

Toward sustainable forest conservation <Part 1>

Possibilities and difficulties as a measure against climate change

In Japan, damage caused by large typhoons occurred frequently last year, and recently the summer days start even in April. "Climate change" has become common nowadays. Global warming caused by emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide is considered as a main cause, and the "Paris Agreement" engaging the cooperation of the international community was ratified last year.

As one of the measures included in the Paris Agreement, "REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation with Forest Management)" was proposed for the purpose of mitigating climate change by suppressing the decline and deterioration of tropical forests in developing countries. Institutional arrangements and capacity building in tropical countries is underway, in addition to formulation of international rules. The REDD+ aims to merge the carbon market and forest governance to allocate benefits (carbon credits) according to the results of efforts to conserve forests (Result-based payment). Many of the efforts to conserve tropical forests so far can not be continued due to lack of funds. Based on the lessons learned, it is anticipated that forest-dependent local residents will utilize carbon credit benefits and sustain forest conservation.

AAI is involved in a REDD+ project in Ethiopia and has started to work on site since 2017. The project is targeting administrative organizations at each level from the central to the regional, and monitoring results of forest conservation quantitatively, which is different from conventional projects. However, we believe that we can take advantage of the experience and lessons learned from the past technical cooperation projects in conducting activities with residents and administrative officials at the field level.

Forest resources consist not only of firewood and timber but also forest products such as honey and mushrooms, as well as services and functions such as clean water, soil, recreation, traditional culture, etc., which maintain and improve people's benefits and welfare in the long term. It is difficult to measure these values correctly on an economic scale and it is not easy for people in developing countries where living is hard to recognize the value and importance of forest conservation. Considering natural resources conservation as a whole, the needs and priority of the local residents are not high even when it comes to saving water, soil conservation, and wildlife protection, which all face similar difficulties for forest conservation.

In order to achieve sustainable management and REDD+ objectives through technical cooperation of forest conservation which has such characteristics and difficulties, the following questions shall be raised in

planning and implementing onsite activities.

(1) How to motivate residents' participation / interest?

How to work with residents nearby forest area, so that they will be interested and participate in forest conservation activities? It is conceivable to enhance their awareness through environmental education, as well as to introduce livelihood support (provision of training and materials) and rights (or tenure for residential and forest usage) to the residents as a kind of incentive.

(2) How to strengthen capacity of forest conservation?

In order to properly conserve forests, it is also important to strengthen capacity of residents and forest administration. This measure includes not only individual awareness and skills enhancement but also various components such as governance and rules for managing forests as shared commons through collaboration among residents, government, and other stakeholders.

(3) How to ensure sustainability of activities?

What should be done to sustain activities / projects such as "participation" and "capacity building"? Social capital such as technical support by government and collaboration by various stakeholders in the region is also important, but generally a "continuous fund" is commonly needed. It may be efficient if you encourage participation by physical incentives, when you seek short-term outcomes such as number of participants and/or tree planting. But, it is difficult to achieve fundamental (long-term) results such as awareness of the residents, institutional strengthening, and an increase in forest resources. It is anticipated that the successful use of REDD+ carbon credits will solve those problems and achieve sustainable forest conservation.



Coffee, a forest product, brings income to local residents. (Ethiopia)



Without proper management, there is a risk of burning down afforestation areas (Malawi)

In this series, we introduce forest conservation-related activities which AAI has been involved in so far, and we would like to explore essential requirements for initiating and activating forest conservation efforts, and making them sustainable, especially through considering the above three questions.