left Their Homes: Painful Moments

The projects I carried out in fragile and conflict-affected settings were deeply rewarding. However, it was also extremely difficult to witness the lives of people I had grown close to being completely shaken by political pressure and instability. In particular, during my time serving as Deputy Country Director in Ethiopia, it remains a profound shock that government officials and partners I had worked with, one after another, chose to go into exile. A high-level Ethiopian official who had delivered a commemorative speech with me at the launch of a peace project eventually went into exile abroad due to the worsening political situation. Another colleague—who had completed a KOICA master's program and, upon returning, had taken the lead in organizing alumni gatherings with me—was also repeatedly excluded from government appointments due to ethnic conflict and ultimately chose exile. It was deeply distressing to face the reality that those who had worked alongside me with the hope of contributing to national change ultimately lost their peace under political pressure and threats and were forced to leave their country. This experience made it clear to me how profoundly conflict and fragility can shatter individual lives, and that development cooperation is not merely about projects but is closely tied to the entirety of people's lives. Witnessing their lives up close remains one of the most painful and difficult moments of my career.



Assistant Manager Kim Sun-young listens to women and young adults while reviewing the status of the project on preventing sexual violence and supporting survivors in Central African Republic and African conflict zones.



Assistant Manager Kim Sun-young (2nd from R) poses with the female peace ambassador in Gursum, Ethiopia, and with staffers from the International Organization for Migration.

## A calling discovered in a life on the move

Those who work in development cooperation are, in the end, people who leave. I also live a life constantly moving across different regions and countries. Even within those brief comings and goings, I feel sincerely grateful to all the colleagues who think deeply, stay in touch with warmth, and welcome me so wholeheartedly.

Just before returning to headquarters from Ethiopia, a usually quiet local staff member told me, "You came all the way to Ethiopia, so different from Korea, and worked hard to serve my country's development. Thank you so much." Those words have stayed with me for a long time, making me feel that the difficult moments I had endured were not in vain. Holding on to this valuable lesson, I continue to learn both in the field and at headquarters—that peace is a sense of everyday reassurance and a universal value, and that human resilience can take root even in the midst of suffering—I will continue to move forward on the path toward peace.

Interview with Jung Seung-pil, Coordinator at the KOICA Rwanda Office

# Pani Bottle Visits a Saemaul Undong Project in Rwanda

Jung Seung-pil, coordinator at the KOICA Rwanda Office, received an unexpected but welcome call one day. He was asked by his favorite travel YouTuber, Pani Bottle, whether he could visit and explore the village in Rwanda that Jung manages. What a surprise! Let's hear Jung's story about how excited he was after receiving the call—so excited that he couldn't sleep at night.



Coordinator Jung Seung-pil waves the Rwanda flags while watching a football match there.

**Q Please introduce yourself.**

I am Jung Seung-pil, a coordinator at the KOICA Rwanda Office. I was placed here in October 2024 and have been working here for about one year and eight months so far. I oversee projects in the agricultural and transportation sectors, as well as training programs. Working in the attractive country of Rwanda, I have been enjoying a fulfilling and rewarding overseas assignment in collaboration with both Korean and local staff members.

**Q The KOICA Rwanda Office and its project sites appeared on the channel of travel YouTuber Pani Bottle. Please tell us about the story behind it.**

Thankfully, Pani Bottle reached out to KOICA, expressing his wish to film the Saemaul Undong project sites in Rwanda. He came across posts in the community he runs about how Korea's Saemaul Undong is being successfully implemented in Rwanda and found them interesting. It seems that he reached out to KOICA because he wanted to see firsthand how Korea's development experience is being implemented in Africa, even though he does not belong to the Saemaul Undong generation. The filming took place in Mushimba Village, located in Kamonyi District in Rwanda's Southern Province, where the Saemaul Foundation has been carrying out a pilot village project since 2010.

**Q Please tell us more about Mushimba Village.**

Other KOICA agricultural projects in Rwanda involve relatively large budgets averaging more than approximately USD 8 million, with a significant portion of those funds allocated to infrastructure development such as land leveling and irrigation facilities, including wetland and hillside development. Nevertheless, Rwanda is known as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," with most of its terrain consisting of mountainous areas, making its agricultural conditions relatively poor compared to those of other countries. Despite these challenging circumstances, Mushimba Village in Kamonyi District is considered a leading case of achieving significant change with a comparatively small project budget. What is particularly impressive is that the three core elements of Korea's Saemaul Undong—income generation, environmental improvement, and mindset change—were achieved in a balanced manner, leading to real changes in the lives of residents. The most distinctive feature of the Mushimba Village project is that it demonstrates how meaningful improvements in people's lives can be achieved through community capacity building, rather than through a project focused solely on physical infrastructure. It is highly significant in that the residents themselves become the agents of change and actively participate in the process of sustainable development. I believe this approach also carries important implications for the performance management and impact assessment framework that KOICA has been emphasizing in recent years.



A weekly meeting held at the Saemaul Community Hall in Mushimba Village.



Coordinator Jung Seung-pil takes a moment with a child in Mushimba Village

**Q Were there any particular scenes that Pani Bottle showed special interest in during the field visit?**

Being a travel YouTuber, it seemed that Pani Bottle was more interested in moments that viewers could relate to and find entertaining rather than in the detailed aspects of the project itself. For example, I remember a moment during a car ride when he noticed the village chief talking on the phone and immediately rushed to turn on his camera, saying that the chief's tone of voice and manner of speaking were exactly like those of a Korean village chief. He also found it amusing that the colors of the clothes and bags worn by the children on their way to kindergarten resembled the colors of the Saemaul flag. While filming these moments, it seemed that Pani Bottle intentionally raised his voice to liven up the atmosphere. I also remember him mentioning that Korean viewers in their 20s and 30s who watch the video would likely develop a genuine interest in the international development cooperation activities promoted by KOICA.

**Q As the project coordinator, what did you most want to showcase during the filming?**

Personally, I had hoped to invite Pani Bottle to stay overnight at the village community hall or a resident's home and create content where we could cook and share meals together using locally harvested agricultural products. I had also planned content ideas such as "Spending a Day Following the Village Chief" and "Experiencing Life as the Village Chief's Manager for a Day." Having regularly watched Pani Bottle's videos, I felt there was not much content showcasing the daily lives of rural African villages, and I was convinced that such a video would definitely draw at least 2 million views. It was truly unfortunate that the idea could not be carried out due to local conditions. Nevertheless, it was a meaningful experience in that the filming allowed us to convey the authentic look and atmosphere of a rural village in Rwanda, if only for a brief moment.




Travel YouTuber Pani Bottle (C) poses with the PeKO character alongside staffers of KOICA's Rwanda office.

**Q Through this video, how would you like viewers to perceive the rural communities of Rwanda and KOICA's rural development projects?**

More than anything, I hope viewers will see the scenes captured in the video as they are. While the Saemaul Undong is sometimes interpreted within a political context in South Korea, it is also undeniably an important experience in which rural residents worked together with the government to create meaningful change. I hope that rural development projects in Rwanda and other developing countries will be viewed not through a particular ideology or framework, but with attention to the kinds of changes residents are creating on the ground. Ultimately, what matters is not the name of the project, but the kind of change it brings to people's lives. I would like to express my gratitude to Pani Bottle, his manager, and his editor for beautifully capturing the various aspects of KOICA and Rwanda in the video. In particular, when KOICA's field support was mentioned at the end of the video, I felt all the worries I had during the preparation instantly melt away.

Scan the QR code below to watch Pani Bottle's YouTube video featuring Mushimba Village.

## 2026 January



### Former KOICA President CHANG Won-sam: “KOICA will make 2026 the inaugural year for implementing integrated development cooperation”

Former KOICA President CHANG Won-sam announced in his New Year’s address on Jan. 1 that this year will be designated as “the inaugural year for implementing integrated development cooperation.” “The international trust built through ODA field operations will return as Korea’s diplomatic, economic and security capabilities,” he said. “KOICA will enhance development effectiveness through strategic and integrated ODA and pursue future growth-oriented programs that combine partner countries’ needs with Korea’s strengths.” Former KOICA President CHANG presented four major visions directed toward partner countries, partners, the public, and the government: ▲ Development cooperation for the self-reliance of partner countries ▲ Win-win development cooperation that leads partners’ growth ▲ “Pride-worthy development cooperation” that the public can feel and support ▲ A trustworthy organization proven by results to the government.




### KOICA holds AX Capacity Building Achievement Sharing Session

Amid the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) as a key tool for addressing social and economic challenges in education, healthcare, and administration in developing countries, KOICA is accelerating efforts to realize “AI for All” through K-ODA, going beyond mere AX (AI transformation). KOICA held the “2025 KOICA AX Capacity Building Achievement Sharing Session” on Jan. 15 at its headquarters in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. The event featured special lectures by Korean AI startup founders, the unveiling and presentation of a comprehensive 2025 AX achievements video, case presentations and exhibition booths by outstanding teams from the AI Ideathon competition, and a Q&A session, among other diverse activities. Former KOICA President CHANG Won-sam said in his opening remarks, “Utilizing AI to enhance work efficiency and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are KOICA’s core tasks,” adding, “In line with the national strategy to realize a global AI basic society, KOICA will expand strategic ODA that integrates AI technology into international development cooperation, linking Korea’s comparative advantages in AI, digital technology, and K-Culture to mutually beneficial development outcomes.”




### “K-Restoration” blooms at Cambodia’s Angkor Wat ruins

KOICA held an international symposium on Jan. 16 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, to share the achievements of the “Conservation and Restoration of Preah Pithu Temple and Elephant Terrace in Angkor Project (2nd Phase).” This symposium was organized to share the progress and key achievements of the project, which was scheduled to conclude at the end of January, while promoting Korea’s ODA achievements in cultural heritage to the international community and strengthening the foundation for expanded cultural heritage cooperation between Korea and Cambodia. KOICA first participated in the restoration of the Angkor ruins in 2014 and expanded its cooperation to the second phase project starting in 2019. In the second phase, KOICA supported the conservation and restoration of the Preah Pithu Temple Group and the Elephant Terrace, capacity building for APSARA researchers and staff, and high-performance stone processing, analysis, and experimental equipment. This achievement sharing helps demonstrate KOICA’s role as an integrated ODA platform with cultural heritage as a core axis. Moving forward, KOICA plans to continuously expand cooperation centered on cultural heritage preservation to contribute to international solidarity through cultural ODA.




### “K-Meister High School” expertise transferred to India

KOICA held a kickoff report meeting for the “Project for Strengthening Technical Vocational Education and Training in India” on Jan. 20 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, marking the start of Korea-India TVET cooperation. This project is the first bilateral cooperation project-type ODA implemented by the Korean government targeting India. This project was designed to address the growing demand for skilled manufacturing personnel driven by India’s “Make in India” policy, and KOICA plans to establish a mechatronics vocational education and training system centered on the Bhopal region’s multipurpose demonstration school (DMS) by 2027. The main components include advisory support for approving mechatronics curricula based on India’s National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), the development of textbooks and instructor guides, the provision of 41 types of equipment, including CNC and PLC training tools, and invitation training programs in Korea for policymakers and teachers. In particular, KOICA plans to strengthen teachers’ practical instruction capabilities and activate industry-academia cooperation networks by benchmarking the Korean Meister High School model.



## 2026 February



### Former KOICA President CHANG Won-Sam's Visit to Timor-Leste and Laos

Former KOICA President CHANG Won-Sam visited Timor-Leste and Laos from Feb. 1 to 8, where he inspected major ODA project sites and worked to strengthen partnerships with ASEAN member countries. Chang attended the opening ceremony of the Korea-Timor-Leste Friendship Sports Center in Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, on Feb. 3, where he expressed his commitment to child and youth development and expanded cultural exchange through sports. He also met with Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão to discuss the achievements of KOICA’s cooperation projects in Timor-Leste and expressed plans to continue sharing Korea’s development experience—given its similar historical background—through future development cooperation initiatives. On Feb. 6, CHANG met with Deputy Prime Minister Chansamone Chanyalath in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, to confirm mid- to long-term directions for development cooperation and reaffirm their commitment to combating transnational crime.




### Launch of the 1st master’s and doctoral fellowship program Of the year

KOICA officially launched its 2026 master’s and doctoral fellowship program to expand educational exchanges and nurture future talent from partner countries. KOICA held an orientation on Jan. 23 at its International Cooperation Center in Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, for three PhD candidates and 20 master’s candidates from countries including Ghana, Mongolia, Bangladesh, and Uzbekistan. A total of 1,048 fellows participated in this year’s fellowship program. Since launching its fellowship program in 1997, KOICA has nurtured over 6,500 professionals from 95 countries. In particular, the doctoral fellowship program introduced in 2020 has established itself as a key foundation for developing advanced human resources in partner countries. KOICA supports networking and project implementation after training through its integrated training brand, “IEM-CIAT,” to help disseminate outcomes.



### Completion of the National Health Education Center in El Salvador

KOICA completed the National Health Education Center (CENES, Centro Nacional de Especialización en Salud)—El Salvador’s first specialized healthcare training facility—within the premises of the National Hospital in San Salvador through the El Salvador National Health Education Center Establishment and Health Education Strengthening Project. The completion ceremony was held on Jan. 29 (local time). The center, constructed as a three-story facility with a total floor area of 2,246 square meters, enables practice-oriented education linked to clinical sites. It is equipped with 51 types of emergency and trauma treatment training equipment, along with an online education system, laying the foundation for digital health innovation. KOICA also supported the development of a mid- to long-term operational master plan (2026-2030) to establish the center as an international health education hub. This project is expected not only to strengthen El Salvador’s healthcare system—long challenged by shortages of health personnel and limited educational infrastructure—but also to enhance trust in the Korean healthcare model and expand the foundation for the global advancement of K-medical services.




### KOICA's PeKO Friends participate in K-Illustration Fair Seoul 2026

KOICA participated in the K-Illustration Fair Seoul 2026, held at COEX in Seoul from Jan. 29 to Feb. 1, where it operated a “PeKO Friends” booth featuring its communication characters and engaged with approximately 5,400 visitors. The booth focused on conveying the value of ODA in a friendly and engaging manner. The exhibition zone introduced the characters’ universe and global activities through videos, while the participation zone featured interactive programs. In particular, the “Rhythm Game Challenge” received enthusiastic responses and energized the on-site atmosphere. Participatory events, including ODA quizzes and team project-type tests, also attracted visitors’ interest. Limited-edition goods and snacks from partner countries sold out quickly due to their popularity. Visitors noted that the characters made it easy and enjoyable to understand the concept of international development cooperation.



### Tailored education and experiences at the KOICA Exhibition Hall

KOICA Exhibition Hall operated the winter vacation special program “ODA World Tour” in Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, from Feb. 23 to 28, targeting teenagers and families. The program primarily included educational activities, experience missions, and side events, all designed to be enjoyable and accessible for participants of all ages. Educational programs included “Thank you, Potato” (for families), where participants learn the value of sharing through the story of Kenyan potato farmers and make “potato hedgehogs,” and “A Bus is Coming” (for elementary students), where they create an upcycled LEGO bus inspired by the story of a Haitian boy, Sebastian.

## 2026 March




### KOICA-Civil Society Joint Working Group launched

KOICA held the "1st KOICA-Civil Society Joint Working Group Launch Ceremony" on March 6 at the World Vision head office auditorium in Yeouido, Seoul. The joint working group was established to maximize the outcomes of KOICA's Civil Society Partnership Program, a flagship public-private ODA project. The most notable feature is that KOICA and partner organizations jointly lead the process as a "One-Team" partnership, from topic selection at the planning stage through to the adoption of implementation tasks. The working group is a restructured version of the previous "Public-Private Partnership Council," upgraded to play a leading role that goes beyond simple opinion gathering and granting direct authority to select agendas and implementation tasks. The first-term working group includes 12 organizations—KOICA, Koworks, Save the Children, and others—and 40 staff members, who will operate together until October.




### KOICA achieves "Triple Silver" at the 2025 A.N.D. Award

KOICA received three Silver Awards for its self-produced video content at the "2025 A.N.D. Award" ceremony held on Feb. 26 at COEX in Seoul, achieving the status of a "triple-crown winner." Now in its 19th year, the A.N.D. Award is an authoritative annual digital awards ceremony in Korea, organized by the Korea Digital Enterprise Association (KDEA) and supported by the Ministry of Science and ICT and other public bodies. KOICA has won the award for the second consecutive year. This year, the web drama "Love in Development Season 2" won an award in the Video Content category, while "The Wind of KOICA (Central Asia ODA Project Promotion Video)" received awards in both the Video Content category and the Public Institution category.




### Hosting the "2026 Development Cooperation Participation Strategy Briefing"

KOICA held the "2026 Development Cooperation Participation Strategy Briefing" at the KBIZ Hall of the Korea Federation of SMEs in Yeouido, Seoul, on March 3. This year, under the Fourth Comprehensive Basic Plan for International Development Cooperation, "results-based K-ODA" was presented as a core vision, drawing growing interest from Korean companies seeking to enter ODA markets. KOICA introduced step-by-step support, ranging from helping qualified partner companies build localized business models to strengthening their project implementation capabilities. KOICA also conducted sessions on ODA project procurement, corporate partnership programs, EDCF projects, and ways to participate through overseas procuring entities, and shared participation strategies related to the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), Multilateral Development Bank (MDB), and international organizations, along with success stories from companies that have already participated in such projects.




### Launch of a high-nutrition energy bar made from an alternative to narcotic crops in Colombia

KOICA launched a high-nutrition food product made from an alternative to narcotic crops in Colombia. Since 2020, KOICA has been working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to commercialize Sacha Inchi as an alternative crop in Putumayo, a region highly dependent on coca cultivation. As a result, a cereal bar made from Sacha Inchi, "Sacha Energy," has been developed and launched, with a product release event held on March 3. This product is the outcome of integrated value chain development linking production, processing, and distribution. KOICA has established cultivation bases for 700 farming households across seven municipalities and has supported the formation of cooperatives. As a result, average monthly household income has risen from about 500,000 Colombian pesos to 1.2 million pesos. The "Sacha Energy" cereal bar is being placed in major supermarkets across Colombia and is also being promoted for entry into the European market.



### Groundbreaking of the 2nd "Cambodia-Korea Friendship Building" at the National Pediatric Hospital in Cambodia

KOICA held the groundbreaking ceremony for the second ward of the "Cambodia-Korea Friendship Building" at the National Pediatric Hospital in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on March 6. The new ward will be built with a total floor area of 9,053㎡, spanning five floors above ground and housing 188 beds. It will include specialized treatment spaces in seven major areas, such as pediatric hematology-oncology, neurology, and respiratory medicine, along with endoscopy and other specialized diagnostic facilities. This is expected to significantly strengthen Cambodia's domestic treatment capacity for severely ill pediatric patients. The second ward represents an expansion of cooperation into serious pediatric internal medicine care, building on the achievements of the Project to Improve Child Care Medical Center at National Pediatric Hospital implemented from 2013 to 2018. Construction will take about 27 months, with completion targeted for 2028.

## 2026 April




### KOICA and AFD to strengthen their partnership in international development cooperation

In celebration of the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and France, KOICA and the French Development Agency (AFD) Group signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to strengthen international development cooperation. KOICA held the signing ceremony at the FKI Tower in Yeouido, Seoul, on April 3 to formalize the expansion of its strategic partnership. This agreement was concluded on the occasion of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Korea. The two organizations will cooperate in 11 areas, including climate, disaster relief, infrastructure, digital technology, and food security, through 2029. Through this partnership, they aim to support the economic and social development of developing countries and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The two organizations agreed to strengthen their cooperation by identifying and implementing joint projects.




### Launch of the 1st K-shipbuilding enterprise cooperation ODA project in Latin America

KOICA and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries are collaborating on a project to promote shipbuilding technology and expertise, with Peru serving as a regional hub. On April 6, KOICA held a launch ceremony with the Peruvian Ministry of Production for the "Project for Technical Human Resource Development and Capacity Enhancement in Peru's Shipbuilding Industry," officially initiating the ODA project. This initiative is a public-private partnership model under the "Inclusive Business Solution (IBS) Program," with costs shared equally between the public and private sectors. A total of approximately KRW 3 billion will be invested over three years, with a primary focus on education and technology transfer in the shipbuilding industry. Key components include the development of vocational training materials, capacity building for technical personnel, improvements in production and quality management, and the establishment of government-to-government partnerships. Through this project, 180 technical professionals will be trained, and technical guidance will be provided to 18 local companies.



### 2026 Return Program Agreement Signing Ceremony held… 10 startup teams officially launched

Since 2019, KOICA has supported startups for individuals with global expertise through the "Return Program." Participants can establish their businesses either in Korea or in developing countries following their overseas experience. The program is distinguished by its step-by-step support system, which goes beyond idea development and covers commercialization and growth. To date, 44 teams have received support, of which 22 have successfully launched their businesses, creating 253 jobs and achieving a startup success rate of 64%. Starting this year, KOICA plans to restructure the Return Program into a phased framework consisting of Pre-startup, Initial, and Leap stages, and to establish a "Continuous Support Team" for existing participants to ensure that success stories continue to expand.



### Completion of the project to improve the integrated educational environment in the West Bank, Palestine

KOICA completed the "Project on Improving Education Quality in the West Bank in the State of Palestine," implemented in partnership with UNICEF and the Palestinian Ministry of Education, with a closing ceremony on April 20. Running from 2021 through March 2026, the project aimed to enhance educational conditions for children living amid conflict and challenging circumstances. Over the past five years, 70 schools have undergone classroom renovations, sanitation facility upgrades, and the installation of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) labs, enabling approximately 20,000 students to learn in safer environments. Educational capacity has also been strengthened through training programs for 500 principals and 62 school inspectors, along with teacher development delivered through a Training of Trainers (ToT) approach. To address school violence, school councils and action plans have been introduced across 100 schools, and 18 student-led campaigns have been carried out. In the area of hygiene, 6,500 kits have been distributed to raise community awareness.

## 2026 May



### “2026 KOICA International Organizations Career Information Session” held

On May 7, KOICA held the “2026 KOICA International Organizations Career Information Session” at Community House “Masil” in Myeongdong, Jung-gu, Seoul. The information session was divided into two concurrent sessions. Session 1 introduced how to participate in the KOICA-UNV University Volunteer Corps and the Korean Multilateral Cooperation Officer (KMCO) program, two flagship pathways for building careers in international organizations. Session 2 offered details on the recruitment system for Korean talent in KOICA-related international organization projects, targeting returnees who had previously participated in these programs. For the first time this year, a Homecoming Day was held concurrently for UNV University Volunteers and KMCO participants, featuring experience-sharing and networking programs for returning participants.



### MOU with Colombia’s Development Cooperation Agency to Establish a Trilateral Cooperation Hub

On May 6 (local time), KOICA signed an inter-agency MOU with APC Colombia to establish the “Latin America and Caribbean: Korea-Colombia Trilateral Cooperation Hub.” This agreement was designed to establish a foundation for jointly implementing projects in third countries across Latin America and the Caribbean by leveraging the development cooperation experience and expertise of both Korea and Colombia. The key areas of cooperation include ▲digital governance, ▲climate and environment, ▲industry, innovation, and startups, and ▲agriculture and regional development. The two organizations will collaborate by jointly providing technical and financial support based on their respective expertise, and plan to jointly identify, coordinate, and implement programs centered on priority areas.



### Groundbreaking ceremony held for ‘Korea-Pakistan Technical Textile Center’ at the National Textile University of Pakistan

KOICA held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Korea-Pakistan Textile Center (PKTC) at the National Textile University (NTU) in Faisalabad, Pakistan, on May 14 (local time). KOICA is implementing the “Project for Establishment of Technical Textile Center at National Textile University in Pakistan(phase 2)” from 2022 to 2028, with a total budget of $7.95 million, to support the advancement and self-sufficiency of Pakistan’s textile industry. Pakistan’s textile industry accounts for more than half of the country’s exports but has struggled to transition into industrial textiles due to intensifying global competition and a lack of research and development (R&D) infrastructure. The industrial textile center, whose construction has now begun, will be a two-story facility equipped with laboratory and lecture spaces, as well as composite nonwoven fabric manufacturing equipment, and will serve both research and training functions.



### Joint training program conducted with TİKA

KOICA and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) jointly conducted a training program titled "Modern Approaches to Tourism Education" at the National University of Tourism in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from May 12 to 16 (local time). The training program was organized to support the development of a foundation for the tourism industry in Tajikistan, a country with significant tourism growth potential. As part of the program, KOICA introduced Korea’s tourism development experience, the latest trends in the tourism sector, and case studies in tourism education. Participants also took part in hands-on Korean cooking sessions.

TİKA likewise shared Türkiye’s experience in developing its tourism industry and its expertise in vocational education. The training brought together 86 participants, including professors from the National University of Tourism, instructors from vocational training centers, and tourism industry professionals.




### KOICA, LG Electronics, and UNDP establish youth-focused technical training hub

KOICA, LG Electronics, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are strengthening cooperation to provide vocational skills training for youth in Somalia. On May 15 (local time), LG Electronics and UNDP signed a Business Agreement on Youth Technical Training Cooperation in Somalia, agreeing to deliver vocational training in electrical engineering, electronics, and information technology to young people in Mogadishu in connection with KOICA’s Africa Regional Peacebuilding and Prevention of Violent Extremism Project. This initiative marks the first replication of the Ethiopia-based LG-KOICA Hope Vocational Training School model in Somalia. A hands-on technical training hub utilizing LG Electronics’ products and equipment will be established in Mogadishu, providing training in electronics and home appliance repair, IT and networking, as well as employment and entrepreneurship skills. Somali instructors who have completed certified training in Ethiopia will serve as trainers, with the goal of strengthening local ownership and ensuring long-term sustainability.

## 2026 June



### Sharing the achievements of the project supporting the return and resettlement of IDPs in Kachin State, Myanmar

On June 2, the KOICA Myanmar Office held a project achievement-sharing workshop for the “Supporting the Voluntary Return and Settlement of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Kachin State through Right-based Interventions” project at PARKROYAL Yangon, in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This project, implemented over a two-year period beginning in 2024, aimed to facilitate the safe return and resettlement of IDPs who had lost their homes due to prolonged conflict, while strengthening the resilience of local communities. Through the project, integrated support was provided in the areas of ▲ housing assistance, ▲ community infrastructure improvement, ▲ livelihood support, ▲ housing, land, and property (HLP) legal services, and ▲ prevention of and response to sexual violence.



### Regular briefing session for KOICA overseas volunteers for 1st half of 2026

On June 5, KOICA held “KOICA-CINEMA,” its regular briefing session for overseas volunteers for the first half of 2026, at Community House Masil in Jung-gu, Seoul. Designed around a movie theater concept, the event enabled participants to experience overseas volunteer activities in a more vivid and immersive way. Participants explored stamp tour-style experiential zones and photo zones, and watched videos showcasing the activities of senior volunteers. The subsequent recruitment briefing introduced the 2026 overseas volunteer recruitment process and key changes to the program. During the career concert, returned volunteers and project managers shared their firsthand field experiences and discussed a variety of career paths. One-on-one consultation booths and coffee chat sessions were also available, providing prospective applicants with opportunities to interact directly with senior volunteers.




### Bilateral meetings with African foreign ministers

On June 1, KOICA held a series of bilateral meetings with foreign ministers from 10 African countries at Lotte Hotel Seoul, on the sidelines of the 2026 Korea-Africa Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. During the meetings, the participants reviewed the achievements of ODA projects in Africa and discussed ways to expand future cooperation. In particular, Africa was recognized not merely as a recipient of aid but as a key partner in addressing global polycrises together, and both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation based on mutual growth and shared prosperity. Hong Seok-hwa, then vice president for Regional Programs II at KOICA, met with the foreign ministers of Tanzania, Egypt, and Tunisia to discuss cooperation plans across a wide range of sectors, including water management, health, education, transportation, digital transformation, youth capacity development, and ICT workforce training. KOICA also signed a Host Country Arrangement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya.



### Doh Young-ah appointed as new vice president

On June 12, KOICA appointed Doh Young-ah, a visiting professor of Global Public Administration at Yonsei University, as its new vice president. Vice President Doh earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from Chung-Ang University, a master’s degree in economics from Ewha Womans University, and a doctorate in public administration from Yonsei University. After joining KOICA as a founding member in April 1991, she served the organization for 33 years until 2024 and held key positions, including director of the East Africa Department and country director of the KOICA offices in Bangladesh and Ethiopia. As KOICA’s Vice President for Regional Program II, she will oversee the departments of Africa, Central and South America, Eurasia and Middle East, and Strategic Partnerships and Multilateral Cooperation.



### KOICA Nepal Office receives the Nepal International Peace Award

The KOICA Nepal Office received the International Peace Award at the Dr. Dilli Raman Regmi International Peace Award 2026 ceremony held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on June 8. The award is one of Nepal’s most prestigious international peace honors, presented to individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of peace, international cooperation, and social development. KOICA was selected as the award recipient in recognition of its contributions to Nepal’s sustainable development, including peacebuilding, capacity development, the establishment of e-government infrastructure, healthcare support, and the expansion of technical and vocational education. The award is regarded as official recognition by the Government of Nepal of KOICA’s long-term development cooperation achievements and strong local partnerships.

# Toward Korea's new integrated ODA

Dear readers,

The environment for international development cooperation is changing more rapidly than ever before. Complex global challenges — including the climate crisis, conflicts, political and economic uncertainties, and food and energy security issues — continue to intensify, with their impacts being felt even more severely in developing countries. At the same time, as development finance within the international community becomes increasingly limited, we have entered an era in which the key question is no longer simply how much aid we provide, but how effectively and strategically we cooperate. As a country that overcame the devastation of war and achieved growth with the support of the international community, Korea has now established itself as a responsible donor country, sharing its experiences and working together with the global community to promote sustainable development. Moving forward, to play a larger role commensurate with its international standing, Korea's ODA must also evolve in a more systematic and efficient direction to keep pace with the changing global environment. With these reflections in mind, the latest issue of MAGAZINE KOICA focuses on the theme of 'integrated grant aid platform'. An integrated grant aid platform is not merely an administrative system. It is a new foundation for cooperation designed to connect the information, experience, and expertise held by various development cooperation actors — including government ministries, public institutions, private enterprises, civil society, and international organizations — and to enable more effective development cooperation based on these connections. Thus far, Korea's grant aid has generated meaningful achievements rooted in the expertise and dedication of each respective institution. Now is the time to connect these strengths more cohesively, which will enable us to respond more strategically to the needs of partner countries, strengthen linkages among projects, and utilize limited resources more efficiently. Such an integrated platform will serve as an essential foundation for making this transformation possible.

In the cover story, we aim to examine from various perspectives the necessity of an integrated platform, the direction in which it is being developed, and the kind of future it seeks to create for Korea's ODA. Furthermore, we explore how this platform must go beyond being a mere space for gathering data and sharing information and become a practical forum for cooperation that enhances ODA outcomes and supports the sustainable development of partner countries.

As Korea's integrated grant aid platform, KOICA will further strengthen its cooperation with diverse partners. We will work closely not only with government ministries and public institutions but also with private companies, civil society, academia, and international organizations to ensure that the unique strengths of each actor are effectively combined to produce collective achievements. Just as Korea's own development experience has shown, progress cannot be achieved alone. Greater change becomes possible when we connect and cooperate with one another. Grounded in this very value of cooperation, the integrated grant aid platform will also open a new future for Korea's ODA.

We hope that the insights shared in this issue will help deepen your understanding of the significance and potential of our ODA platform. In addition, we feature various stories showcasing the valuable achievements and experiences being created by KOICA and its partners both within and beyond the development cooperation ecosystem. We hope they make for an informative and engaging read. KOICA will continue its journey with the international community toward sustainable development and shared prosperity. We express our deepest gratitude to you, our readers, for your unwavering interest and support.

Acting President of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

Kim Dong Ho



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