

Partnerships between ODA and NGOs: for effective international cooperation (1)

Part 1: International organizations and NGOs

This year in Japan the song "The Three Odango Brothers" was a great hit. Given this, we have decided to call this year the year of ODANGO, and to commemorate this we are starting this new series on ODA and NGOs in the hope of achieving more effective international co-operation and better ODANGO relationships.

In recent years the importance of NGOs in international co-operation has been increasingly recognized, and NGOs are playing ever more important roles in the field of development assistance. Behind this trend is the necessity of providing more 'efficient aid'. The need for this is being fuelled by so-called 'development aid fatigue' and the financial difficulties experienced by developed countries. Also, there have been criticisms from local communities / people, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of development aid, that ODA is not benefiting them at all. Additionally, in terms of the 'quality of assistance', especially in the cases of agricultural development and rural community development projects, the 'aid' cannot be finished when only the 'frame' infrastructure is completed, as in the case of projects specifically aiming at infrastructure building such as road construction. Agricultural and rural community development projects will not succeed unless local communities are involved in organization and implementation (or even in the planning stage) of the project. The same is true for maintenance and management activities after whatever 'frame' has been created.

On the other hand, NGOs, with some exceptions, are more involved in grassroots activities, as they operate very closely with local communities and people, and are capable of taking aboard the local peoples' viewpoints and placing priority on meeting local needs. Today the number of 'soft' projects (i.e. qualitative assistance which necessitates local community involvement) is increasing. In order for developed donor countries to effectively carry out their ODA projects, co-operation with local NGOs is becoming more and more crucial. In this context, keywords such as 'community participation', 'small-scale', 'gender', 'sustainable', 'environmentally friendly' etc. have emerged and become popularized recently in development assistance circles. International organizations and aid agencies of developed countries which are collaborating with local NGOs in their aid activities include UN (UNDP, UNEP etc.), World Bank, CIDA, USAID and GTZ. The following table is a summary of systems of NGO support and collaboration.

	UNDP	World Bank	CIDA	USAID
Co-operation with NGOs and its objectives	Direct financial assistance for local NGOs, Project undertaken by NGOs, Cooperation/collaboration with NGOs in project undertaking, Communication with NGOs.	The partnership relation in which NGOs participate in the planning and implementation stages of WB funded projects with emphasis on participatory development and local NGO	Work with Canadian NGOs which formulate and implement projects in cooperation with local partner NGOs in developing countries with emphasis on strengthening capacity of the local partners	Work with US NGOs as collaborative /co-funding partners Work with US NGOs as intermediary bodies in implementing/managing USAID programmes
Field of co-operation/ assistance	Agriculture, water supply, environmental conservation, promotion of small-scale enterprises	Poverty alleviation, agriculture, education, population, health and welfare, nutrition, sewage	Environment, human rights, BHN, WID, infrastructure building, promotion of small-scale enterprises	Environmental conservation, promotion of small-scale enterprises, HIV/AIDS prevention
Budget scale per project	US\$10,000-65,000 per project	US\$10,000 ~ 15,000 per project	US\$15,000 ~ 218,000 per project	US\$150,000-900,000 per project
Criteria for evaluating NGOs	Evaluation based on the legal status, capacity and suitability for the project	Evaluation by check list for management capacity, experience and strategies	Evaluation on the capacity, influence, administration, programme management etc.	Evaluation on the past achievements, financial performance and management

All of the organizations shown above make much of the collaboration/cooperation with NGOs in their development aid activities. In the following issues of this new series we will introduce Japan and AAI's activities in relation with local NGOs.