

Ten years in Sudan

The author's relationship with Sudan began in 2011, just before South Sudan became independent, and 10 years have passed since then. From June 2021, Phase 2 of the technical cooperation project in River Nile State will start again, and I am facing the 11th year of experience in Sudan with a fresh feeling. Our experiences in Sudan as a company have also accumulated over the past ten years, involving multiple staff in AAI and bringing the total number of projects to seven. Valuing technical cooperation in a specific country or region and continuing it over the long term may be becoming a tradition fostered by AAI.

The relationship with Sudan began in January 2011 with a detailed planning survey in Kassala State in the eastern part of the country, and it was purely by chance that the author joined this survey as a member. At that time, I had assignments for both Syria and Palestine projects, so I did not have much time to spare, and I could have declined the offer to participate. Although I accepted the offer on a short-term basis, I was deeply interested in the Syrian and Palestinian projects, so I thought that the work in Sudan would be a one-time only job for me. If I had turned it down at that moment, the next ten years would have gone in a completely different direction!

After that, however, Syria plunged into civil war following the "Arab Spring," making it difficult to continue the technical cooperation project that had been implemented. Partly because of this background, I became gradually immersed in the Sudan project. At the end of my four years at Kassala technical cooperation project, I planned to revive a local onion dry-processing plant based on discussions with the CPs. This led to develop a new project including a feasibility study under the JICA Private Sector Partnership Scheme, which continued to expand into a verification survey project. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to participate in a technical cooperation project in River Nile State after the work at Kassala State. This was technically a shift from rain-fed to irrigated agriculture and a re-tackling in Sudan from different

angles. After the separation of South Sudan, it was also a decade of losing oil resources, which had been a major means of earning foreign currency for Sudan. Therefore, there is a strong demand for the modernization of the agricultural sector, and the relevant technical cooperation project is also trying to improve the efficiency of irrigated agriculture.

Seen in this way, it becomes clear that I have made conscious efforts to sustain and develop the relationship with Sudan although the work in Sudan started out purely by chance. Generally speaking, in the consulting industry, there is a saying, "I hit the ball that came." But our emphasis as AAI will be placed on sticking to specific countries and regions. I think I have been associated with Sudan in the true spirit of the AAI corporate culture.



From the first, I was interested in agriculture in dry areas, and I thought that the Arab region in the Middle East would be my main field of activity, so the country of Sudan was a perfect partnering for me with long term involvement. Dr. Giro Orita, a famous veterinarian whom I met in Syria when I was working for Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), once told me that it would take ten years of continuous work before becoming a fully-fledged technical cooperation worker in the field of agriculture. Needless to say, Dr. Orita has contributed to the development of Syria for 40 years. There was no way I could reach Dr. Orita's level, but when I reached the 10 year milestone I felt it was time to look back on my journey with Sudan.

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*Due to the political change that occurred on October 25, 2021, Japanese experts were temporarily evacuated to Japan. We hope we can return to Sudan as soon as possible and resume our work..