

Dakar: a short story of a teacher

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Tomohito Okuda

Master's Candidate, Department of Urban Engineering, The University of Tokyo

Humans are very good at creating attracting spots in a city, while they are no good at removing bad part from there. In Dakar, Senegal, you can find luxurious hotels with a great ocean view and a modern shopping center on the one hand, but also flooded slums in the suburbs, garbage on the street and congested areas without access to sanitation on the other hand. I believe that there are a variety of charms even in slums. What attracts me more is, however, the attitude of persons who are trying to make the city better. This essay is an attempt to show an example of such power through an episode I had.

As is well known, the penetration of information technology is now shooting up in sub-Saharan Africa. Convenience of the Internet is already well known in Dakar, and many people even in slums have their own mobile phones and facebook accounts. I also have a work on creation of an online database to facilitate communication between stakeholders on flood mitigation. On the other hand, persons and institutions with financial resources to buy their own personal computers are still limited. In addition, there are still many people who do not know how to use computers.

There is a high school teacher in the NGO I've been working with in my reserach. Since many teachers at his school are still incapable of using computers yet, he often takes time to initiate them into computers. He says that even only the skill to make a handout can improve their operational efficiency greatly.

Another important thing is IT education to children. In order to receive a higher education in the world now, computer skills are always required. It can be said not only for people who study abroad in Europe or in the United States, but also for students who study at domestic universities. As students don't expect good study materials in small bookstores in Senegal, the Internet is now widely recognized as their principal source of information.

Thus the high school teacher wanted to teach his students computer skills and found the solution. He got an information that a governmental agency called Agency for Promotion of Large Investments has a number of unused personal computers, wrote a letter to the director and successfully receive them for free. Moreover, he was sensitive enough to take no credit for that. Both obtaining computers and teaching IT skills to the teachers and the students in time between are completely unpaid work.

What he is doing is just a little contribution to development of Senegal, but even it is a little, he is actually improving the society in his time between. "What Senegal currently lacks," according to him, "is an action of each individual, rather than policy. In addition, they should not always look for money in front of them, but they have to have volunteer spirit. Only if all the people of Senegal spend one hour for someone every week, they can have 12 million hours altogether. How much it can result in social benefits and the economic development in the future? The Senegalese don't think of such a thing, but they have to do it." You may have another opinion to his idea. What I wish to say here is, however, that I was simply impressed by his words. At the same time, I got a renewed motivation to spend my time for people like him, as an individual who fortunately got an excellent higher education.

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