

Second round table meeting held at the Japan Society for Afrasian Studies (JSAS) Annual Conference

On 7 October 2023, a roundtable on the research project was held as a special session of the annual conference of the Japanese Society for Afrasian Studies (JSAS).

The principal investigator Kazuyo Hanai, Project Assistant Professor at the University of Tokyo, gave an overview of the research project and the progress of the research teams in seven African countries, all of which conducted field surveys this year, the second year of the project, to analyze the impact of COVID-19 and government policies on people's lives and the process by which people overcome the impact of these impact.

In this roundtable, Mr. Tomohiro Hosoi (doctoral student at the University of Tokyo) from the South Africa team and Prof. Vick L. Ssali (Lecturer at Aichi-Gakuin University) from the Uganda team presented their research results.

Based on a questionnaire survey conducted in South Africa, Mr. Hosoi clarified that while COVID-19 is no longer considered as a risk, people are most concerned about economic distress, service delivery failure, and security. The survey also revealed that the anxiety about the unknown disease and the emotional difficulties caused by not being able to meet with family and friends were severe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, while trust in government is low, many people rated the government's prevention policies as effective despite the severe impact on people's lives, noting that family and civil society organizations played a role in mitigating the negative effects.

Based on interviews conducted in Uganda in 2022 and 2023, Prof. Ssali showed that people's perception of risk and evaluation of government policies may be changing as the situation changes. While many people in the 2022 survey were skeptical that the government's COVID-19 prevention policies were distorted to gain electoral advantage, an increasing number of people in the 2023 survey expressed trust in the government and rated the policies as having been effective. In addition to the passage of time since the end of the pandemic and regional characteristics, the impact of elections on people's perception of risk needs to be analyzed as a factor in this change, Prof. Ssali noted.

The presentations were followed by a lively question and answer session with participants. Details of the 2023 survey will be made available at a symposium in February 2024.

