

Partnerships between ODA and NGOs: for more effective international cooperation (2)

Part 2: Japan and NGOs

Japan's ODA has long adopted the approach of tied loans and other loan assistance, partly due to the post-war compensation. As a result, in developing countries ODA has been utilized mainly for building large-scale infrastructure such as dams, roads and bridges. However, with the growing criticisms of the negative impacts such as environmental degradation and the expansion of the rich/poor gap caused by such forms of ODA, recently the role of NGOs as developmental organizations has been drawing attention. In 1989, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) started the "Subsidy System for NGO Projects" and the "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects" and in 1999 ODA mid-term policy paper, support for and collaboration with NGOs are given importance. In 1995 JICA issued the "Research Report on Collaboration between JICA and NGOs in International Cooperation". JICA's "Community Empower Program" started in FY1998 and its "Partnership Program with NGOs" started in FY1999 also indicating the increasing expectations being held out for NGOs.

The boxes below show the brief outlines of NGO support schemes of the MoFA and JICA. It can be seen that there are some difference with the schemes adopted by CIDA (Canada) and USAID (USA). In the case of CIDA and USAID, the relationship between these organizations and NGOs is meant to be as "partners", that is they are on equal terms in both the planning and implementation of projects. By dividing the funding responsibilities of projects the official development agencies and NGOs retain equal position, and NGOs can express their originality in their development activities. On the other hand, schemes adopted by agencies in Japan do not facilitate divided funding responsibilities in one project and it cannot be said that official development agencies and NGOs enjoy an equal relationship as partners. Also, unlike the case of Japan, CIDA and USAID allow NGOs of their own countries to work with local NGOs in host developing countries. This is an effective and meaningful way of doing it in that Canadian or US NGOs would ensure high level performance of project implementation as expected by the official agencies, and that people in Canada or the US would have opportunities to contact and work with people in developing countries. This leads to capacity building of domestic (Canadian / US) NGOs and of local NGOs in aid recipient countries.

Collaboration between Japan's ODA and NGOs has only recently started, and there are a number of things we can learn from abroad. However, it is a great step forward that new schemes involving both Japanese and local NGOs can directly participate in ODA activities, on top of the previously existing system of providing research and technology for the governments of developing nations. The implementation of such new schemes is not so easy and there will be a lot of difficulties encountered. However, if effective development activities can be achieved with ideal levels of collaboration between official aid agencies and NGOs, impact on the future aid activities for developing countries would be very significant. Given the mounting criticism of ODA, much effort has to be made in order to realize ideal aid activities.

MoFA

***Subsidy System for NGO Projects (FY1989-):**

Financial support for Japanese NGOs' development aid activities. Up to a half of development aid funds can be subsidized. Activity areas eligible for this scheme include rural development, human resource development, women's self-support, health and hygiene. JPY1.2 billion / FY1997 (supporting 116 NGOs, 224 projects) ***Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (FY1989-):** Direct financial support from Japanese embassies abroad for small-scale projects undertaken by local authorities, research and medical institutes or NGOs in developing countries. Japanese NGOs that are continuously working in developing countries can also be supported under this scheme. JPY 5 billion / FY1997

***Insurance and support scheme for international volunteers (FY1994-):** Insurance subsidy scheme for volunteers working abroad in case of natural disaster or accident. This in part acts as support for NGOs.

***NGO / MoFA Consultative Committee (FY 1996-):** A forum to discuss NGO support strategies, ODA basic policy, ODA reform etc. various ODA-related issues.

JICA

***Community Empowerment Program (FY1998-):** Aimed at improving welfare at the grassroots level. Model projects of community-oriented activities through local NGOs are implemented by JICA local offices. Activity areas are in the field of social development, including: community development; support for senior citizens, disabled citizens and children; health and hygiene improvement; promotion of women's self-support; improvement of living environment; human resource development; and promotion of local industries. JPY500 million for FY1998 (supporting 30 projects).

***Partnership Program with NGOs (FY1999-):** Part commission of project activities to NGOs, universities, local governments or think tanks. The project has to be more than one year in duration but no more than three, and applications are invited either through public advertisement or public announcements. Activity areas include: issues of social development as above; issues in the field of environmental support including plantation, pollution, environmental conservation; issues in the field of intellectual support including support in transitional economy, policy development, legal development, organizations & systems establishment, professional training. FY1999 budget JPY 200 million (supporting eight projects).

***NGO Staff Training Project (FY1983-):** Training for NGO staff and those who are working in the field of development at the grassroots level.

***Consultative Committee and Mutual Training Session between NGOs and JICA (FY1998-):** Regular meeting as a forum for promoting mutual understanding and learning development assistance strategies from each other.