

## Visiting an ex-JOCV colleague

There is a restaurant named CAFE & BAR TAMER in Ohno district of Kashima city, Ibaraki prefecture. The owner of the restaurant, Mr. Toshikazu Kuwano is a former JOCV (Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer) in Sudan, who was a colleague volunteer of the author, being trained and dispatched at the same period. After graduating from high school, he worked for a power company and joined JOCV in 2012. In February 2016 after he returned home, he started the restaurant in Kashima city, his hometown.



He was working at the Miyakejima Island of the Izu Islands during his company employee days. There, he felt strongly the connections of local people, especially young people. When he asked why, they said because there was a restaurant where everyone gathered in the area, so they could get along naturally through chatting about various things there. This experience in the island raised his strong feeling towards the place where he was born, and he started to think that he would like to work for creating a connection in the region someday, although he had been away from the local community since his high school student days.

Returning from Sudan, he started the restaurant by renovating his parents' house which was vacant. It was the first time for him to manage a restaurant, so he encountered many setbacks, but some part of the management business was similar to his JOCV activities, such as finding out hidden needs of the area and gathering people by planning different events. He opens an English conversation classroom every Tuesday inviting an American acquaintance as a teacher, and offers the restaurant as a workshop place to friends who met during the JOCV days. Mr. Kuwano himself also organizes an opportunity to exchange views on the

future of the area while watching a documentary film on free trade with local farmers, and accepts students of the junior high school that he graduated from to have work experience.

He hopes the local people will pay more attention to various things from daily problems to what is going on overseas through the experience at the restaurant. In addition to information sharing, he believes spreading human relationships in the area is important through physically gathering and connecting people. Especially for young people, he wants to make the restaurant a place where they can realize there are many interesting things in their area without going to big cities. Under the idea of "Think Globally, Act Locally", he said that he would like to continue planning various events so as to involve and connect people in the area.

The restaurant serves tasty coffee and tea along with baked curry or homemade pizza, which are prepared originally with his wife. At first, they had a plan to provide the African cuisine which he used to eat in Sudan, but they were afraid such dishes could be less familiar to Japanese customers, so they decided to serve current style of dishes so that many people could easily come and enjoy. However, they do have a Sudanese dish such as lentil soup which he often enjoyed at a roadside food cart during the JOCV days. They hope the soup could bring a good chance to know about Sudan, and fortunately it is getting popular.



Lentil soup

By the way, the restaurant name "TAMER" is an Arabic name given him as a nickname by a language teacher of the JOCV training center before his dispatch. It means "person with wealth". He said it would be wonderful if they could make the greatest wealth of "people's connection" from this restaurant. There is not only one way to activate the area. However, the most important thing both in overseas work as well as in Japan is how to build a trusting relationship with local people. I thought through this visit that Mr. Kuwano's activity is something similar to ours, in which we work with project counterparts and train participants through day-to-day activities. (By Ioki, July 2017)