

# AAINews

**APPROPRIATE AGRICULTURE INTERNATIONAL  
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## At the dawn of year 2008

As introduced in AAI News Vol. 60, we have been publishing this news letter for the last 12 years. Looking at the title list of articles in our newsletter, one can see quite significant changes in Japan's technical cooperation activities for developing countries. For instance, the number of JICA experts dispatched decreased over the years, while the number of senior volunteers increased. As Japan's cooperation became more "soft" in its approach to support processes, the number of development study including pilot studies and technical cooperation projects increased. In particular, in recent years, the number of technical cooperation projects assigned to the private sector companies grew. Furthermore, the same tendency has been seen in training activities, and many training programmes at Tsukuba International Center are now conducted by private companies.

Along with the above, the AAI's activities have also seen significant changes. In the 1990s, our mainstay was long-term expert dispatch, however this has decreased gradually. Our participation in development studies used to participate as a member of order initiated company, however in 2002, AAI received the first joint order with another company for a mangrove project in Oman. With regards to technical cooperation projects, in 2005, we also received an order as part of the joint team with another company for the water saving irrigation project in Syria. In 2002, we also received an order as a private company for organising and implementing the responsibility for the country-focused group training course "Vegetable cultivation course for the Republic of Tajikistan", and since then we were entrusted with organising training course for the Republic of South Africa as well as for Southern African countries. In recent years, we have been responsible for vegetable cultivation and upland rice variety selection training courses. Even though our work has changed, our enthusiasm to contribute to development in developing countries and our keen interest in arid regions has never wavered. We believe that this kind of passionate interest is one of the original foundations of international cooperation.

Through these processes, we have learnt the importance of making use of experiences abroad in Japan, as well as making use of experience in Japan abroad. We have also learnt the importance of making use of experiences in expert dispatch and development surveys in technical cooperation projects. Moreover, we strongly feel that ultimately, the most important element in our work is to build a trusting relationship with counterparts and participants. In particular, the existence of our counterparts in different countries that we worked with is vital. In building relationships with counterparts, we feel that elements such as size of projects and number of involved people are critical. This is why, from the inception of our company, we have put tremendous energy and resources into small scale activities, supporting grass-roots activities and collaborating with local NGOs.

With regards to collaboration with local NGOs, we developed a relationship with an NGO in Zimbabwe. This was triggered by our involvement in externally commissioned work for Japan's grass-roots assistance scheme in 1999 to evaluate and select capable local NGOs in the country. Through our continued involvement in activating group vegetable gardening by women in farming villages and an input credit scheme, our relationship has been continuing to date. We are hoping that as a follow-up to training programmes, we would support ex-trainees' activities in southern African countries, linking such support to development of other grass-roots assistance activities. Although we still have a lot to learn, it may be time for us to pay back to people around us in return for what we gained during our work. Utilizing our experiences, the AAI staff will continue to work on activities which may be small but nonetheless shining and leading to steady progress and achievements. Your continued support for our work would be highly appreciated.

Snow-capped Mount Helman and a demonstration plot under the water saving irrigation project in Syria

**Happy New Year**



**Hiroyasu Ohnuma, President**