

## Past Technical Assistance for the Gulf States and Future Challenges (6)

### Part 6: Epilogue - Tasks for the future

In the last five issues we have discussed some activities and achievements in the field of technical assistance for the oil states in the Gulf region. This region is about to be removed from the status of being a Japanese ODA recipient. From now on co-operative activities on a more equal (as opposed to top-down or lop-sided) footing between donors and hosts need to be promoted, likewise more initiatives by the private sector in technical assistance. Also, with movements such as Omanisation in the background, it will be an important task of future technical assistance to foster manpower among the nationals of each country. Furthermore, the future direction of technical assistance for these countries should focus more on what this oil producing gulf region can do that no other region can.

With their harsh dry climatic conditions, all of the Gulf states enjoy a great and changeable variety of natural features such as the mobile dunes of the Rub'al Khali Desert, the highly saline region called Sabkha, mountain ranges and adjacent rocky plains, as well as oases with flourishing date palms. Also, from time immemorial this part of the world has always been a trade centre between the East and the West. Still now dhows sail between Africa and India. These Gulf states are not only full of wealth derived from their oil, but are also some of the world leaders in the field of information technology. Projects which make the most of these regional characteristics will be required in the field of future technical assistance in this region. For example, the fact that there are such diverse natural dry land features means that technical assistance in this area may contribute to the development of technologies which can be applied to various types of dry land in many other parts of the world. The close relationships with neighbouring regions from Africa to west Asia create favourable conditions for gaining information from, as well as for transferring technologies to, countries in these regions. If the wealth and information accumulated in the Gulf region can be used also for the development of the neighbouring regions which suffer the same development-related problems, this can be called 'international cooperation' in the real sense of the words.

We would like to conclude the current series by proposing the following two projects as examples of technical assistance which take full advantage of the particular conditions prevailing in the oil states:

#### **Aridland Agriculture Research Station**

This centre would aim at developing useful technologies for agricultural development in dry land environments and at training researchers from many concerned countries. Taking the diverse and changeable natural environment of the Gulf region as its background, the centre could offer technologies applicable to countries which are suffering from the problem of desertification. Also, the abundant financial resources and information availability will provide a favourable environment for researchers and trainees from surrounding countries to stay for a sufficient period of time and allow them to concentrate on their work. There could be a whole range of different training programmes for dry land agricultural development, but specific technologies to be taught at the centre might include dry land afforestation, dune fixation, crop cultivation, salt damage prevention, development and efficient use / management of water resources, and the introduction of salt- and drought tolerant plants.

#### **Plant Resources Research Institute**

(Dry Land Plant Theme Park)

This theme park would serve as a place for collecting, displaying and preserving the genetic resources of plants, demonstrating how to utilize dry land plant resources, and holding exhibitions on plant species useful for dry land agriculture as well as explaining their uses. For many years people have used dry land plant resources in their daily lives as aromatics, dyes, or medicine. However, today the wave of modernization is causing drastic changes in people's lifestyles and is sweeping away traditional cultures and customs. Thus, this kind of theme park on plant resources could also be useful for preserving local traditions and cultures as well as enhancing agricultural productivity in the future.