



A seminar at Toyota Kenya Academy

Cultivating Human Resources in Kenya

A Japanese general trading company has established a center for the study of vehicle after-sales services and other skills in Kenya, and provides support for cultivating human resources able to realize Africa's autonomous development.

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THE Nairobi Declaration was adopted at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), held in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, in August 2016. This declaration cited human resources development as a major issue for the realization of economic structural reforms through economic diversification and industrialization, one of three priority areas.

Based on the Nairobi Declaration, the Japanese government and private companies have stepped up work on the development of human resources who support the African economy. One of the companies conducting such activities is the Toyota Group trading company, Toyota Tsusho Corporation.

Toyota Tsusho's business initiatives in Africa started with cotton imports from eastern Africa in 1922. The trading company entered into a capital participation agreement with CFAO, a large trading company in France and a key player in Africa,

All photos: Courtesy of Toyota Tsusho Corporation

in 2012. Toyota Tsusho made CFAO a wholly owned subsidiary in 2016, and has expanded its business in Africa. In 2017, the company established an African Division, the first time for a division of the company to manage a particular region.

A representative of the African Division says, "Toyota Tsusho Corporation is committed to developing business through the long-term perspective by growing together with local people under the 'With Africa, For Africa' philosophy. Industrial diversification and job creation meet the needs of African governments. We focus on cultivating human resources with the goal of helping raise the awareness of safety and skill development, and in doing so contribute to regional growth."

Toyota Tsusho manages and operates Toyota Kenya Academy, a human resources cultivation training center, as part of these initiatives. The Academy was founded by expanding the facilities and services of the former Training Centre that Toyota Kenya Limited, a subsidiary of CFAO, has used to up-skill technicians and other Toyota authorized distributors and dealers in Eastern Africa at the time of its relocation in 2014. The Academy also offers courses to the public, especially young people, women and people with disabilities, to contribute to the development of skills to enhance global human resources as espoused in Kenya's national vision.



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The representative of the African Division, which manages and operates the Academy, states, “We plan and provide a wide range of programs based on the main pillars of safety, health, education and the environment. In particular, courses in the automotive area enable young technicians to acquire rudimentary and Toyota standard skills. This program has been very well accepted and its popularity and benefits have seen very many young people apply, way above the number that Toyota Kenya Academy can handle.”

Aside from courses in the automobile area, *kaizen*, or continuous improvement, which is widely known as one of the core principles of the Toyota Production System, are taught together with Total Quality Management and PDCA by Toyota-certified trainers to realize effective and productive working places and organization of participants. Toyota Kenya Academy also plans education programs in areas where knowledge and experience is limited in cooperation with the Japanese Government and United Nations organizations. For example, Toyota Kenya Academy has implemented training sessions for operating and

Toyota Kenya Academy provides a wide range of training sessions and business programs, including (1) automobile repair, (2 & 3) agricultural and construction machinery operation and repair, and (4) *kaizen* continuous improvement.

repairing construction and agricultural machinery with the support of instructors from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) attached to the Toyota Kenya Academy. In addition, Toyota Kenya Academy implements business programs on leadership and management for those aspiring to become entrepreneurs or corporate managers.

According to the African Division representative, “We have trained over 1,500 people through the courses offered at the Academy. Some of the trainees have even started their own car maintenance businesses. We believe Toyota Kenya Academy helps Kenyans to develop independent and autonomous mindsets which leads to social contribution.”

Other African governments are paying keen attention to the activities offered at the Academy. These are great examples of Japanese initiatives for cultivating human resources to continually support African autonomous development and economic structural reforms. **■**