

AAINews

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Some reflections on Harare upon revisiting after three years

Recently I had a chance to visit Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, for the first time since my visit in January 1995. What I felt most strongly during this visit was the fact that Zimbabwe dollar prices had become so much higher, more than twice compared with those I observed three years ago. Just before my departure this time it was reported that thousands of people had rioted in Harare, protesting against the drastic increase in prices of food stuffs etc. The main cause of the skyrocketing prices of food and other daily necessities was the sudden depreciation of Z\$ against US\$. The following is a comparison of the exchange rates and the prices of some items over the past three years:

<u>Items</u>	<u>January 1995</u>	<u>April 1998</u>
Exchange rate	US\$1=100yen=Z\$8 (Z\$1=12.5yen)	US\$1=130yen=Z\$15 (Z\$1=9yen)
Hotel room (4-5 stars)	Z\$500 ~ 800 (6,250-10,000yen)	
Hotel room (3 stars)	-	Z\$780 (6,800yen)
Hotel room (outside Harare)	Z\$250 (3,125yen)	Z\$470 (4,100yen)
Fax (A4 x 1 to Japan)	Z\$30 (375 yen)	Z\$65 (565 yen)
Middle range wine (South African, 720ml)	Z\$30-60 (375-750yen)	Z\$60-120 (500-1,100 yen)
Food (Chinese restaurant)	Z\$50-70 (625-875 yen)	Z\$100-120 (870-1,050yen)
Food (hamburger x 1)	Z\$7-10 (90-130 yen)	Z\$20-25 (175-220 yen)

By the way, what I like in Zimbabwe is the bottle recycling (deposit) system. For example one bottle of beer (350ml) costs Z\$7, but if you return the empty bottle you get Z\$1.3. Basically some 20% of the price of the beer is the deposit for the bottle. You can often find Coca Cola bottles lying under the driver's feet in a truck or taxi. It is worrying, however, that aluminium cans are more and more used for coke and beer these days.

In today's Zimbabwe, 30% of the population live in cities and 70% in rural areas, but it is said that these figures will be reversed in the near future. As has been the case with Japan and other developed countries, and also as is presently seen in developing countries all over the world, the influx of a great portion of the population into urban areas (urbanization) is becoming a problem in Zimbabwe as well. The worsening situation of public security in Harare must somehow owe itself to urbanization. Many people come to the city in the hope of achieving an affluent lifestyle, only to find out that, in reality, it cannot be realized so easily. Being unable to find a job, some gradually fail in their lives. I heard that there had been one murder committed in order to loot a bicycle. Here one can find such insanity, a little bit different from that of school children in Japan, who attack policemen to get a gun.

Needless to say, the problems of urbanization and rural degeneration are two sides of the same coin. What kind of precautionary measures can we take, before the urban environment gets increasingly damaged as a result of excessive human concentrations in cities, and rural areas are left deserted with negative consequences for rural societies as well as the surrounding natural environment?
(by KOTO)



Metropolitan view of Harare



Rural residences - huts

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

Agriculture in the Dhofar Region, Oman (5)

Part 5: The meaning of 'the inter flow of Dhofar agricultural products'

The following is a brief summary of agricultural practices in different parts of Dhofar State that have been reported in previous issues of AAI News:

- 1) Salalah (coastal plain): traditional vegetable and fruit cultivation, dairy farming on pasturage cultivated using modern methods.
- 2) Jabal (mountain region): traditional pasturage for cows and camels.
- 3) Nejd (desert region): camel pasturage and modernized pasturage production.

The farming practices of these areas are deeply related to each other in complementary ways. As summarized in the table below, the major products from each area support the farming activities of other areas in the form of food, fertilizer and forage. The flow of agricultural products within Dhofar is not entirely a closed circle - other areas contribute - but the local interdependence is considered to be fairly significant (chemical fertilizers excluded).

	To Salalah	To Jabal	To Nejd
From Salalah		Food products, dairy products fodder from fish	Food products, dairy products
From Jabal	Meat, dairy products cattle manure		Meat, cattle manure
From Nejd	Pasture, camel meat	Pasture	

What should be also mentioned here is that this relationship of interdependence among the above regions has been more and more significant in recent years. In other words, each region's agricultural activities cannot proceed independent of the other regions, and the role of producing specific products is becoming increasingly divided among the different regions. For many years past, farming practices in each region were effectively self sufficient but as agricultural production activities expand in area it seems that inter-regional dependence is also growing.

Self sufficiency within a region of the traditional sort is sustainable but its productivity is low. On the other hand, the expansion of agricultural productivity is taking place under the name of 'modernization,' and this seems to be destroying the traditional forms of agriculture, which were sustainable in the past.

By combining only the positive aspects of the above two forms of agricultural activities, one could achieve 'sustainable modern farming', and this should be the goal of future agricultural development. In the next issue, the final part of this series considers the future of agriculture in the Dhofar region.



Cattle manure from Jabal, on sale near Salalah



Fodder on sale near Salalah

Reflection from an Arabian Night's Encounter in Dubai (on the future of the Gulf States)

On one evening during my stay in UAE, I was visiting a friend of mine from Pakistan who works there. This is my usual weekend outing while in the country. He had invited two other old friends to his home that day, and it turned out that all three of them had been fellow students of the same university back in Pakistan, and that after graduation all of them had got a job at a Pakistani subsidiary company of Honda Giken Co. Two of them, who had majored in economics at university, left the company soon afterwards and went into banking, while Mr Rashid, the engineer, had stayed with the same company. This time he was in Dubai on a business trip concerning the company's plan to build a new car factory there. His view of the plan seemed somehow instructive to me in relation to the future direction of technical assistance in the Gulf Region, so I would like to discuss it here.

UAE produces plenty of aluminium utilizing its rich oil resources. The aluminium is in turn used to produce cars in Dubai which are then sold in Pakistan and its neighbouring countries. Most of the factory workers employed by the industry are Pakistanis. UAE does not have to make a huge investment to support this car production business while at the same time the country can easily supply the aluminium for car manufacturing. Furthermore Dubai can act not only as a production site but also as a point for export, an activity that the city specializes in. Therefore, hosting such a car manufacturing industry should be not be a bad deal for Dubai (UAE). It is also good for Pakistan, since Pakistan gains in terms of capital earned by Pakistani workers employed by the Pakistani corporation. It may also be advantageous for the Pakistani Honda subsidiary to site its factories in Dubai. Dubai is a safe and has easy, extensive access to the marketing routes in this part of the world. Honda in Japan, which presumably supplies car parts for assembly here, also benefits.

The oil-rich state of UAE can provide energy and raw materials cheaply, and its socioeconomic conditions are stable. Its infrastructure is attractive for business and industry activities, plus it is easy to secure the necessary labour. In addition, UAE hosts extensive marketing networks with India and Pakistan where human populations are very large (as is the marketing potential), as well as with Central Asia, Arab states and Africa. Therefore, the country has all the ideal conditions for certain kinds of companies / industries to site their branches here. For UAE, where the shortage of future employment for its own nationals is being felt as a problem, projects by foreign companies seem to be welcome events for creating more employment opportunities in the country.

In past years the major purpose for companies to set up their production bases abroad has been cheap labour in developing countries. Such influxes of foreign companies have served as part of the driving force behind economic development in East and Southeast Asia. However, this type of economic development has led to many problems such as the increasing economic gap between urban and rural areas and environmental destruction. Indeed it eventually led to the recent economic crisis in Asia. If UAE became a host of major production sites for foreign companies, the developing countries which would supply their cheap labour would be linked to the world market through the strong currencies (petrodollars) of the Gulf states which might bring more economic stability. The possible environmental impact should still be considered, but a number of potential sites for building factories can be found in UAE.

I have stated only the positive aspects so far, but there are problems, too - first of all, the working conditions for labourers. Working conditions in the Gulf region seem to vary among different companies today, and the legally established standards of working conditions, which do exist, are not well observed. It is necessary to have a proper working environment to become a major world industrial site, as the workers must be the beneficiaries of such development. Another problem concerns water. As most of the Gulf region is covered by extremely dry deserts, securing sufficient industrial water supply would be a challenge.

With such problems solved, I would like to suggest further development of the Gulf region, not only as an energy supply base but also a major world industrial region.



View of Abu Dhabi, UAE: A number of foreign oil, construction and trading companies etc. are rushing in.