

AAI and Me – Yoshihisa Zaitzu <Part-2>

Daily activities in AAI

As I wrote in the previous issue, the launch of AAI was relatively smooth. It was agreed to continue to participate in the project I had been involved in since the time of CKC and to include Onuma in this project. At about that time, Mr. Sakaba established Ecoplan (Forestry Consultant) and shared the office with us and he provided us with a foothold to participate in domestic activities. It was essential for me at that time to absorb expertise on a daily basis. In addition to that, daily clerical work such as receipt arrangement and business coordination with other companies was extremely useful for subsequent AAI operations.

Upon joining AAI, by the way, I had a dream as participant in development consulting work; I yearned to engage in long-term assignment work, and the opportunity came earlier than I expected. After joining the company in 1989, I went on to work as a specialist in erosion control, forestation, and water-saving agriculture in 1991 in a joint research program of Shizuoka University and UAE University. Since 1996, I have been dispatched to the Agricultural Research Institute established in Nejd, southern Oman to provide technical guidance to young researchers. In this way, my dream was achieved rapidly.

My experience as a long-term expert greatly helped to accumulate and build on my expertise and to expand new specialized areas and such experience really reinforced the technical management capacity of AAI. In addition, a lot of human interaction with local technical staff, technicians visiting from Japan, and university personnel have become an indispensable asset for the subsequent activities of the AAI, a group of experts aiming at dryland agriculture. During this dispatch period, Koto joined AAI and the Onuma / Koto / Zaitzu structure was established.

Onuma and Koto used to work together on the same project, but I had almost never worked on a project with any of my colleagues including them for about 30 years. It was my destiny. My assignment was always either a reinforcement of other companies' projects or a stand-alone dispatch. I once thought that I would like to work together with Onuma and Koto under the same project, but now I have no regrets. Among many leaders and experts of other companies, I was trained technically and as a human being, and I was able to absorb a lot of specialized technology. I also always had a sense of tension, a feeling

that I shouldn't disturb the project. I think that this kind of diligent application has become the cornerstone of self-development and that we have also gained a certain level of trust from outside the company.

Technology accumulation has expanded from the original work focusing on soil and land use to satellite image analysis, GIS, irrigation water quality, project cost calculation, and basic cultivation technology. One of the most fulfilling projects in which all these acquired technologies were utilized was the "The Third Country Training Program for Iraq" held in Jordan. Under the scenario to construct an irrigation facility by a WUA in the Karbala area in southwestern Baghdad and to form a vegetable cultivation centered farming system, we tried to form a project plan through continuous technical training for related engineers and local farmers gathered in Jordan. Local human resources were utilized as instructors in each specialized field, and I participated as a general coordinator. This was a remarkably interesting role. I supervised various lectures, searched for substitutes in the fields without instructors, and gave lectures by myself in the case of no substitutes being available. I also attended training and inspection tours. In the evening, we confirmed the work progress by each specialized group and made a local information collection list before returning home. When the training was resumed, I arranged the presentation of collected data and accompanied the training in Japan. At last, the project plan was completed. I will never forget the pleasure I experienced working with the excellent Iraqi trainees.

I am grateful to have been able to work with local farmers, extension workers, officials, and researchers in many countries. I would like to use my experience of human interaction in different projects in different countries for my future activities ... and the responsibility to guide the next generation in this fascinating activity still remains in my heart. (to be continued)



With the participants of
The Third Country Training Program for Iraq