

Past Technical Assistance for the Gulf States and Future Challenges (5)

Part 5: Landscape greening projects in suburban Dubai

In UAE, rapid urbanization started taking place in the 1970s, and the late 1970s saw a construction rush of unprecedented scale in the country. In the 1980s, much effort was diverted to the greening of the urban environment, by, for example, planting trees along roads or around cities as a sand block, or by greening the landscape of areas in and around cities. One such environmental greening project is the landscape greening project in suburban Dubai. Started in 1985, this project was part of the city planning of Nadd Al Sheba district, which was being constructed systematically around a new central palace. The specific tasks of the greening project included planting trees around the palace as a windbreak and along streets leading to the palace for aesthetic purposes, as well as decorating the palace interior with flowers.

Appropriate Agriculture International (AAI) was involved in this project from the beginning. In addition to the typical routine work for this kind of project - establishing plantation sites and irrigation facilities and producing and planting seedlings - we also provided some technical advice as to the selection of tree species suitable for the local soil conditions, tips for nurturing seedlings, measures to be taken against nutrient deficiency and grazing by camels. Moreover, we were involved in the management aspect of the project itself, from the initial planning stage of the entire project and the purchase of necessary equipment, to personnel affairs. The normal practice in oil producing countries in the Middle East is that, after a rough plan is made, the detailed daily tasks and procedure of the project are left with Arab workers who supervise the project site, while most of the actual physical work is carried out by foreign labourers. In this context we Japanese workers were in the position to be able to advise the Arab directors while at the same time hear the opinions of the manual labourers. Therefore in addition to the technical assistance it was an extremely important job to co-ordinate things in order to carry on the daily on-site work according to the plan. Accurate understanding of the demands from the top, efficient organization of labourers of different nationalities and sound technical advice made it possible to develop an efficient on-site work system.

For future technical assistance in the oil states of the Gulf region, it seems desirable for donors to position themselves on equal terms with the host beneficiaries, as in the above greening project, so that the former can advise not only on the technical aspects of certain projects but also on the management aspects. In this way it may be possible to establish continuous relationships of cooperation which are rather efficient and beneficial for both Japan and the oil states.

Tree nursery



Foreign labourers



Planted trees photographed in 1985



Planted trees photographed in 1991