

# Play Infinite Game

～ CHALLENGE OF POLY-GLU ～

Dr. Kanetoshi Oda, CEO, POLY-GLU Group

I was invited by a POLY-GLU LADY (Our woman staff is called POLY-GLU LADY) to her home on the night before my departure for my country Japan during my business trip to Bukoba near the great Lake Victoria in Tanzania located in East Africa. It was a simple one storied house on a hill from where the Lake is seen down the hill.

The 5 member family consists of couple of thirties, two infant sons and one daughter.

But, I was astonished when I entered the house. In the front wall of the house, the national flags of Tanzania and Japan were set. And, then photographs of the President Kikwete of Tanzania, Prime Minister Abe of Japan and mine were set in a line. Furthermore, some paper cuts of Poly-Glu News from News Papers and Magazines were also set in the wall. After seeing these, I stood still for a while feeling largeness of my responsibility. Despite differences of our skin, color and language, the couple treated me like their father and the children like their grandfather.

Not only that, the girl choir of a primary school also composed and sang a Swahili song 'Thanks to Poly-Glu' during my site visit to Bagamoyo accompanied by the Minister Matsunaga of Japan Embassy in Tanzania.

In the song they were saying 'After introducing of Poly-Glu Drinking Water, we don't need to take leave from school for illness. We don't need to go to the river for water anymore, so now there is no fear of being attacked by crocodile. Thanks to Poly-Glu. We respect the Japanese . We love Japan. Thanks to Japan, Thanks to Poly-Glu.'



Primary School Students singing 'Thanks to Poly-Glu' in chorus

## **I was called the STAR of BOP of Business**

BOP Business is a business which targets low income people in large. Products are manufactured in countries of low labor cost and soled in developed countries.

Products are sold in small sachets so that the people of low income can also purchase. Conventionally these may be called BOP business. But, Poly-Glu Business is basically different from this simple business that demands only the profit.

Let's take an example.

A Chinese philosopher said 'Teaching how to fish is better than giving a fish'.

Poly-Glu is doing even more than this philosopher is saying. Poly-Glu teaches not only how to fish but also how to make the fishing tools, how to sell the tools, how to sell fishes and even how to do fish firming. By getting them doing these series of things, Ply-Glu builds up the confidence that they can do anything. The success of Poly-Glu is that they have now expectations and they make efforts to materialize those expectations.

If there is ambition and confidence, next is the expanding of that expectation and ultimately the birth of a new enterprise. Truly speaking, it is not the case that we will teach or give instruction.

People of developing countries like arguments. Common sense of Japan and the common sense of local community are different and this difference ultimately makes confusion between both of them. Despite that, during discussion both agree at a reasonable point. And, that is expected.

The basic is to target 'the interest of both, relation of WIN-WIN'.

Poly-Glu is making them understand the ABC of business through its water business. For example, Poly-Glu in Japanese style make them understand the importance of keeping promise, maintaining time, respecting customers, work management, money management etc. Thus, a person can be a manager just in only one month.

Then, the manager takes responsibility to instruct the subordinates. Supervision by the local staffs is better than by that of Japanese staffs. So, imitation of Japanese 'apprenticeship' is the root of POLY-GLU Business. The concern of Japan head office is to increase the sales of water purifying agents by increasing the number of water plants. This is like, sales of gasoline increase, if the number of vehicles increase.

## **Background of POLY-GLU Water Business**

If the small quantity of sample sales is included, our product so far has been sold to about 60 countries and drinking water is being supplied to 2.2 million people.



The number of POLY-GLU LADY and POLY-GLU BOY is 850.

Moreover, 6,000 people including the water vendors are involved in our water business. Centering our water treatment plants, roadside markets are also growing in many areas.

Our small group of companies in Osaka with only 35 staffs are doing such a big job.

If a look is given at the results, it may be thought that the company chief executive is a great resourceful person and has been working in the developing countries for long time. But, that is not true. Actually, the company has reached this stage without any concrete plan. Poly-Glu business was established through a process of error and learning and specifically learning from the local people. In the beginning, when the water purifying agent was developed, waste water treatment was our main target. It was thought that stock listing would be possible in 10 years. However, to the Japanese Government and big companies count the actual performance only and their door is very narrow for the newcomers. When we were planning new business policy after our failure in the primary stage, our technology got recognition during our rescue activities after natural disasters in Thailand and Bangladesh. We were welcome there like God and were treated as their saviors.

We started our business in developing countries when we realized that our technology has huge opportunity to contribute in the developing countries. We did not started overseas business in a planned way rather we had to explore our business in the foreign countries as we were not recognized in the domestic market as per expectation.

There was another big reason.

During that time, due to misappropriation of our company treasurer, a distant relative of mine, our company was caught in a debt trap though it had no loan until 6 years since its establishment. We totally lost the trust of bank and business partners. Even there was rumor in the internet that Poly-Glu had gone bankrupt. At the same time, some directors and business agents made conspiracy to capture the company. Half of total 63 staffs resigned. There was no way except starting business in another world.

The consideration of starting business in another world came to me as a savoir of my life.

We made the responsible person understand that a family must have the ability to pay one or two dollar a month.

Though there was no confidence of reestablishment of our company through our business in developing countries, we also felt at the same time the enormous possibilities.

In japan, bad situation but in developing countries, treatment like savior, in these

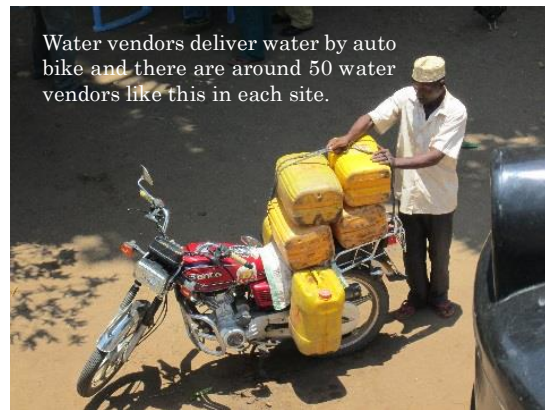
situations of Paradise and Hell, to explore the possibilities in the Paradise was natural.

We put our maximum efforts in our Paradise.

We stayed in a very cheap hotel of US\$5 per night and as we did not have capital for installing standard water treatment plant, we thoroughly used the local materials to minimize the cost. But, the materials of local procurement are not so good in quality. The device goes out of order soon after installation. But, as the structure is very simple, local people can easily repair it. People's skills get improve through repairing works. As cost of the device is 5% of that of one of Japan, the water price is also naturally very cheap. Water supply system affordable to the poor people was developed in Bangladesh after continuous trial for 3 years. During these time, I visited Bangladesh about 30 times. Local Mayor admired "We thought he would give up and would not come back. But, perseverance of the Japanese has proved our thought wrong",

Then, in the same way, we invested in India, Somalia, Tanzania, Central America one after another. The more the business is expanded, the more the staffs are required. But, instant increasing of staffs and technical expert is not possible.

And, again we were facing another obstruction. In such situation, we needed to use our optimum wisdom. Around 500,000 Yen per month would be needed if a Japanese staff is dispatched to Africa. Profit cannot be achieved in the developing countries in a short time. Therefore, we decided to dispatch our local expert from Bangladesh so that 50,000 Yen per month is enough for one staff.

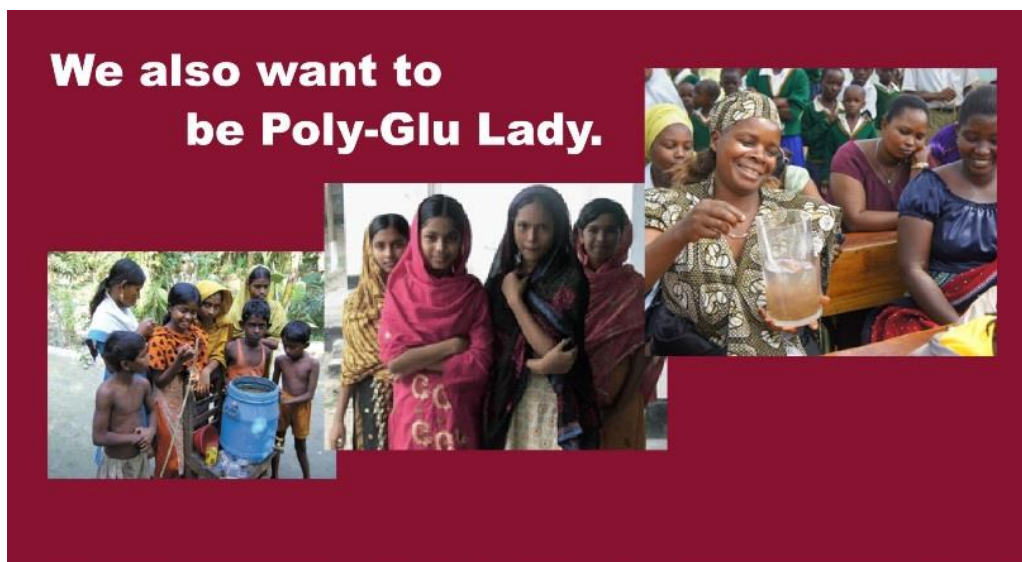


People in Tanzania and India got confidence that they can by themselves make poly-glu devices by seeing the instructions of the staffs from Bangladesh.

Though I don't deserve so, I was appreciated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina like this "Our country needs not only your technology but also a person like you".

There is little cash income in the rural areas of Bangladesh. When the Poly-Glu Ladies go to collect money at the end of month, the customers say that they don't have money, they wanted to pay by vegetable or by fruit or by eggs of chicken. As there is no option, the ladies receive barter exchange and sell them in local market once a week. They purchase at a little cheap and sell at a little high price. As a results of such new phenomenon, the business becomes more interesting to the Poly-Glu Ladies. In the Islamic countries, woman get married at an early age often at 15 years and stays at home as there is no work for them outside. Poly-Glu Ladies were saying beautiful when they came out and started working.

The women who were staying in home have now come out, working joyfully and this joyful mood brought them the image of beauty.



### **Cost of Device and Water Price**

Installation of a water purification device after meeting with local community. Local political dealers like town mayor or village chairman also attend this meeting. Standard water purification device of the capacity of 200 MT to 300 MT for supplying 20,000 people in the area of 3000 to 5000 households.

I propose to the participants that I would install a water facility if they agree to pay like 1 US\$ per month for using 10 litter per day, 2 US\$ per month for using 20 liter per day and 3 US\$ per month for using 30 liter per day. Then, after getting commitment from the local

community, we complete installation of the water purification in a week and start supplying water after permission from government office.

Installation cost of water purifying device is around 20,000 US\$. At the opening of the operation, 6 males and 20 females are appointed. Number of staffs increases with the increase of



Community meeting. We usually hold such meeting in each country we work

sales. In the beginning, staff salary is cheaper than the standards but it increases gradually. It becomes profitable soon as the gross profit is 50%. So, redemption of the cost of water purifying device is possible in 2 years.

If conventional technology is used, 500,000 to 1,000,000 US\$ would be required to install the water purifying device of the same capacity. Moreover, 2 years will be required for designing and installing. So, conventional technology is inappropriate in developing countries.

Poly-Glu water quality is like that of Japanese water standards. Poly-Glu does not consider degrading of quality for the reason that it is being used in developing countries. For maintaining water quality, water is tested at government recognized institution in every 2 months.

I emphasize on stopping the water related ODA to developing countries.

Why don't the people who know the water supply system of developing countries drink tape water in developing countries?

The cause is very simple. Water is dirty. Why the water is dirty? Any person of ODA relation knows the reason very well.

The reason is steeling of water.

I have observed it both in New Delhi and Chittagong. There is big hole in the dark water pipe in the road side where people come to get water from the hole of the pipe. Water will flow to the road if the pressures is high. So, the water is sent at a low pressure at a certain time. People come at that time to get water from the holes. As a results of the hole in pipe, dirt from outside get into the pipe thus making the water dirty and unsafe. So, this is the reason why the tape water of developing countries is dirty. Local citizens consider the water free of cost. They do not feel guilt for steeling water. They are not habituated to logical society. There are some people ready to pay for clean and safe water but even they do not pay for tape water saying the cause that the water is dirty. So, the big money granted as ODA ultimately brings no result. In case of

ODA loan, payback becomes difficult. If there is any doubt in my words, our parliament members and surveyors may see the real situation. I am saying this because ODA related people are ignoring this though they know this situation. So, the millions of dollar allocated for water projects should be used for other purposes.

Our 27 years old lady staff said “I have been asked by my chairman to work for increasing the trust of our red passport.” This impressive statement was noted in public relations magazine of the government.

So, I believe if the people according to her statement, act sincerely and actively with pride, they will be evaluated and trusted by the people of the counterpart country and this trust will naturally link to the success of the task. It means, to find the happiness of work in international work being said thanks or gratitude to Japan by the people of counterpart countries. If the ODA is limited in water project, may be a section of people related with the execution of the project will be happy but the people of the counterpart country will not be happy. Counterpart country welcomes the ODA because they consider though it will not be that much effective at least they will be able to get some foreign currency.

Water supply works in developing countries should be like Poly-Glu Style works which runs individual transaction for water business. Poly-Glu has got this experience from Bangladesh after working there for 4 years where now there are also people who want to make pipe line to their houses from our water plant on their own expenses. I was waiting for this momentum. They realize the conveniences and make other realize the same. And, this realization was very necessary.

### **Ensuring Safe Drinking Water for All People of the World and Eradicating Poverty from this World through Water Business**



POLY-GLU is gallantly taking the big challenge which is also a world scale task undertaken by the United Nations.

I guess there are some people who laugh at this kind of statement of mine.

People have right to laugh but our challenge is like the troop of ants.

We are getting attention of the world because a small company is taking a big challenge. A multinational big company

may not get such attention. Request for my lecture at International Economic Forum and International Collaboration has abruptly increased for the last 2 years. I was basically an expert of automation engineering and I was never an expert of water technology. The same way, I am neither an economic specialist nor an international cooperation expert. There are many expert and scholars of high water technology.

I think rather than that high theoretical works, my works where dirty water is converted into safe water instantly and the technology is being expanded on own efforts is more appreciated and that is quite natural.

I mean main task is to ensure the safe drinking water regardless of whatever the method is. So, a laymen can try more options than an expert. The same way, the Poly-Glu Style is not something that has been learnt from someone.

Poly-Glu while cooperating and consulting with the local communities always simply run its business with concept of WIN-WIN-WIN situation for all.

**Let' s try to build our nation in such a way so that our country is trusted by whole world for its international peace keeping and revised development activities.**

Though it is necessary in refugee camps, grant aids in general make the people lazy and that is why the system of grant aid has to be revised. Most of the amount of grant aid is spent as administrative cost what is again big waste of the money. Donation is collected by advertising in TV saying that the collected money will save the lives of people. Moreover, the staffs of such donation collection organization receive very high salary. We object to the practice that this high salaried people are collecting donation from low income people. We want stopping of giving donation like grand assets etc.





A big improvement may be expected if the parliament members and media people report the real situations to the citizens after observing inconveniences of ODA and arbitrary thinking of the international organization and making close investigations of the projects in sites. In the parliament sessions, discussion is made centering only a tree but not a forest.

On the other hand, when they have look at ODA projects and international organizations, they in contrary, look at forest not each rotten tree.

I understand very well that this extreme opinion of mine will not be welcome.

But, till now, tragic incidents are happening in the world and conflict & poverty is not solved at all. It is said that last year, more than 60 million people had to leave their homes. I kept my hand on the shoulder of a child and I felt absentmindedly that the muscle of back has gone frozen. I went to Somalia with Goto who was killed by IS and took photograph with the children.

It was only bone under cloth. We discussed we must do something. There are lot of argument and peace loving people among our citizens, scholars, mass media and parliament members who don't know the real situation of the world. We want them see the tragic dead bodies of the children at least once.

We want them make arguments on safety of country and compulsion to international society after having look at the cruelties at site. The people without any experiences of look at the reals situations, have no qualification to talk on world peace.

Cooperation of the European countries to the refugee approaching to Europe is an instance of really dedicated support.

We being a small island country is only emphasizing on peace of our own country but is it right to remain silent in such a situation of the world? Is Japan an isolated country from the world? Japan has wider scope to contribute to making of world peace. Though it is the high time to play its role, it is very sad that Japan is hesitating to do so.

## **POLY-GLU is being favored by the GOD**

The number or code or card system auto door lock and the photoelectric mark for adjustment of cutting position of packages now both being used all over the world are my inventions.

I invented both of them in the year of men's landing on the Moon. Normally I was supposed to be a millionaire by now. And, if the incident of financial misappropriation and attempt of capturing my company did not happen, my company could have become a stock listed one. But, surprisingly I have been poor from the past to the present. If I became a millionaire, the present POLY-GLU certainly would not have existed.

I had to face very difficult situation due to betrayal of staff and frivolousness of some directors. I

think I could know about my ideal job after sticking to my work despite risk of life and realizing the divine will by entering into poor people's life. This small company has been called the 'Treasure of Japan' by the Prime Minister and has been introduced in the UN Assembly. But, I keep saying myself 'I am poor, I am poor'.

However, recently there has been a little change also in my poor life. In domestic market, sales have started rising and lost trust has also been regained. Main stream companies are now using POLY-GLU in their factory waste water treatment. Even, there are owners who ask the staffs to use POLY-GLU. There are some countries of BOP market who are purchasing our water purifying agent in bulk like 10MT together at a single purchase order. If it continues like now, I hope I would be able to pay back the loans. May be I would be able to pay more salaries to the staffs who continued working despite financial difficulties.

I am also thankful for supports of Japanese Government. Though our company was about to be bankrupt, METI supported us saying our company as 'Model of BOP Business'. That was the beginning of government support. Then, one after another, we received support from JICA, JETRO and Foreign Ministry. I must be thankful for support in our project of Tanzania. Our project in Tanzania is a real picture of public private cooperation. We got a good success in Tanzania because foreign ministry and JICA HQ in the center and local Japan Embassy & JICA have supported us wholeheartedly. It was impossible to start business in Africa if there was not such support.

POLY-GLU in cooperation with local people of developing countries is succeeding in its business. No other company in the world can offer drinking water at a low price that POLY-GLU can. Is it not understandable? POLY-GLU being financially weak and a small company and from a situation of uncertainty of its existence came out with its own business style.

#### **Poly-Glu Ladies from Bangladesh attending Training Program in Japan in March 2011.**



## Water Expert from Tanzania attending Training Program in Japan in June 2015



Courtesy Visit to JICA Head Quarters



At POLY-GLU Head Office

### Immediate Tasks of POLY-GLU

1. To increase number of staffs of overseas division from 12 to 20. Half of them to be foreigners.
2. To rapidly make collaboration with UN, International Organizations and local NGOs.
3. To assist other companies especially SMEs for investment in developing countries.
4. Enhancement of Capital

Though we feel sad when we cannot respond to collaboration requests from government organizations of many countries and from world organizations due to our financial weakness.

We also want to put our efforts in developing high technological environment.

We will also welcome investment form the enterprises or individuals who understand the principles of POLY-GLU.

We think it would be possible to ‘ensure safe drinking water for all the people in the world’ in 6 years by applying POLY-GLU style business if the above mentioned 4 points are achieved.

It may be inconsistent that I would want to collaborate with the international organizations about which I have criticized. But, there are also some people in those organizations who agree to my criticism and expect revolutionary changes. There people who for the first time felt the real international contribution after working with POLY-GLU.

Japan government in its public advertising has started introducing the Poly-Glu business activities towards the world. We are grateful but at the same time our responsibility has also become bigger and we are committed to respond to the expectation of our country. Furthermore, I would take the privilege of saying what I should say.

In the back of Poly-Glu Boy and Poly-Glu Lady the word KIZUNA in big font which means

'BONDING' is written in Japanese. All the staffs know the meaning of KIZUNA (bonding) and they have realized the importance of bonding together.



'A person' s devotion influences the surrounding first, then the society and eventually the world'



Training event for the camping of high school students from Asian countries in August 2015



A POLY-GLU Lady is explaining our technology to the President of Tanzania.



Dr. Kawahara of Roshinantus is observing the activities of our water plant in Bagamoyo, Tanzania



H.E. Miss Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP

A person becomes company president form an apprentice !  
Let's try to raise up entrepreneurs form among the poor people. I at last at this old age could come to understand the way of life. I will do such work so that the trust of our red passport is further increased.  
I apologize for my words that might hurt anyone.



Prime Minister's Office of Japan <https://www.youtube.com/user/pmo.japan>

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