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AAINews

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The Camel's Lesson

I was given a chance to stay and work in Oman for almost one year starting from September 1998. My workplace was an experimental station in the middle of the desert, and I was living in the town of Salalah. When I was thinking about the vegetation improvement of the mountain areas around Salalah, I had some occasions to contemplate the issues of development assistance. Let me start with an episode about the mountains. When I visited the Japanese Embassy in Oman, one of the embassy staff who had just started working there, told me about some green landscape which he had seen on TV. The scenery was covered with such green vegetation that he thought it could be somewhere in Japan, but actually, to his surprise, the footage had been shot in Oman itself. The landscapes he'd seen on TV were the mountains of the Dhofar region in the southern part of Oman. The town of Salalah is in the center of the Dhofar region, and I was actually living near the landscape which had so amazed him, and indeed which had amazed me to no less extent.

Why is there such a green area? It is almost like a different world. The answer is that this area is blessed with a unique climate thanks to the monsoon, which brings moist air from the Indian Ocean from July through to September. The heavy air carried by the monsoon in turn brings rains and mists when it reaches the mountains. During that period the weather around Salalah becomes cool, and many people come here from the capital Muscat and from neighbouring Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar etc.) to spend the summer. They enjoy picnics under the clouds or in the drizzle. For those who live in desert environments such weather is something special and even pleasurable.

However, in this mountain area the depletion of vegetation due to overgrazing (by cows, goats and camels) is becoming increasingly a problem in recent years. Despite the fact that today camels are becoming less and less important livestock animals as an income source, 1994 data show that in this mountain area there are some 47,000 camels, not to mention 147,000 cows, 89,000 goats (see "Agriculture in Dhofar (3)" in AAINews Vol.15). The first solution we would think of to this problem is to reduce the number of camels for the protection of the vegetation. However, for the local people camels are property, and more than anything, they love their camels. Speaking personally, although at first I was interested in camels I do not have a particularly good impression of these animals now; they often stand immobile in the middle of the road and are never scared away by car horns, their meat is tough and has a strong smell, and their milk is lighter and saltier than cow milk. One day I asked one of our counterpart workers why he kept camels rather than cows. His first answer was "Camels are lovely". There then followed a description of camel behavior and habits. Since he had a car he would not need camels for transportation, and it seemed that camels had absolutely no practical use for him. But he continues to keep his camels even today. The people say they love camels and it is an age-old custom to keep camels. For them life with camels is something quite natural. Understanding this sort of thing as abstract knowledge is one thing, but feeling it on the spot is quite another.
We would like to help them tackle the problem of vegetation depletion by grasping the situation objectively, while keeping in mind their profound love for camels. In fact, unless we can take the local peoples' feelings into consideration as much as possible, our assistance activities will not be sustainable. My wish is that the pleasure of having a picnic in the misty and green landscape will always be an opportunity for the people of the desert. (By Iiyama in Salalah, October 1999)


Hills covered with green


Milking a camel

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 our 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.

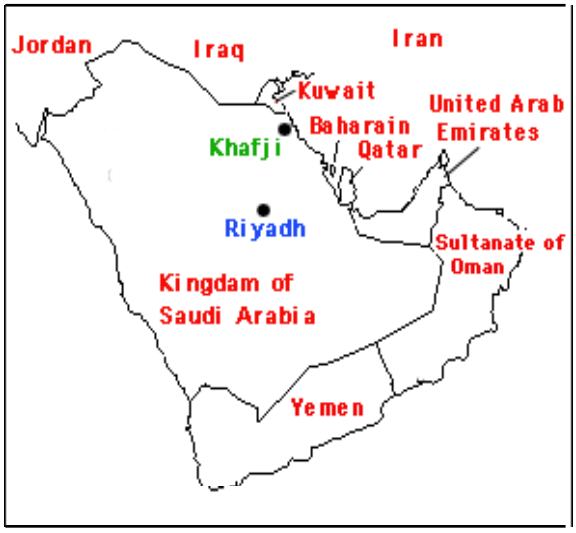
	UNDP	**World Bank**	**CIDA**	**USAID**
Co-operation with NGOs and its objectives	Direct financial assistance for local NGOs, Project undertaken by NGOs, Cooperation/collaboration with NGOs in project undertaking, Communica-tion with NGOs.	The partnership relation in which NGOs participate in the planning and implemen-tation stages of WB funded projects with emphasis on participatory development and local NGO	Work with Canadian NGOs which formulate and imple-ment 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.

Saudi Arabia News (1)

Part 1: On Demonstration Project of Large Scale Desert Greening

n this new series we will report on the Demonstration Project of Large Scale Desert Greening in Saudi Arabia(KSA) supported by the Petroleum Energy Center, Japan (PEC), using a subsidy for technologies on petroleum refining, etc. in which AAI has been involved since the end of January 1998. This project has been implemented as a part of strengthening the collaborative relationship between Japan and oil producing countries. Initially only the demonstration project was planned in Khafji alone(refer to the attached map), but following a request from KSA it was later decided to include some research activities as well. The counterpart is Riyadh-based King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), which is equivalent to the Science and Technology Agency of Japan. KACST is 23 years old, although it only came to be known by its current name 14 years ago. As a research institute, KACST has seven research centers, including the Natural Resources and Environment Research Institute (NRERI), the direct partner for this project. NRERI accommodates research fields such as ecology (fauna and flora), hydrology, agronomy (cultivation and irrigation), inland fisheries, remote sensing, etc. This is the only research center (under KACST) which is capable of covering almost all of the themes necessary for our project. The research activities are carried out at the KACST HQ in Riyadh and the KACST Muzahimiah Experimental Farm near the capital, while the demonstration are carried out in Khafji as stated above. The current project consists of six major themes as shown in the table below. One primary investigator and co-investigator are assigned to each of the themes, and currently three Japanese researchers and five local researchers from KACST are together engaged in research and demonstration.



Map of the Arabian Peninsular

KACST HQ

Theme	Activities
Sewage treatment technology (KACST HQ in Riyadh)	- Development of membrane and sewage treatment technologies. - Development of water recycling system for removing high ammonia nitrogen.
Water-saving irrigation technology (Muzahimiah Experimental Farm)	- Development of water-saving irrigation technology using porous tubes. - Impermeable layer formation technology using polymer solution. - Development of water-saving irrigation technology by using water holding materials. - Testing and selection of water-saving equipment for irrigation systems and sewage.
Development of greening technology (Muzahimiah Experimental Farm)	- Development of greening technology by use of symbiotic micro-organisms. - Development of greening technology by use of fertilizer. - Utilization of soil mixture with various organic compositions for dry land greening - Screening of salt-and drought tolerant plants in Saudi Arabia. - Development of seedling production by using automatic system.
Environment and energy technology (KACST HQ, Riyadh)	- Development of solar power technology. - Development of database for land utilization, and vegetation, by use of remote sensing and GIS.
Waste water treatment technology (Khafji experimental site)	- Development of waste water treatment technology.
Technology for cultivating salt-, drought-, and heat-tolerant plants	- Investigation of technology for lawn cultivation. - Investigation of technology for growing dates and other tree plant species.

Mini-Series: Natural Environments of Wetlands (2)

Part 2: The Indus River in Pakistan

Five rivers originating in the Himalayas join together to form the Indus. The river, the total length of which in Pakistan reaches 2,900km, is the backbone of wetlands in the country, from the mountain ranges in the north through to the downstream delta areas. Found all along its river basin are various types of wetland environments, including lakes and swamps created by glaciers in the north, the flood plains of the Indus delta, mangrove forests at the river mouth and tidal flats. In addition, there are also other wetlands, lakes and ponds, which were formed as a result of changes in the aquatic environment following the construction of Pakistan's world-famous irrigation systems. Having recognized the importance of these wetland environments early, the Government of Pakistan has been active in initiating wetland conservation polices since the 1960s.

The area surrounding the Taunsa Barrage, totaling 6,571 ha, was recognized as a wildlife sanctuary in 1983. One of the most important wildlife species found in this sanctuary is the Indus River Dolphin which is protected under Pakistan's Wildlife Protection Act. The survival of this species is highly threatened due to habitat loss and fragmentation caused by barrages, and water shortages in the dry season resulting from the construction of dams and irrigation systems. Today the total population of the Indus River Dolphin is estimated to be fewer than 1,000. Therefore a great deal of effort is being put into the conservation of this species. It has been listed as 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red Data Book since 1976, and it is also listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Apart from the detrimental impacts on wildlife living in the river basin, the irrigation systems also cause other damage to wetlands. Instances of this include water pollution from agricultural and industrial drainage, and negative impacts on mangrove forests due to the decrease in fresh water supply at the river mouth. Also problematic is the loss of riverine forests and their attendant biodiversity as a result of the control of regular floods. While degrading the environment in the manners just mentioned, irrigation systems can at the same time create favorable environments as well. Dams, lakes and reservoirs along the Indus play a very important role as wintering and breeding sites for rare water birds, or as resting sites for cranes.

Many bird species require several different types of wetlands, such as, for example, open tidal flats for feeding and mangrove forests for breeding. Therefore, the protection of some valuable wetland species can only be achieved by conserving the whole ecosystem. In other words, such species can be seen as environmental indicators of ecosystem conservation. At the same time, protection of the wetland ecosystem which has been created along with the development of irrigation systems in the river basin means nothing but the ultimate enrichment of human life. Thus we suggest that more efforts should be made to improve the rich ecosystem by continuously monitoring the status of the key indicator species.

Indus River Dolphin

Numerous birds