



# Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia

– Our Experiences and Appeals –



**WHAT LINKS US  
TO PEOPLE IN OTHER  
ASIAN COUNTRIES ?**



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# ABOUT THE NGO COUNCIL ON THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF ASIA – ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOKLET –

The NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia was born from among the international NGOs participating in the workshops organized by the Toyota Foundation in fiscal 2013 as a follow up activity to the Foundation's "Asian Neighbors Program for Fiscal 2012 Special Purpose Grant: Prospects for the Future of Asia". Just arranging the schedules for the Steering Committee members, who represent international NGOs engaged in diverse activities and with offices located in different areas, to gather together in one place to hold meetings was a big "project" in itself. Having overcome that hurdle, we hope that the new partnerships arising among the members will work toward the forging of creative partnerships in Asia.

## From the Sharing of Experiences

Fifteen Japanese international NGOs that had received grants from the Toyota Foundation's "Asian Neighbors Program for Fiscal 2012 Special Purpose Grant: Prospects for the Future" participated in two workshops held to share the results of experiences with our Asian neighbors in fiscal 2013, and this became the trigger for the establishment of the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia. In the second workshop, held on February 24, 2014, the participating organizations voluntarily consulted with each other to reach a decision to cooperate on further enhancement of their outreach to Japanese society on the basis of the results of each organization's experiences.

## Founding and Purpose of the Council

Following a period of advance preparations, the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia was inaugurated in April 2014. The name of the project initiated by the Council was "Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –". The aim of the project was to communicate to and share with people of Japan's civil sector, the government and corporate sector the results of our experiences with our Asian neighbors, and through this to promote the following goals:

- 1) To construct a foundation for the expansion of the number of people who understand, sympathize with and support the social role and significance embodied by Japanese international NGOs,
- 2) To provide opportunities to learn about and reconsider the cooperative relationships between people of Japan and the peoples of other Asian countries, and
- 3) To enhance learning and self-examination on the part of the Japanese international NGOs themselves.

Originally, fifteen Japanese international NGOs and four overseas NGOs participated in the Toyota Foundation's Asian Neighbors Program for Fiscal 2012 Special Purpose Grant: Prospects for the Future. However, since some of these organizations had constraints of time and geography, twelve Japanese international NGOs finally participated in the Council.

## Activities of the Steering Committee

Following the inauguration of the Council, six people from six of the participating organizations formed a Steering Committee, which met once a month in order to begin work on the practical implementation of the project. Firstly, at a meeting to determine the themes on which member organizations of the Council wanted to make appeals to society, the Steering Committee members selected three themes, water, community development and partnership. For each theme, a sub-group (composed of the Council members based on their respective interests) was formed to plan activities, following which communication and dialog activities were carried out with respect to the relevant target organizations and people. The Steering Committee acted in the role of coordinator to these three sub-groups.

In addition, and in order to present an overall summarization of the activities of the sub-groups, the Committee decided to hold a symposium titled "Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –", which took place on February 6, 2015. Furthermore, in order to communicate and engage in dialog with as many people as possible even after the completion of the project, it was also decided to prepare a booklet (in both Japanese and English), an ebook and a YouTube video in order to promote dissemination efforts.

## From Learning to Creative Partnership

Looking back on the activities conducted thus far and the preparations for the publication of this booklet, it has been a year of great learning experiences. This refers especially to the attitude of learning from others with humility while engaging in communication with various stakeholders in society.

Firstly, this involved mutual learning among the participating international NGOs themselves. Throughout Japan there is a large number of both large and small network-type NGOs that provide their respective members with opportunities for mutual learning, but there is never any such thing as enough learning. The participating NGOs made a considerable number of new



discoveries about each other, leading us to reconfirm the fact that there is still a strong necessity for peers to learn from each other.

Secondly, our great concern as international NGOs is in the field, where development is taking place, and thus we place priority on activities regarding issues faced by local residents. However, since similar issues and the experience of having overcome those issues also exist inside Japan, we learned the importance and necessity of making connections across national boundaries. The Water Group and Community Development Group report on this experience below.

Thirdly, there was the mutual learning by organizations and people active in differing sectors. Society can be roughly divided into the three classifications of government sector, corporate sector and non-governmental/not-for-profit sector. The people working in each of these sectors and organizations all have values and modes of thought that are associated with the pursuit of their different missions. People engaged in international NGOs tend to have a strong sense of citizenship, even among the actors in the non-governmental/not-for-profit sector. Our values and modes of thinking may not necessarily be widely accepted by people in other sectors. Through the activities of this project, we were fortunate in finding much to learn from the exchanges and dialogs with people in government agencies, business corporations, trade unions and citizens in general. It was reconfirmed in the Water and Community Development Groups that partnerships built through sharing experiences in the field is an important issue, and within the Partnership Group, with regard to the acceptance of funds, the relationship with Japanese government agencies, among other donors, is another challenging issue. This helped us to renew our awareness of the necessity for much greater efforts in engaging in dialog with government people. The details of this are reported by each of the groups below.

Fourthly, in considering the learning mentioned above to be learning arising from horizontal connections, we were also strongly aware of the importance of vertical learning, by which is meant learning with the participation of the youth of the next generation. The Water Group had an opportunity to engage in dialog with high school students. The high school students gained new knowledge about the world's water and were also able to widen their horizons about the state of the world. It appears that the group members were asked a lot of typically youthful fundamental questions by the students and were given very original ideas for solutions to water problems, resulting in a wonderful learning experience for everyone.

### Further Dialog with a Great Diversity of People

In this way, we learned a lot while communicating with people. In order to make effective appeals and to share with the people of Japanese society what we have learned through our experiences in cooperating with our Asian neighbors and the achievements that we have made thus far, it will be necessary for us to

promote dialog with a far greater diversity of organizations and people. Large numbers of people are suffering from problems such as poverty and human rights violations both across the borders in Asia and inside Japan. We intend to work toward the building of creative partnerships aimed at forging a future symbiotic Asian society where, in the light of social justice, we all can think about and act upon these common issues that we face together.

Lastly, the Council members would like to express their heartfelt appreciation to the Toyota Foundation for providing the grant for the implementation of this project. We are extremely proud to note that the implementation of this project itself has been for us a part of our creative partnership with the Toyota Foundation. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC) for supporting this project by taking on the role of secretariat.

Michio Ito,  
Representative, Steering Committee  
NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia



## DELIBERATIONS BY THE THREE SUB-GROUPS

It is now more than 50 years since Japanese international NGOs began engaging in development assistance to and cooperation with local peoples in Asia.

Their accumulated experience is an important asset for thinking about developing the prospects for the future of Asia.

In recent years we have also been keenly aware that the knowledge and experiences of these international NGOs have many facets in common with those of local NGOs (referred to as “NPOs” in Japan) that have sprung up all over Japan to deal with social issues such as ageing and population decrease.

Of the various issues that Asian people face today, we formed working groups on water, community development and partnership, issues in which many common elements are seen in communities in different countries.

## WATER GROUP

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**Can the problems of life-sustaining water be resolved by technology alone?**

**We discussed this topic with private companies, civil society and the youth who will shoulder the next generation.**



Activities of the Water Group began when Sendai Nika High School in Miyagi Prefecture contacted Mekong Watch. The school has been designated a super global high school, a school which has the purpose of cultivating global leaders capable of acting on the international stage. The school selected the study theme of “the world’s water problem”, and through having requested the cooperation of Mekong Watch, the three organizations comprising the Water Group gave lectures on the three themes of “Water as Seen from Water Sources”, “Water as Seen from Rivers” and “Water as Seen from Users” to 240 students in the first year at the high school on September 9, 2014. Four of the students who attended the lectures also participated in the symposium “Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –” organized by the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia on February 6, 2015, and reported in their own words about their experiences, as well as what they had learned and felt, during their visit to Thailand.

On October 31, 2014, we held a Tokyo workshop to discuss the future of water in Asia. In the role play held during the workshop, actual cases of arsenic pollution in Bangladesh and large-scale dam construction on the Mekong River in Laos were used as the basic situations. This allowed us to have participants engage in simulated experiences that looked at issues from angles different from those usually experienced. We asked the participants to speak as if they were villagers, government officers, construction company staff and so on in situations where technological methods to resolve problems were being proposed to local residents. As companies, NGOs, educators and ordinary citizens were quite evenly represented among the 24 people who attended the workshop, it was possible to hear opinions from a wide variety of standpoints.

Asia Arsenic Network, FoE Japan, Mekong Watch



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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**What can we learn from local communities in the field? NGOs and NPOs active in communities both in Japan and overseas exchanged experiences of working to develop vibrant communities.**



Through our long experience as international NGOs, we have learned that partnership building with local NGOs and residents of local communities is vital.

At the same time, a large part of our working funds is received as grants or subsidies from government agencies, private foundations or companies as well as individual contributions inside Japan. While partnerships are not necessarily limited to funding relationships, funding is crucially important for NGO activities in development situations. Our experience has highlighted the fact that partnership building in the field can be strongly influenced by the nature of the fund-providing organization.

In our group activities, we began by forming a common perception of the concept of partnership among the members. Following that, we conducted two questionnaire surveys that addressed many more international NGOs on the realities of partnerships with donor organizations (both governmental and private organizations) as seen from NGOs' perspectives. On the basis of the survey results, we carried out dialog activities with the relevant organizations and their officers in charge.

Asia Community Center 21, Shapla Neer—Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support, Bridge Asia Japan, Green Earth Network (GEN)

We who have been active in communities in Asia, Africa, Oceania and Japan began to feel that there was some relation between issues in local communities overseas and those in the communities where community development activities are taking place in Japan. We first held discussions among the participating members on such issues as the current state and common points of activities overseas and in Japan. As a result, we recognized the importance of Japanese international NGOs sharing their experiences in the field and engaging in dialog with people active in communities in Japan. Putting out a call to our friends who share similar feelings, on January 31, 2015, we invited people who are involved in community development activities in Japan to a workshop titled "50 Ways to Make the Most of What We Learn from Local Communities – Linking Community Development in Japan and Overseas –" This was an opportunity for all of us who are active both overseas and in Japan to share experiences while considering the questions, "What can be learned from the field, both overseas and inside Japan, that can lead to resolution of issues in local communities? What was the result of the encounters between overseas and Japanese on-the-ground realities?"

i-i-network (Research and Action for Community Governance), OISCA (The Organization for Industrial and Cultural Advancement), SHARE (Services for the Health in Asian & African Regions), Shapla Neer—Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support, Nara Machizukuri Center, Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)

## PARTNERSHIP GROUP

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**What kinds of relationships do we call "partnerships"? We carried out series of dialogs with people in related fields based on a questionnaire survey.**



# WATER



**Towards resolving water issues:  
Making use of local water resources,  
choosing appropriate technology and urging  
the participation of affected persons.**





Photo by Kazuhito Hattori

Due to a number of factors, including large-scale development, population growth, urbanization, the propagation of modern agriculture, and climate change, water sources and rivers around the world are currently facing serious crises. Water shortages and water pollution are serious concerns in the countries of Asia. Are these issues of no concern to those of us living in Japan? There are many people who think that the problems facing Asian countries, including water issues, can be solved using superior Japanese technology. But is that really possible?

To completely deny the importance of technology would be a mistake, but however wonderful existing technology is, once aquatic ecosystems and the cultures they foster break down, it is terribly hard to retrieve them.

We think it is important to consider the following points for solving Asian water problems:

- (1) Understanding, protecting and utilizing the characteristics of local water sources and rivers;
- (2) Choosing "technology near at hand", which is sustainable and appropriate to local conditions, rather than "distant technology" that is not easy to obtain locally or is beyond the control of the local residents; and
- (3) Disclosing well-balanced information such that the persons most affected, particularly local community residents, can participate in the process of making appropriate choices for solving problems.

These points came to light in our discussions with people ranging from high school students to corporate representatives attending a lecture and a workshop that the Water Group hosted.





# ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: WHAT WATER CAN TEACH US ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ASIA AND JAPAN – NATURE, TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNITY –

Three organizations, the Asia Arsenic Network (AAN), FoE Japan (FoE J) and Mekong Watch, held a round table discussion to reflect on the many things they learned from their year's experience in the Water Group. Thinking about the familiar substance we call "water", what are the future prospects for Asia and Japan? (Interviewer: the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia secretariat).

## Technology's shortcomings from the perspective of Asian water issues

---In Japan, many people think there are no water problems, perhaps because water service coverage is nearly 100 percent here. There is no motivation for people to consider where their drinking water comes from, and they do not realize that their lifestyles and corporate activities in Japan are being supported by water resources in distant Asian countries. Can you please talk about your concerns from the standpoint of a Japanese NGO coming to grips with water issues in Asia?

**Ishiyama:** First, there is the problem of how to relate to technology. At AAN, we have been making efforts to solve the problem of arsenic contamination of drinking water in Asia. For example, in Bangladesh, where I myself have lived, arsenic in well water had already become an issue about 20 years ago, and people living in economically weak farming communities, in particular, suffered great damage.❶ We frequently receive proposals from Japanese companies who learn of AAN's activities, saying that if we use their technology it will be possible to remove arsenic cheaply. In most cases, however, such technology cannot be used sustainably in the locations where we are working. The problem is rooted in the villagers' lack of understanding of how dangerous arsenic is, or even if they do understand, for economic reasons or due to peer pressure in the community not to be too vocal about it, they cannot take steps to ascertain the quality of the water they drink or obtain safe water. I think there

are problems with the idea itself that technology on its own can solve the problems.

**Doi:** Speaking of technology, Mekong Watch has been sounding alarm bells because the technology of large-scale dams is being promoted as a means of economic development, but they are, in fact, destroying the environment and local societies of the Mekong basin and aggravating water problems rather than solving them.❷ Not a few of these dams have been completed using Japanese technology. When the residents complain about the damage, the dam's proponents propose adding more technology, saying "Well, let's make a dam without a reservoir," or "Let's build a fish ladder so that the fish can pass by." This is consistent with what Ms. Ishiyama was saying about the idea that technology by itself can solve problems. This is not limited to Japanese companies, though.

---Would the proposed technology solve the problems?

**Doi:** No. Fish ladders are not suitable for Mekong River fish, and the villagers displaced by the dams become unable to gain easy access to the natural resources from the rivers and forests that have supported their way of life, and this frequently leaves them impoverished.

---You discussed these issues with high school students and corporate representatives, right?

**Doi:** At a lecture held at Sendai Nika High School, I stressed the point that water is not only for drinking, but plays complex roles, such as providing a place for fish to thrive, carrying nutrients downstream, transporting people and goods, and so on.❸ I wanted them to understand that

## ❶ Arsenic pollution in Bangladesh

In 1993 arsenic was detected in water from hand-pump wells that had been installed by international organizations, NGOs and the government after the war for independence in 1971 as a measure to ensure safe water. It is said that the number of people exposed unknowingly to arsenic is as high as 35 million.

## ❷ Mekong River Development

The Mekong River, with its headwaters on the Tibetan Plateau, is a large international river, ranking sixth among the world's rivers, and flowing through six countries, China, Burma/Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Currently, dam construction is being planned in a number of places along its main course and tributaries, raising concerns about damage to the 60 million people who rely on river fisheries for their livelihoods.

## ❸ Video recording(only in Japanese) of the lectures given by the three organizations in Japanese can be seen on Youtube.

Lecture by FoE Japan

[https://youtu.be/H\\_qdaYXTBzI](https://youtu.be/H_qdaYXTBzI)

Lecture by Mekong Watch

<https://youtu.be/TmYfKjjoDo4>

Lecture by Asia Arsenic Network (AAN)

<https://youtu.be/FEjdZ7UYhoY>

if we rely solely on technology we will find that some aspects are overlooked. In December, I led a small group of teachers and students from Sendai Nika High School to go and actually see the Mekong River.

**Ishiyama:** My awareness of the current situation doesn't jive with that of corporate representatives, so we tried role playing to develop sympathy for different points of view and sought for ways to initiate a dialog.<sup>(4)</sup> Specifically, a businessman from Japan who would like to sell his water purification equipment sets off to the villages damaged by arsenic contamination and tries to convince various "stakeholders" about his product, including a female patient who has been impoverished due to arsenic poisoning, a community leader who has strived to ensure safe water for the community but failed for various reasons, a politician and an NGO worker. It was not only corporate representatives that we involved in the role play, but NGOs, teachers and ordinary citizens also participated in roughly equal numbers, so I think we were able to reproduce various viewpoints quite realistically.

---Did you find ways of starting a dialog?

**Ishiyama:** The participants expressed thoughts such as, "Try putting yourself in the position of the affected people facing complex issues, and you will see that even the finest technology will not solve the problem directly," "I am involved in the development of technology at my company, but in the laboratory, there is no opportunity for me to consider non-technical matters. Here, I actually got a real sense of how big non-technical factors can be," and "The difference between having information and not having it can result in big differences in judgment." Matters that could not have been explained even if I had exhausted myself in the attempt, seemed to have been made easily understandable through a simulated experience. If companies considering involvement in the water business in developing countries were to plan their business on the basis of an understanding of the circum-

stances of the people directly involved, I think it would also lead to a reduction in business risk.

**Mishiba:** Certainly, corporate representatives have a strongly rooted bias in favor of technology, and the inability to "jive" with them is difficult to overcome, but I have encountered some that made me wonder if they were beginning to have a change of mind. There were businessmen who attended the workshop and stayed around for the social gathering afterwards so that they could engage in an active sharing of their views with us NGOs. The assertions and points of views they hold as "company people" cannot be easily changed, but I sense the possibility that continuing the dialog may provide a start.

### Technology is merely a means of supplementing the functions of nature and communities

---Mr. Mishiba, I hear that you frequently visit the forests of Malaysia and Indonesia. From the perspective of your own experience, what have you noticed in terms of water issues?

**Mishiba:** In Japan, I spotted a slogan on a Waterworks Bureau publicity campaign poster aboard a JR train that said, "Happiness is being able to use water services at any time," which brought about in me a keen realization that we who live in Japan do not even know where the water we drink comes from. Later, to the students at Nika High School, I made the point that the original source of tap water was the forests, and that the many dams that had been built in the local watersheds of Miyagi Prefecture were nothing more than a way to supplement with technology what will always be the water producing function of the natural forests.

I then highlighted the problems facing the forests by comparing Japan's forests, which were originally created by people and then ruined through neglect, with the forests of Sarawak, Malaysia, which have been lost through excessive logging. The reason I chose the example of Sarawak is that Japan is the largest



## TAMIKO ISHIYAMA

Director of the Asia Arsenic Network (AAN) for supporting the ability of communities affected by arsenic pollution in Asia to ensure the safety of their water.  
<http://www.asia-arsenic.jp/top/>

<sup>(4)</sup> We received valuable assistance from Akiko Yagi at the Development Education Association & Resource Center (DEAR: see <http://www.dear.or.jp>) in designing the role plays and in preparing for and holding the workshop. The role playing plans used at the workshop are described here: [http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/roleplay\\_laos.pdf](http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/roleplay_laos.pdf) [http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/roleplay\\_bangla.pdf](http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/roleplay_bangla.pdf)



photo by Sayed Sunny



consumer of wood from that area.⑤) Moreover, we fail to realize that our lifestyles and corporate activities are, in fact, supported by water resources in countries far away. I hope that we can become more aware of water, which we take for granted, in our everyday lives. For example, the concept of “virtual water” is a means of quantifying the large amounts of aqueous resources that go into producing the goods we import, such as meat and vegetables, and can be used to make such hidden connections easier to see.

**Doi:** When I talked with high school students, I didn’t want them to take the simplistic view that “Japan is rich and the rest of Asia is poor,” so I emphasized the strong, rich interconnections that exist everywhere between nature and people or among the people living in the Mekong basin. On the other hand, in Japan, I told them, we have ironically stopped exercising the potential strength we have in our relationships between people in the effort to ensure safe water, for example, because we rely on the technology of the “water supply”.

**Ishiyama:** On that point, my experience in Bangladesh was similar. Private wells for households have spread rapidly in Bangladesh since the 1980s, and the people have given up the tradition of cooperative water use. When arsenic contamination was discovered, they needed to return to cooperative water use, but in many cases they have failed to form a consensus or perform regular management and maintenance. Ultimately, in order to provide safe water sustainably and fairly in areas with arsenic contamination, what is most important is not to have advanced technology. Rather, what is important is for NGOs to talk with the residents to select the most appropriate water source in each community, use local materials, and conduct activities to foster the understanding of the government and the users themselves. One NPO has also pointed out that Japanese villages were good at selecting and applying appropriate technology based on cooperation. This made possible the sustainable develop-

ment and use of water resources, and led to the propagation of small-scale waterways throughout the land.⑥) Many Japanese have forgotten this, but they should regain their awareness of the fact that technology was brought to life through cooperation. I do not want all of the attention to go only to technology.

--- The high school students’ reaction to this must have been very interesting from the viewpoint of looking to the future. Did they make any remarks that left an impression on you?

**Mishiba:** They were such excellent students, that I found myself responding to them as if I were speaking to well-informed adults. I said, “The harnessing and development of technology and the effect of the burden it puts on the environment, that is, the Earth, nature and people, are like two sides of the same coin. When you think about ‘technology’, please also give some thought to the effects of the negative burdens ‘technology’ imposes.”

**Ishiyama:** I was impressed when one of the high school students visiting Thailand said, “From my perspective in Japan, I thought flooding was a problem, but I learned that the people living there do not necessarily see it as a problem.” Certainly, it seems as if people living in the watersheds of large Asian rivers have managed to adjust themselves to nature... I think that, unlike the Japanese, who worry so excessively when they try to control nature but cannot, these people have a quite laid-back attitude. Of course, if it exceeds certain limits, it’s a problem, but unless you come and see it for yourself, it is hard to understand that the water from normal flooding is a blessing.

**Doi:** There was one interesting remark a student made that the water supply has not yet reached Thai villages, so because they rely on wells and rain for their water, they are conscious of diversified water use, while on the other hand, the wish among Japanese to obtain clean, safe water has gone too far and could be considered to have become an obsession. In the past, however, I hear that different water resources were used



Photo by Kazuhito Hattori

## TOSHIYUKI DOI

Senior Advisor to Mekong Watch, who works with villagers to propose development that does not threaten the wealth of the rivers and other features of the natural environment.

<http://www.mekongwatch.org/>

### ⑤ Sarawak Forest Issues

The tropical forest covering the State of Sarawak has been rapidly lost due to unregulated logging, development of oil palm plantations and dam construction, with much of the wood from logging going to the Japanese market.

### ⑥ Community Water Supply Support Center of Japan

<http://www.cwsc.or.jp>

appropriately and skillfully in Japan, with no demand for excessive water cleanliness.

---It sounds like the three organizations learned a lot by working as a team.

**Doi:** It is not as if we never knew of each organization's activities at all to begin with. However, I have been living and working in Thailand, so chances to work with NGO staff who normally work in Japan are valuable to me, and I felt a comfortable level of tension.

**Ishiyama:** I also have few opportunities to get an accurate understanding of what kinds of problems are occurring and what kinds of issues other NGOs are facing outside of my own fields of activity, but I came to realize that in fact we face many issues in common. One of these is the awareness of the possibility that certain things might need to be done before developing sophisticated technology. In concrete terms, what needs to be done is to think of ways to ascertain the characteristics of the water resources in the area and methods of protecting and using those resources. A "technology at hand" must be chosen, which is harmonious with and sustainable under local conditions, not "distant technology", which is hard to obtain locally or which is beyond the control of people living there. The people involved, especially those living there, who will be most heavily affected, must have fair access to information to help them participate in the choice of solutions as well as to make proper choices. It can be boiled down to these three points.

**Mishiba:** Global issues such as climate change/global warming, the loss or degradation of forests, poverty reduction, human rights and water privatization, are

intertwined in very complex ways. Here we are focusing on water, but by bringing up different views from the different perspectives of our organizations, we have become able to put forward ideas and approaches toward this one issue from much broader overviews. I think this may have given us an impetus to start with a specific problem and move toward a discussion of global concerns.

### **We must consider carefully for whose sake something is being done and what we call achievements**

---I think there will be many readers who will want to start grappling with water issues. Do you have any suggestions for actions they might take?

**Ishiyama:** The arsenic contamination issue in Bangladesh was the result of the rapid propagation of the technology of "wells" by the UN, government and NGOs without bothering to test the water quality. The outcome was a decrease in cholera and other communicable diseases, but it also led to many people suffering from cancer and chronic illnesses. I think the good health across the life-course of people living in farming villages in developing countries has been discounted in the public's assessment. Even the people affected do not think much about how their health will be several decades in the future. This is probably the biggest obstacle to resolving the arsenic contamination issue. If a person is unaware that her health and her family's health is irreplaceable, she will make no effort to change her behavior and habits in order to use safe water. For both NGOs and companies, the first priority when dealing with water issues is to base their actions on the recovery of the right to good health of the user. Beyond that, there is the need to support the users so that they become able to devise means of ensuring access to safe water while adapting themselves to the changes in their environment.

**Mishiba:** The questions of "For whose sake is the effort being made?" "Who benefits from it?" and "Can those benefits





continue to be enjoyed with reasonable sustainability?" are not limited to water issues. When choosing goals and objectives for their problem-solving efforts, I would like especially for people who are involved with technology to design their projects on the basis of the principle of benefiting many people in Asia. I strongly hope that their plans will not be biased toward one set of assertions or interests. Furthermore, I think what is most important is that they run their businesses in a way that thoroughly reflects the intentions, volitions, assertions, aspirations and sovereignty of the people who are to benefit, both women and men, by ensuring sufficient communication, maybe even too thoroughly, with them. That, I think, is the most important point in ensuring sustainability.

**Doi:** Technology has become the central topic here, so I would like to touch on information technology (IT). IT has been recognized for the great role it plays in NGO activities, but I also feel concerned about the instantaneous transmission of large quantities of sound bite-like messages abstracted from the ground reality for the purpose of consumption. It has removed us from the traditional way of considering things slowly and taking the time to make sense of them. Don't you think it would be important to take a new look at "slow language", the language of "slow life", if you like, involving time and effort in local production for local consumption?

Just before I was to give my lecture at the high school in Miyagi Prefecture, I was looking for ideas, and so I plunged into a thorough reading of Shigeatsu Hatakeyama's book, *Mori wa Umi no Koibito* (Forests are Lovers of the Sea), which records the case of the fisherfolk of Kesennuma planting trees in upstream forests in an attempt to revive the bay. (7) The whole area depicted in the book nurtured historical and everyday interactions between the people living in the forest and those living by the sea, which cannot be captured even by the term "ecology", and there are generations of waka poets who have described this in their works. I think the expression "forests

are lovers of the sea" is a good example of the "slow language" that was fostered by traditional Japanese waka poetry. The way these expressions and thoughts were spun strikes me as important from the perspective of Asia and Japan's future concerning water.

--That means giving considerable thought to the state of water in the future, while keeping in mind for whose sake things are done and what we will call success. So, finally, what do you think the future role of international NGOs will be?

**Ishiyama:** The conventional model of international cooperation, in which things are distributed, will probably become relatively smaller. We have learned the local languages and talked with the local people to help them recover or improve their health and ensure access to safe water. I also think that sometimes, by distancing ourselves as "outsiders", we might have achieved better results by forming a wider network and making use of different viewpoints and experiences than the local people could have done for themselves. In the near future, I think the same kind of thing could happen in Japan. The people of Asia could learn Japanese as a local language, and might bring in ways of expressing things that differ from those of the Japanese, but which have a sense of compassion that both sides can relate to, and then come into our localities in Japan and support us. Wouldn't learning from one another and building up trust among international NGOs then become even more important?

**Doi:** Now, as Japan's economic power is receding and domestic problems are becoming apparent, perhaps cooperative relations will be established across all of Asia on a more equal footing than before. I think that in order to transform that possibility into concrete actions, we should devote ourselves to creating visions and plans.



## JUN'ICHI MISHIBA

Secretary General of the international environmental NGO FoE Japan, relaying the importance of protecting forests as the first step toward the protection of water.  
<http://www.foejapan.org/>

⑦ Hatakeyama, Shigeatsu (2006)  
*Mori wa Umi no Koibito* (Forests are Lovers of the Sea), Bunshun Bunko.

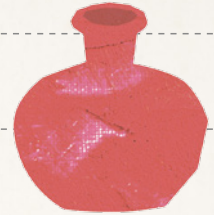
# KEYWORDS

We have learned much from all who participated in our discussion with the Water Group. Expressing our gratitude, we will introduce some keywords for a fresh consideration of water issues that were also quoted at the round table discussion. Thank you all most sincerely.

## VISIT THE LOCALITY

"From my perspective in Japan, I thought flooding was a problem, but I learned that the people living there do not necessarily see it as a problem." "The water supply has not yet reached Thai villages, so because they rely on wells and rain for their water, they are conscious of diversified water use, while on the other hand, the wish among Japanese to obtain clean safe water has gone too far and could be considered to have become an obsession." (Remarks by students from Sendai Nika High School, who visited the Mekong River)

➡ Not even the most excellent records or narrator could relay a comprehensive description of the scene. When considering water issues, it is essential to visit the locality.



## HARBOR COMPASSION

"Try putting yourself in the position of the affected people facing complex issues, and you will see that even the finest technology will not solve the problem directly." (Remark by a corporate representative who participated in the role play)

➡ Compassion brings about awareness, which may in turn trigger changes in the habits of the heart and action. Role play brings out compassion, and is an important tool in development education.

## TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS CAPITAL

"Japanese villages were good at selecting and applying appropriate technology based on cooperation. This made possible the sustainable development and use of water resources, and led to the propagation of small-scale waterways throughout the land." (Remark by Hatsuko Hoyano, Director of the Community Water Supply Support Center of Japan)

➡ Japan's technology achieved results only when it was complemented by the spirit of joint efforts, which were fostered in Japan's rural villages. Strong awareness of this fact would be the first step in opening up a new perspective on the future of Asia, which includes Japan.







# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



We report on the future outlook for the kind of community development we hope to achieve, which has emerged through the sharing of experiences, mutual learning, collaboration and mutual support by the local persons involved and by persons cooperating from outside in their efforts toward resolution of problems in communities both in Japan and overseas.





We are a group that includes international NGOs working jointly with people in local communities striving toward solutions to local problems in Asia, Africa and Oceania, and community development NPOs interacting with local citizens, providing mutual assistance and learning from each other while conducting community development activities in Japan. We engage in a wide variety of activities, including community development, forest revival and agricultural development (OISCA); health support for the socially vulnerable (SHARE); addressing child labor, disabled persons and local disaster prevention issues (Shapla Neer); community and human resource development (JVC); townscape preservation and community development (Nara Machizukuri Center); and human resource development and experience sharing for local communities (i-i-network). We all share the stance, however, of cooperating with people who are taking the initiative to solve the problems they face, or engaging in activities ourselves as a part of the affected persons, on the basis that the affected persons themselves be the main actors. Another similarity among us is that our activities turn their attention to areas both in Japan and overseas. In the course of these various activities, we bear in mind that issues in communities overseas may possibly have some relation with the issues of community development in Japan, and we undertake group activities aiming to learn from experiences in Japan and overseas and to return the favor locally.





# TOWARD VIBRANT LOCAL COMMUNITIES ESTABLISHED THROUGH COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL LEARNING – INITIATIVES LINKING COMMUNITIES IN JAPAN AND OVERSEAS –

In the first half of the Community Development Group's activities (summer and fall 2014), the group's five organizations located in the Tokyo area gathered and shared the experiences from their respective activities in Japan and overseas, discussing what they had learned from communities and how communities in Japan and overseas are related.

In the second half (winter 2015), we called together people with similar ideas, holding a workshop titled, "50 Ways to Make the Most of What We Learn from Local Communities – Linking Community Development in Japan and Overseas –" to which we invited people active in Japanese communities.

This became a venue for mutual learning through the sharing of experience in the field.

## What Emerged from the Shared Activities of the Participating Organizations

We would like first to introduce the efforts made within Japan by each of the organizations participating in the Community Development Group.

### Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)

Within Japan, JVC's efforts have thus far centered mostly on advocacy, with no community development projects. What is meant here by advocacy is suggestions made for corporate activities or Japanese government policies that have some connection with issues facing residents living in areas overseas where the organization is active. It was under these conditions that the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 occurred, and it served as a turning point. Through activities in the Tohoku region, we began to feel that the methods, specialties and approaches we have been using overseas might also be useful in Japan. The question will be: How can we bring back our overseas experience and apply it in our own back yard?

### Shapla Neer—Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support

Shapla Neer has recently begun discussing how to relate our overseas

experience to the situation in Japan.

Under the theme of child labor, our experienced members stationed overseas have held lectures throughout Japan, where they held discussions with experts on the problem of child poverty in Japan, comparing the situation in Japan and overseas. We have also cooperated with an organization aiding the homeless people of Shinjuku, organizing reciprocal field trips between Shinjuku and places in Bangladesh, where child labor is an issue. In either case, we strive for mutual learning. Since the earthquake disaster, we have been active in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture.

### OISCA

OISCA began performing practical activities in Japan 20 years ago. The broad concept of sustainable community development has provided links between efforts in Japan and overseas. In Japan, while engaging mostly in forest maintenance, OISCA has become involved in village development, and is now conducting a coastal forest revival project in Natori, Miyagi Prefecture. Some of our community-organizing activities have clear parallels with our activities overseas. Moreover, as many OISCA trainees have come to Japan from overseas, the organization is conducting exchange programs with depopulated areas.



## SHARE—Services for the Health in Asian & African Regions

SHARE has provided support for the health of foreigners living in Japan for more than twenty years. Recently, in cooperation with the Tokyo Metropolitan government, we have been cultivating human resources to serve as interpreters for tuberculosis patients, and are putting considerable effort into our domestic activities, such as our dispatch operations. The Primary Health Care<sup>⑨</sup> approach that has been developed overseas has been proving useful in Japan as well, but has sometimes run into difficulties in Japan (relations with the government, etc.). SHARE has been active in Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture since the earthquake disaster.

## i-i-network (Research & Action for Community Governance)

i-i-network has continued to engage in mutual learning activities, visiting local communities in Japan to hold exchanges

with people who are conducting community development activities both in Japan and overseas. We feel that there are many similarities between Japan and countries overseas regarding shared management of common resources (iriai in Japanese) in communities, decision-making practices (yoriai in Japanese) and the roles of outsiders in the community.

The activities of these five organizations in Japan and overseas, and their linkages between Japan and other countries, are presented in Table 1.

The following views emerged during free discussion based on this table.

▼ Even in the case of the poverty issue in Japan, the mechanism that produces the problem is similar to what occurs under circumstances overseas. Opportunities for interaction to learn from each other are important.

▼ The globalization of Japanese society is inevitable. NGOs with overseas con-

## ⑨ Primary Health Care

Methods and approaches that recognize the basic human right of all people to health, guaranteeing the right of citizens to make their own decisions and to participate actively in the process of achieving Primary Health Care. The five basic principles of Primary Health Care are, (1) a basis in citizen needs, (2) effective use of local resources, (3) citizen participation, (4) harmonization and integration of multiple fields, including agriculture, education, communications and construction, and (5) use of appropriate technology.

Table 1

	Activities Overseas	Activities in Japan	Overseas → Japan Links	Japan → Overseas Links
JVC	Community development, human resource development, farmer exchange.	Farmer exchange	Invitation of overseas interns and staff to local communities in Japan.	Farmer exchange, sharing experiences of Fukushima with overseas visitors.
Shapla Neer	Assistance for child workers, (community-based) disaster prevention activities, disabled persons, etc.	Operating the Iwaki Exchange Space (run by users), taking care of earthquake victims living in places other than temporary housing.	Learning about the notion and approach of "affected persons as main actors" and "the people left behind" in the field.	Getting a real feel for the difficulties of conducting activities in communities and opportunities to reassess overseas partnerships: What is the structure for reliance on partners? What is a real partner?
OISCA	Community development, reforestation & maintenance, agricultural promotion, human resource development (agriculture).	Forestation & maintenance; environmental education for companies, municipalities and forestry cooperatives; accepting trainees.	Learning knowhow and ideas about community development. (OISCA acts as a coordinator, and has no direct operations in the field). International exchange such as in the case of Tabayama.	Human resource development, inviting people from overseas who want to learn in Japan, as in the case of Tabayama.
SHARE	Assistance for health improvement in the socially vulnerable (children, mothers, sexual minorities, patient self-help groups, migrants, etc.). Activities: Health education, human resource development, community development through healthy residents.	Assistance for health improvement in the socially vulnerable (migrants, homeless). Activities: Free health consultation, telephone consultation, human resource development (interpreters for tuberculosis patients, foreign volunteers living in Japan), emergency and reconstruction aid.	Application of Primary Health Care approach introduced from overseas (community-based, using local resources, participation of the affected, networking), learning about the difficulty of activities in Japan (particularly with local government) and the importance of looking at one's own locality (collaboration with Taito Ward during the 2011 emergency).	Surveys using a foreign network to study treatment conditions of foreign patients in Japan. Sharing knowhow on health-related activities for migrant workers in Japan with relevant overseas organizations.
i-i-net	"Iriai" exchange, human resource exchange, filming of rituals in shifting cultivation, collaborative management of national parks (human resource development in West Bali).	On-site training for community development as JICA training courses (for people involved in community development overseas) at various community development sites.	Linking residents of West Bali with Sado and Toyooka through reciprocal exchanges for study and mutual learning.	



nections may be able to play a guiding role in promoting an appropriate form of globalization and achieving international understanding.

▼ Couldn't we ourselves improve our projects overseas by learning from experience in Japan?

▼ Could international NGOs contribute to Japan's communities? Let's create a venue for dialog with people engaged in domestic issues!

### **Workshop "50 Ways to Make the Most of What We Learn from Local Communities – Linking Community Development in Japan and Overseas –"**

A workshop titled "50 Ways to Make the Most of What We Learn from Local Communities" as held on January 31, 2015 at the JICA Tokyo International Center to build connections between Japanese and overseas community development. The thirty participants who gathered for the workshop included representatives of Japanese NGOs engaging in activities overseas and people active in Japanese communities, and this became a forum for mutual learning and exchanging experiences. The workshop consisted of two sessions. The first half was a keynote discussion, in which four participants active in Japanese communities presented reports on the theme of connections in the field between Japan and other countries. In the second session, the participants broke into five groups, and while sharing their activities in their respective communities, they considered the two themes of what can be learned in the field in Japan and overseas toward solving issues faced by communities, and what has occurred when the fields in Japan and in other countries came together.

#### **Session 1 Keynote Discussion**

##### **Koji Goto ("soup" association)**

The "soup" association has involved itself in the problem of homelessness that surfaced after the Japanese eco-

nomie bubble burst in the early 1990s. It has achieved rapport with people living on the street. We realized that street people were originally part of communities, and some of them return to communities. Thus we became involved in communities, and in cooperating with people in organizations running foster homes and promoting measures against solitary death of people living alone, we then initiated community development activities ourselves. Later, we met Shapla Neer representatives at a symposium, and engaged in a series of collaborative projects in which we deliberated on what constitutes poverty, what support is appropriate, and what powers citizens have. Through these we gained a shared understanding that the perspectives of "being a part of the affected" and "persons affected being the main actors" are central to the provision of support. Shapla Neer has engaged in supporting street children in Dhaka, and from its methods of delegating activities to its local partner NGOs I have learned that the essence of aid is to create multi-tiered connections with a variety of partners. I feel that as partners we can come to see what is essential despite coming from completely different fields, or, really, because of these differences.

##### **April Joy Duran (OISCA trainee, Education Committee member, Tabayama Village, Yamanashi Prefecture)**

\* Hiroyuki Cho of OISCA introduces April

OISCA has been involved in Japanese forest issues since the 1980s. Several years ago, at the request of Tabayama Village, Yamanashi Prefecture, we became engaged in efforts to protect degraded forests. The village asked OISCA to send someone young, so as a part of our capacity building, we sent April, who was born in the Philippines, as a trainee.

##### **April**

I greet the children at Tabayama's nursery school and grade school in English every day. I teach them English once a week, and we engage in play while using English. I want the children to make friends with foreigners. The chil-



dren don't go outside very much, but because I go outside, they come with me and play outside too. I read to them in the library from books in English. At the day service center, it would be too hard for the old people to speak English, but I put my heart into smiling and making it a pleasant time for them. I explain to them in Japanese what kind of place the Philippines is, and we do exercises together. Other than that, I cook food with the volunteers in Tabayama and do activities such as tree planting, forest preservation and farming. The Philippines has serious problems with trash. I am learning about the way trash is put out in Tabayama, and I hope to put this knowledge into practice in the Philippines.

#### **Masashi Imase (Nara Machizukuri Center)**

Since its founding in 1979, the Nara Machizukuri Center has engaged in community development activities by citizens. In the course of that, we have teamed up with a number of citizens' organizations in various countries of Asia, starting with Penang, Malaysia, in 1991, forming the "Asia and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation". At that time, there was notable economic and urban development in Asia, and problems arose with the loss of historical townscapes and breakdown of communities. We undertook interchange, mutual assistance and mutual learning while conducting conservation activities in each locality. After the year 2000 we have expanded our network into Chiang Mai, Thailand, and Aceh, Indonesia.

At this time, there is a global trend toward conservation and active use of historical townscapes, and we are aware that citizens have been a big part of the drive. We held a symposium in Penang in 2013, drawing together 20 citizens' organizations from nine Asian countries, at which we expanded by establishing the Asia Heritage Network. Small activities have added up step by step to create results, so in the future we will increase our interchange, mutual assistance and reciprocal learning, while conducting activities in each community throughout

Asia.

#### **Miki Nishiyama (SHARE—Services for the Health in Asian & African Regions)**

SHARE specializes in international health care, tackling the issues of child health and access to healthcare services, with activities in Cambodia, Thailand, East Timor and Japan. We also conduct activities in suburban Tokyo together with members of the foreign community, NPOs providing aid to foreigners, and other community members to provide cost-free health counseling to foreigners residing in Japan. In cooperation with the Tokyo Metropolitan government, we also provide a dispatch service of support personnel who can interpret for foreign tuberculosis patients. We are training volunteers from Thailand who live in Japan to help with the HIV/AIDS problem. We are promoting this by having Thai residents of Japan, as persons affected in the foreign community, conduct their own educational activities. We are also making use of SHARE's overseas network, helping patients who have difficulty with treatment in Japan obtain treatment after they return to their home countries. Overseas, we have been providing assistance to migrant workers at karaoke bars near the border between Thailand and Laos, and I think what we have learned from our work in Japan is very useful. On the other hand, AIDS education is more advanced in Thailand, so we would like to make use of our experience in Thailand when teaching high school students in Japan.

#### **Session 2 Group Work**

All of the participants broke into five groups to discuss the two themes of "What can be learned in the field in Japan and overseas toward solving issues faced by communities?" and "What has occurred when the fields in Japan and in other countries came together?" In each group, in addition to activities announced during the keynote discussion in Session 1, we had activists who had travelled in from distant locations (Hippo Machizukuri Center in Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture; Isumi Lifestyle Laboratory in





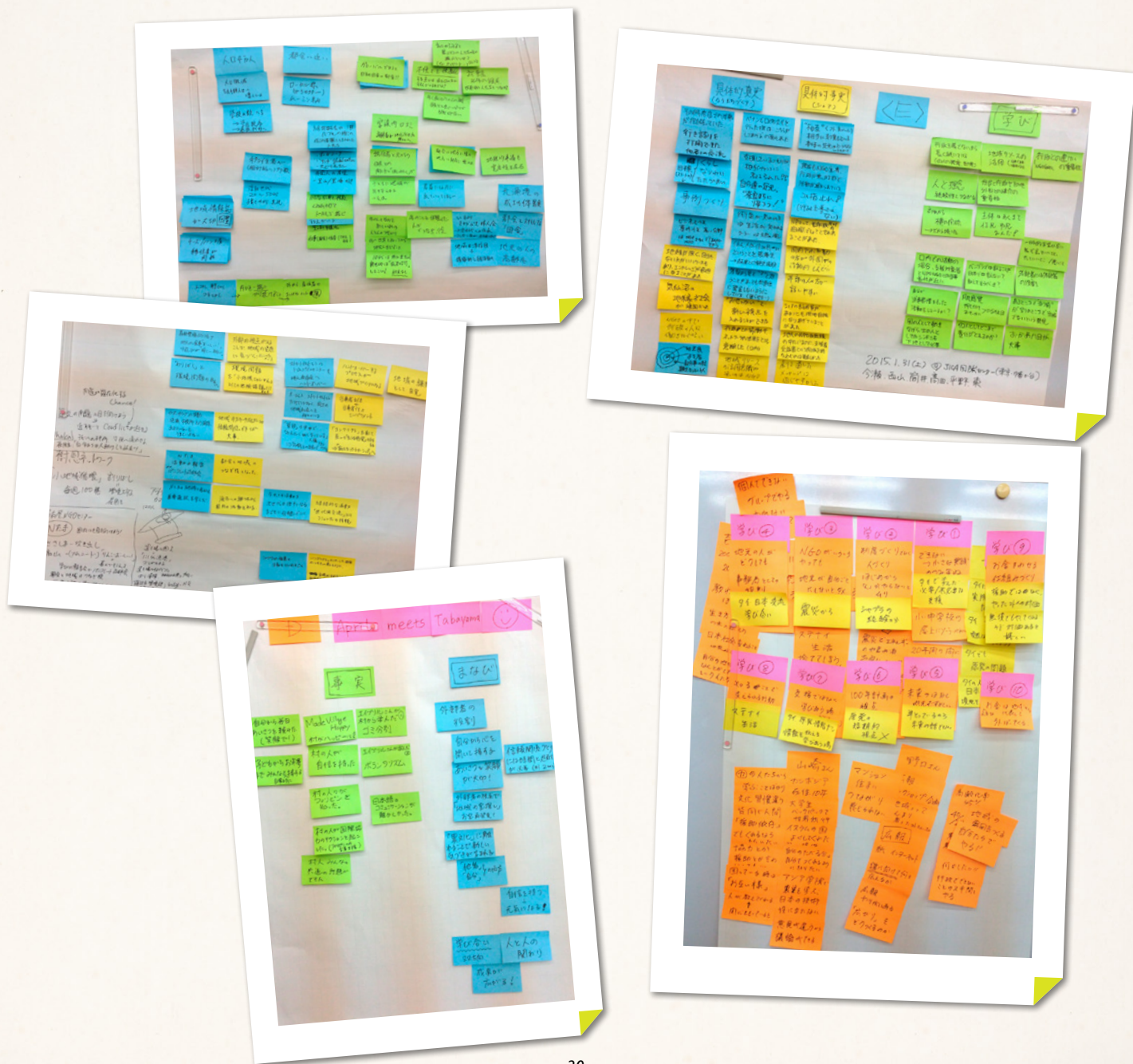
Isumi, Chiba Prefecture; Asia Health Institute in Nisshin, Aichi Prefecture; and Nagoya NGO Center in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture) report on their activities in their respective communities. We then had the participants consider the themes while exchanging information with each other on their respective experiences. The photos below provide an overview of the group work outcomes.

During the group work, the participants described their experiences to each other, discussing actual examples of community issue solving in Japan and overseas, providing each person with an opportunity to consider these experienc-

es. It can therefore be said that the realizations that occurred to each of the participants through this forum constituted its "outcomes". Unfortunately, we were not able to reach the "50 ways" suggested by the title, but several things became clear in view of the workshop overall, and we would like lastly to introduce the outcomes below.

### Community Development is a Process of Connecting People to People

When April first visited Tabayama Village, the first thing she did was greet everybody she met individually. A diverse variety of people is residing or is involved



in communities nowadays for various reasons. In order for these people to cooperate with each other toward improving the community, it is vital to have a process of connecting them with one another.

### **Bridging Insiders and Outsiders The Presence of Mediators**

In the town of Isumi, former residents who have experienced big city life are returning once again. Known as the "U-turns", they are becoming the town's backbone in its activities, as mediators between the local people and the new people who are moving in. These days, a community cannot exist completely shut off from the outside world. How can they strengthen their connections in cooperation, not only with companies, administrative bodies, universities, etc. but also with people living in other communities? People who can fill a bridging role are needed.

### **Community Development from a Perspective of Future Centuries**

Communities are entities that have existed over long historical periods, and will continue in the future as our descendants inherit them. Mr. Yoshizawa, who has undertaken community development activities in the town of Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, is keenly aware of the importance of thinking about communities from a perspective of future centuries. Humans, however, are apt to be distracted by matters of immediate concern, so the presence of outsiders with their broader perspective may be useful.

### **Make Use of What there is in a Community**

Whether in Japan or overseas, people in rural communities have always

thought, "There is nothing here where I live," and have yearned for big city life while continuing to depend on assistance from outside. There are a growing number of communities, however, that have realized that this attitude is fruitless. There is a need to reappraise what there is in the local area where you are and to take a view toward making the best of it.

### **How do We Understand the Notion of "Being a Part of the Affected"?**

The principle of "persons affected being the main actors", in which the people directly facing an issue themselves play the leading role in its solution, is being accepted in many places. How can NGOs, however, who are involved as outsiders, see themselves from the viewpoint of "being a part of the affected"? Would it not be important for them to consider that they also live in a community and might themselves become "affected persons" facing similar issues?

### **Crossing the Overseas-Domestic Barrier, Linking Communities**

In globalization, where people, goods, and information all cross national boundaries, activities toward solving community issues need to connect with each other by overcoming the overseas-domestic barrier. How can the fields of "community issue solving" or "community development" in Asia, Africa and Oceania be linked with those in Japan, and what kinds of mutual learning will that bring forth? This will be our new challenge.





# KEYWORDS

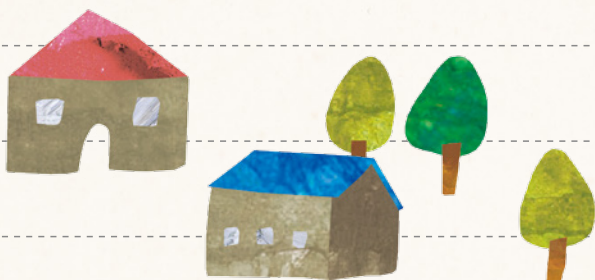
## **“AFFECTED PERSONS” AND “BEING A PART OF THE AFFECTED”**

The term “affected persons”, mentioned repeatedly at the workshop and discussion in the Community Development Group, refers to the people who are themselves directly facing a problem of some sort in a community. In the world of so-called international development assistance, it has become important for the projects to gain the active participation of the local residents. The term “affected persons”, taken further, expresses the view that the people who are directly facing a problem themselves should be the main actors in any action, as expressed in its usage in the expression “affected persons being the main actors”. These words are also used in the welfare sector, as seen in the terms “sovereignty of the affected”, meaning having people with disabilities or illnesses take the leading role in deciding how they will live their lives, or “study by the affected”, meaning taking an objective view of one’s own difficulties, and finding one’s own way to live by examining the experiences of others in similar circumstances or persons involved in the sector.

On the other hand, the term “being a part of the affected” reflects the view that not only those persons directly facing a problem, but their family, colleagues and friends, as well as people in their community should be cooperating to find solutions in the same way as the affected persons themselves. One example of this is found in solving the street children problem, where it is important that not only the children themselves take a leading role, but that the community around them also see themselves as main actors in efforts to resolve the issues. In this world of increasing globalization, it can be said that in order to solve problems in different and distant countries, we need to reassess our own way of living because we are also becoming “a part of the affected”.

What we want to impress upon the reader, finally, is that we who are involved in community development activities led by the affected people are ourselves “a part of the affected”. All of us are persons living in a community somewhere. We shop at local shopping centers, our children go to schools in the community, we enjoy community festivals, we have community centers that provide nursing care for our aging parents, and in times of disaster, we need to help each other in our communities. We must not forget that anyone who engages in community development is “a part of the affected” in his or her own community.

(Makoto Nagahata, i-i-network)





# PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is an important concept that links people with people, organizations with organizations, and societies with societies.

Here we report on activities  
for building partnerships across national boundaries.







The four organizations participating in the Partnership Group are all active in supporting local residents in gaining freedom from poverty, but their approaches and contents of the projects vary. Shapla Neer—Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support provides support for marginalized children and community disaster prevention activity through local NGOs; as secretariat of the Asian Community Trust (ACT), Asia Community Center 21 implements grant programs for local NGOs covering a wide range of fields; Bridge Asia Japan carries out projects such as water supply and school construction; and Green Earth Network (GEN) conducts reforestation activities with the aim of reviving natural green areas on China's Huangtu Plateau.

Through our experiences thus far, we have learned that in order to achieve success in local projects and bring about sustainable development, the participation of responsible local NGOs and local residents, in other words, relationship building based on the concept of partnership with these actors, and building partnerships with Japanese donor agencies that support these relationships, are extremely important.

We therefore surveyed the current state of partnerships between Japanese international NGOs and overseas counterparts and also between Japanese NGOs and donor agencies in Japan, and decided to make recommendations to the domestic donor agencies based on the outcomes of the survey.



# BUILDING CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

First, we analyzed the concept of “partnership” and expressed it in a diagram. Based on this concept, we then conducted a questionnaire survey targeting international NGOs throughout Japan.

We also conducted an ad hoc questionnaire survey by focusing on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ “NGO Partnership Project” under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects and reported the results in a meeting of the Partnership Promotion Committee of the NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regular Consultation Meeting (hereafter NGO-MoFA Regular Consultation Meeting). Furthermore, we organized two meetings:

- 1) a conference where we shared and discussed partnership projects by NGOs and their private financial supporting organizations; and
- 2) a meeting to share the results of the first aforementioned survey with the NGOs that responded to the questionnaire, and to discuss future efforts to grapple with the issues raised in their responses.

## What is a Partnership?

We, the four organizations in this group, firstly defined the concept of partnership, and developed a common understanding among ourselves. This concept, consisting of eight factors, was then expressed as a diagram (see figure on left). Based on this concept, we then conducted a questionnaire survey targeting other international NGOs, asking them how they view or understand partnerships, and focusing on the aspect most crucial for international NGOs, that is, securing a flow of funds for activities, especially their relationships with the donors that provide them with grants, subsidies and so on.

## Implementation of the Questionnaire Survey

It is necessary for international NGOs to secure funds (including funds necessary for dispatching human resources such as experts and volunteers, or for inviting local residents to Japan, etc.) in Japan in order to support local NGOs and community residents overseas. We implemented this questionnaire survey to find out what outcomes and impacts the relationship with the donor agencies have on the partnership with the local NGOs and community residents’ organizations, and also to know how each international NGO views partnership and practices it in the field. Additionally, we

limited the donors in this survey to institutionalized government and private organizations.

The questionnaire, sent out to approximately 300 organizations, was implemented from October to November 2014 with the support of the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC) and the 13 regional network organizations throughout the country. The responding organizations totaled 36, with return rate of about 12 percent.

The main points of the survey results are as follows.

### Characteristics of the Organizations

- ▼ Roughly 70% of the responding organizations were 50% or more self-funding, and just under 50% were 70% or more self-funding, showing relatively stable financial circumstances.
- ▼ Just over 90% had 10 or more years of experience as international NGOs.
- ▼ 25% were spending an annual 100 million yen or more on projects in Asia.
- ▼ Responding NGOs focused their activities mainly in 18 countries, the top eight, in order of number of NGOs involved, being Cambodia, Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- ▼ Their main fields of concern were education, rural development, health and hygiene, livelihood enhancement, nutrition, the environment, vocational training, and water supply and water sources.





### Relationships with Local NGOs and Community Residents' Organizations

▼ In principle, all organizations have partner organizations.

▼ Over half of the Japanese international NGOs had found partner organizations after many years of activities in the areas they were engaged. Subsequently, introduction by prominent figures in the areas concerned came next in finding local partners, and this was followed by introductions from the resident offices or international alliance offices of Japanese NGOs.

▼ With the exception of one organization, all the organizations shared common goals and a common awareness of problems with their partner organizations.

▼ About half of the organizations responded that they had horizontal relationships with their partner organizations and about half said they were aiming for that kind of relationship.

▼ 47% of the organizations had written agreements on division of responsibilities and roles with their partner organizations, 39% said that grey zones still

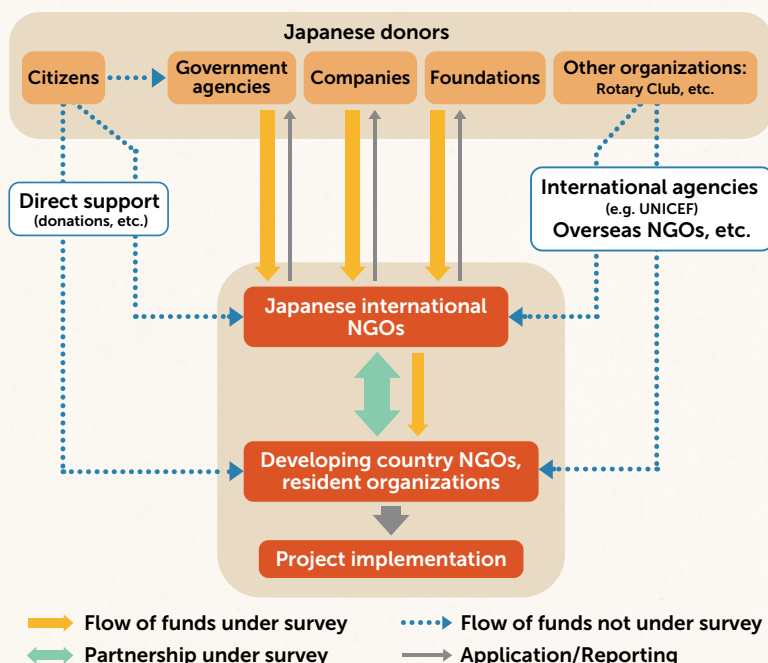
remained and 14% had not concluded a written agreement with their partner organizations.

▼ In order of frequency, the resources and services provided by the Japanese international NGOs extended to 1) funds, 2) dispatch of human resources, 3) technical assistance, 4) acceptance of leaders of local NGOs, residents and others to Japan, including for training, 5) in-kind assistance, 6) policy advocacy, 7) marketing in Japan for goods produced by the partner organizations.

▼ In order of frequency, the resources and services provided by local partner organizations were 1) provision of local information, 2) participation and cooperation by local residents, 3) participation by local NGO staff in projects, 4) burden-sharing of project expenses, 5) interpretation services in the field.

▼ Points to note when ending a partnership project were 1) continuity of the projects engaged in, 2) sustainable development of partner NGOs and resident organizations and of the projects concerned, and 3) extension of the effects of the projects.

**Partnership Concept Diagram.** This figure shows the flow of funds from Japanese donors to developing country NGOs or resident organizations and the concept of partnership



### The Partnership Group members define "partnership" as a relationship formed from the following characteristics and factors:

- 1) A relatedness between an actor and another external actor (interaction between two or more actors),
- 2) Shared awareness (values) of problems regarding development issues (poverty reduction/livelihood improvement, access to education, measures against communicable diseases, gender equality, etc.) that require resolution,
- 3) Sharing of the goal of a project to be implemented,
- 4) A relatedness that brings about value added through bringing together the resources and strengths of the parties involved,
- 5) The existence of understanding and agreement on a clearly-defined division of roles (or at the very least a clear sharing of awareness),
- 6) An awareness of horizontal relations (not chain-of-command or prime contractor/subcontractor relations),
- 7) A relationship that involves mutual learning,
- 8) A relationship that is not necessarily permanent (a relationship in which links can be reviewed once a joint project has been completed or goals achieved).



### Securing Funding in Japan

▼ Just over 60% of the organizations were applying to private organizations and just under 30% to government agencies for grants and subsidies.

▼ The most highly evaluated as an effective grant scheme was, among others, the MoFA Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects (N-Ren). The next most effective was considered to be the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Grassroots Technical Cooperation Projects (Proposal-type Technical Cooperation in particular). Of the 30 NGOs that responded, seven NGOs, 23%, were making use of the former and four NGOs, 13%, were making use of the latter. The remaining 19 NGOs' responses centered on private grants as the most effective, but cited 15 different agencies and grant schemes.

▼ The reason for the high evaluation of N-Ren was "the size of the grants". (The grant amount per project ranges from 10 million to 100 million yen. See the Keywords at the end of this section.)

▼ While the size of private grants is limited, being in the range of 500,000 yen to 3 million yen, the application and accounting report requirements, and the speed of decision-making and disbursement received high evaluations.

### Relationships with Donor Agencies in Japan

▼ 56% of the NGOs reported experiencing an excessive degree of burden, especially with N-Ren and the JICA Grassroots Technical Cooperation Project. Summarizing the content of the responses, the problems can be divided into two main groups. One originated from the characteristics of the officer in charge, and especially conspicuous was the difference in handling methods by different officers. For instance, 1) while officers were given good evaluations for flexible responses to changes in the contents of a project plan, 2) applications were sometimes rejected despite spending huge amounts of time rewriting the application several times according to suggestions given by the officer, 3) demands were made for studies that

were impossible to carry out under the circumstances in the local area, 4) the contents of instructions changed several times at the time of application, and so on. The second group of problems stemmed from the vexatious complexity of the required office work. For instance, 1) after completion of the project, it was necessary to attach and copy a list of expenses including those of several tens of yen and also documents proving that transactions had been completed, 2) the proposed budget was checked in great detail, resulting in a long period of time before funds were provided, and so on. A certain degree of accounting expertise is necessary to receive public funding, but we have doubts about the demands for excessively detailed office work.

▼ While the size of grants made by private organizations was smaller, the following positive evaluations were given: 1) The attachment of original receipts was not necessary for quarterly reports, making office work simpler (a foundation grant), 2) an opportunity was given to participate and learn from the exchanges of experiences among Japanese international NGOs engaged in developing countries (a foundation grant), 3) changes in the content of a project were handled flexibly (a company fund), 4) company executives visited the project in the field and it was possible to engage in a direct exchange of opinions (Company CSR Department), and 5) expert advice was given at the time of presenting an interim report at a company meeting (Company CSR Department).

These were the results from the viewpoint of the international NGOs, and we consider it necessary to research the views and reactions from the donor side as well.

### Implementation of an Additional Ad Hoc Questionnaire

During the process of the survey, we learned from the MoFA that there had been very few applicants for the "NGO Partnership Project", which had been initiated in FY2004 to encourage partnership with local NGOs in developing



countries under its funding scheme to Japanese international NGOs, N-Ren. The lack of response from Japanese NGOs was becoming a cause for concern in MoFA. We therefore decided immediately to conduct an additional questionnaire as an ad hoc survey to verify the hypothesis that “the cause of the small number of applications may be due to a lack of necessary knowledge and knowhow about procedures for concluding contracts with local NGOs”. Of the roughly 300 NGOs that were the target of the survey described above, we received valid responses from 22 organizations.

### Reporting the Outcomes of the Ad Hoc Survey to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Officers at a Meeting in Nagoya

The “FY2014 Second Meeting of the Partnership Promotion Committee” of the NGO-MoFA Regular Consultation Meeting was held in Nagoya on 10 December, 2014. In addition to the committee members, JICA officials and about 50 local NGO staff members in the Nagoya area also participated in the meeting. We reported to the meeting on the results of the additional ad hoc questionnaire on the “NGO Partnership Project” under the N-Ren scheme.

#### Overview of the Results of the Ad Hoc Survey

▼ All 22 organizations that responded knew of the “NGO Partnership Project”, but 18 organizations, 82% of the total, had never applied.

▼ While there were some organizations that implemented their projects independently from the N-Ren scheme and also others that made use of different project categories under the N-Ren scheme, the most common reason for not applying was the heavy burden of office work required for the application procedures and the general user-unfriendly of the scheme.

▼ “Budgetary” constraints had a great effect. It is difficult to move money between budgetary items, resulting in a

lack of flexibility toward project changes, and while a three-year project continuation period is permitted, since, in fact, the contracts are only for single fiscal years, the process of “preliminary screening → acceptance of application → prior screening (four or five exchanges of paperwork) → refund of unused budget → completion” has to be repeated each year.

#### Proposals for Improvement

Based on the outcomes of the survey, we proposed the following measures for improvement.

▼ MoFA, JICA and other donors are, in a broad sense, partners of international NGOs; they simply perform a different role. If we see this relationship in terms of a “team”, what we would like to do is form a relationship built on trust where each player makes use of his or her individuality to contribute creative play (activity) to reach the common goal (development target).

The director of the MoFA Non-Governmental Organizations Cooperation Division gave a forward-looking response by saying, “I believe that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also a partner, one of the members of a team,” “we would like to develop projects by working together with NGOs so that we can achieve shared goals.”

In the future, while maintaining the dialog between NGOs and the MoFA, and further promoting shared goals and the fostering of trusting relationships, we hope to work toward improvements in the environment that will enable Japanese international NGOs, local NGOs and local residents’ organizations overseas to engage in greater “creative play”.

### Dialog with Private Donor Organizations Based on Examples of Successful Partnerships

On January 22, 2015, we held a seminar in central Tokyo for the purpose of engaging in a dialog with private donors. The aim of the dialog was to examine the factors that lead to success by taking up successful cases of project



partnerships forged between international NGOs and private donor organizations.

A total of about 30 people, three NGOs along with representatives of the company, trade union and the charitable trust that acted as their partners participated in the seminar and gave reports on their different collaborations.

#### **[Case Report 1] Cooperation between the CSR Department of Ajinomoto Co., Inc. and Hunger Free World**

Reporters: Kei Kuriwaki, CSR Department of Ajinomoto Co., Inc. / Kiyotaka Watanabe, Hunger Free World (HFW)

Ajinomoto has been carrying out social contribution activities through the "Ajinomoto International Cooperation Network for Nutrition and Health (AIN)" program in order to contribute to the improvement of nutrition in developing countries, mainly in Southeast Asia. Ajinomoto considered that it is the responsibility of the company as a global corporation, not as a charitable activity, to work for the improvement of nutrition and health and decided to collaborate with NGOs. While there have been discussions within the company about whether or not such projects have a positive effect on company value, the reality is that this is very difficult to prove numerically. Ajinomoto, however, has taken on this project with the long term in view.

Financial support for a bee-keeping project in Bangladesh in 2005 was the spark for the relationship with HFW. The company then supported and collaborated with HFW for five years in two periods from 2010 to carry out a composite project of dietary education, school lunches, poultry farming, and so on in two Bangladeshi villages.

Ajinomoto executives and CSR Department staff visited the location of the project, and HFW was able to receive expert advice that they were able to put to use in their project when they gave an interim report at the company's AIN committee meeting. The company, with its specialist knowledge, came to know about the customs and culture in the villages, and the NGO played the role of

aiding the specialist knowledge to take root in the local communities. This division of roles led to a mutual win-win relationship.

#### **[Case Report 2] Cooperation between Aeon Retail Workers Union and Green Earth Network**

Reporters: Takeshi Suda, Aeon Retail Workers Union (ARWU) / Kunio Takami, Green Earth Network (GEN)

The meeting between the two organizations occurred when, on the morning of the Great Hanshi-Awaji Earthquake on January 17, 1995, the then General-Secretary of ARWU was so impressed by an article written about Kunio Takami of GEN that he decided to get in touch with him. The ARWU General-Secretary had judged that participating in GEN's reforestation activities in China would lead to the realization of "happiness" as defined by ARWU. Support began in 1995, with union members participating as tree-planting volunteers.

As well as helping to plant trees, through exchanges with the local people and visits to historical places, the ARWU members were able to gain a real sense of the current situation in China and the magnitude of the environmental problems there. The collaboration with GEN 1) helped the members to know more about the people and history of China and gave them experiences they could not have in Japan, 2) broadened their vision through exchanges with other trade unions, and 3) brought them into contact with the aspirations of the people of the past, becoming the trigger for reflection on their lives as Aeon staff, as well as providing them with an opportunity to review the aspirations for carrying forward social reform that were upheld at the time of the founding of the trade union. For its part, GEN reported that with the cooperation of ARWU and other trade unions, foundations, companies, and JICA, they had thus far planted 18,800,000 trees on 5,900 hectares of land.

#### **[Case Report 3] Cooperation between the charitable trust Asian Community**





### Trust (ACT) and WE21 Japan

Reporters: Michio Ito, Asian Community Trust (ACT) / Kyoko Niekawa, WE21 Japan

ACT is a charitable trust which enables a donor to establish a special fund of 10 million yen or more within the trust, and as of 2014 maintains more than 20 funds for the support of local NGOs and other organizations in Asia. One of these is the Asian People's Partnership Support Fund which supports exchanges and collaborative activities between Japanese and people of other Asian countries where Japan caused great suffering during the Second World War, and assists both parties in growing and developing through sharing of views and experiences.

WE21 Japan is an NGO that gains its activity funds from sales at its recycling shops, and carries out exchanges with local residents in northern Philippines who are facing mining developments in the hope that disasters such as that at the Ashio Copper Mine in Japan do not occur there. WE21 Japan received grants for three years from 2010 from ACT's Asian People's Partnership Support Fund to carry out an exchange project with the indigenous peoples who live in the area with the aim of helping them to raise awareness of their rights and to share with them the techniques for organic farming and reforestation. During that time, ACT secretariat staff and the fund donor visited the area and held friendly exchanges with the local residents. ACT and WE21 were able to share values and an awareness of the issues and were both delighted that they had formed a strong sense of camaraderie.

### Sharing the Outcomes of the Questionnaire with NGO Staff and Discussions on Future Activities

We held a meeting titled "Sharing the Questionnaire Survey Results and Activities for Future Issues", which was attended by ten NGO staff members from eight of the organizations that had responded to the questionnaire. Comments at the

meeting focused on the two issues of the stance of Japanese international NGOs toward partnership, and the stance toward government funding. The main views of the participants are given below.

#### The Stance of Japanese International NGOs toward Partnership

Compared to western NGOs, Japanese NGOs are not yet used to forming partnerships, and there is the impression that they have not yet achieved good results. One of the trends in international cooperation is that the era when NGOs would go directly into the field without working through a local partner has already ended, and Western NGOs have the awareness that it is necessary to foster local partners. NGOs even educate local government employees. I think this is a very interesting effort, but unfortunately, considering the fact that there are only ten participants in today's meeting, I think there are very few international NGOs in Japan that are ready to focus on this issue.

#### Government Funding

▼ Western donor agencies provide funding in order to urge self-reliance by the partner, but this way of thinking is not only lacking in Japan, continuation of operations is made difficult due to the cutting off of working funds after projects are completed. The result of this is great strain on the local NGOs and resident organizations in field.

▼ Since government funding may imply the notion that it is being provided in accordance with the interests of Japan, one wonders whether or not these kinds of funds are actually welcomed by local residents and NGOs. We really need to make the use of public funds more responsive to local needs and NGO conditions so that they can maximize the effects in the field.

▼ Government funding is highly evaluated for its large sums of money, but I get a strong feeling from the questionnaire results about the hardship that NGOs are experiencing with the complicated application procedures. This is causing Japanese NGOs to lose their positive



qualities as “NGOs”.

▼ International NGOs based in local towns in Japan have great diversity and are carrying out wonderful activities that are firmly rooted in their locality. It is very unfortunate that these NGOs have very little opportunity to make their voices heard by the government and that there are no user-friendly schemes for them.

▼ It is very difficult to obtain public funding for abstract activities such as organizational building, empowerment and human rights. Projects that lead directly to positive economic effects tend to take priority. It is unfortunate that projects that take some time, such as helping people to become aware of their rights, are often not accepted.

▼ We need to develop funds that allow us to realize the strong points of Japanese NGOs, such as mobility, attention to detail, flexibility and empathy.

▼ It is necessary to make more appeals to Diet members, who are the representatives of the people.

▼ Government funding is first of all provided by the people who pay taxes. There is too much of an imbalance in power in the relationship between NGOs and the government. This situation will

not change unless we bring to the forefront the awareness that NGO workers are taxpayers as well as being users of funds. In that sense, the word “citizens” should be added above the government in the partnership concept diagram that was shown at the beginning of the meeting. (This proposal was accepted and Figure 1 “Partnership Concept Diagram” was amended.)

## Outlook for the Future

The Partnership Group learned a lot from the activities of this project. Firstly, more opportunities should be found to consider the significance of partnership among the officers and staff of international NGOs. Secondly, efforts should be made to increase the opportunities for dialog with and to engage in team-building involving both the Japanese government and private donor organizations.

By further analyzing the results of the questionnaire, we are determined to make efforts toward improvement and resolution of the relevant issues in order to act as bridges of creative partnership building between our Asian neighbors and Japanese society.





# KEYWORDS

We reconfirmed anew the importance of building creative partnerships across national boundaries through the questionnaire survey and our dialog with the officers and staff of NGOs and donor organizations.

Below we have summarized the important keywords for “building creative partnerships”.

## INTERNATIONAL NGO

International NGOs may be regarded as citizens’ organizations that are engaged in international cooperation. It is said that there are 400 to 500, or even more, such organizations in Japan. While they are far smaller in financial and organizational scale than government organizations, the characteristics of their activities are that they are very mobile and flexible, they are able to carry out very detailed activities and form human and trusting relationships with people in developing countries. In the future, Japanese international NGOs will play an important role in moving toward the new symbiotic society and building creative partnerships across national boundaries.

## GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR JAPANESE NGO PROJECTS (USUALLY KNOWN AS N-REN)

This is the funding scheme under which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) provides government funds for economic and social development projects undertaken by Japanese NGOs in developing countries and regions. Since the primary source of the funding is taxes, strict conditions are placed on its use. Examples are preparation of the large amount of documents and materials, the long screening process and certain accounting skills required for application for the funding. The conditions given are often different from the stance of NGOs, which place importance on spontaneity, mobility and flexibility. As a result, there are negative impacts on NGO activities and strain is felt in the projects in the field. If the taxes are being paid by us, the citizens, then there is a need to engage in further dialog with the MoFA to request improvements in N-Ren with the participation of Diet members, who are the lawmakers.

## TEAM-BUILDING

The term “partnership” makes us think of the relationship between Japanese NGOs, on the one hand, and local NGOs and residents’ organizations on the other, but in fact, it is the donors that have an enormous impact on the relationship between the two sides, and it is not possible to consider this issue without including the donors. For Japanese NGOs, to develop activities with local NGOs and residents’ organizations that will lead to social impacts, it is crucial that due attention is given to how the donors, who are situated in the location farthest from the field, will share the goals of the project and foster trusting relations. This is exactly what we mean by team-building.



## SYMPOSIUM

# JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL NGOS WORKING TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC SOCIETY IN ASIA – OUR EXPERIENCES AND APPEALS –

A symposium titled “Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –”, was held on Friday, February 6, 2015 at the Bellesalle Iidabashi, Iidabashi, Tokyo. Highly intense and enlightening discussions were held to summarize the year’s activities and to finalize the “Declaration of the NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia”.

### Group meetings emphasizing dialog

Firstly, Michio Ito, representing the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia, the organizer of the symposium, expressed his gratitude to the Toyota Foundation for its grant supporting this project.

Mr. Ito referred to the three aims of the project as follows: 1) To promote understanding in society about the role of Japanese NGOs engaged in international cooperation and the significance of their activities, and thus to contribute to the expansion of support for international NGOs; 2) to learn and rethink about cooperative relationships between the people of Japan and other Asian countries; and 3) to engage in self-reflection and learn about our role and position in society through dialog with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Mr. Ito also said that he was looking forward to positive discussions and comments from the participants on the draft “Declaration of the NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia”, which was scheduled to be adopted by the Council.

After hearing reports and recommendations on the three specific themes of “Water”, “Community Development” and “Partnership”, the participants took part in group discussions, following which a plenary session for exchanges of views was held. A wide range of people, not only NGO-related persons but also high school students, company staff and members of the



general public were among the 56 participants. Sufficient time was given over to small group discussions in order to emphasize opportunities for dialog.

In the reports and recommendations on each of the three themes, the stage was taken by the representative of the first year students of Sendai Nika High School in Miyagi Prefecture, who had attended a lecture by the Water Group members and actually visited the Mekong River in Thailand. Mr. Sorato Hayasaka gave his impressions of the visit by saying, “I had some vague knowledge about the water problem in Southeast Asia, but I did not know about the arsenic contamination and deforestation. I was also not aware that the water problem in Asia was linked to our lifestyle in Japan.” Ms. Mao Uehara, explaining that she had come to notice that there were differences in the way people viewed water, said, “In Japan we have the problems of floods and water pollution and I thought that the situation was the same in Asia, but it wasn’t so. I learned that in the highlands of Thailand, people are having to deal with the problem of arsenic as if it were just a normal day-to-day problem.”

### Group Discussions

After a break, the participants broke up into groups to hold deeper and more detailed discussions. Desks were moved to form a square or chairs were arranged in a





circle, after which quiet but intense discussions took place. We introduce some of these here.

In the Water Group there was some debate on whether water should be understood as potable water or from a wider viewpoint. We are apt to see water as a substance or as potable water and believe that the problems of water can be solved by technology, but the discussion turned to comprehending water in a context which includes the relatedness between people in situations that involve water.

The Sendai Nika High School students shared their experiences in Thailand with the other participants, mentioning that the people in rural Thailand use both tap water and rain water, though in different ways, and are well aware of the water sources. The students had also noticed that the people maintain an attitude of restraint toward the fact that water can be obtained on a daily basis. On the other hand, Japanese people use water as if it were taken for granted, and their awareness about where water comes from is poor. One opinion was that the desire for water cleanliness might

be more than what was really necessary.

The Community Development Group reconfirmed the importance of "being a part of the affected", and keywords such as "a trusting relationship" and "considering community development from a perspective of future centuries" came up during the discussion on how to interact with communities and what points one needs to be careful about.

It was also pointed out that if one puts oneself too much into the shoes of the affected, the issue of becoming a do-gooder or forcing one's views onto other people might arise. In response, the comment was given that, for example, when talking to an AIDS/HIV patient, even if one is not an AIDS/HIV patient there might be the necessity for treating the problem as if it were one's own problem by saying "if it was me and if you were someone in my family..." One idea that was shared with the participants was that since people who are involved in communities are also in the same way "living in a community", but in a different place, constantly thinking about what one should do in one's own

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## SYMPOSIUM

Japanese International NGOs Working  
Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia  
– Our Experiences and Appeals –  
Date: Friday, February 6, 2015  
Venue: Bellesalle Iidabashi (Tokyo)



## PROGRAM

- Opening Remarks and Outline Explanation
  - Michio Ito (Asia Community Center 21, Representative of the Council Steering Committee)
- Reports and Recommendations from the Three Groups
  - Water: What Water Can Teach Us about the Future of Asia and Japan
    - Tamiko Ishiyama (Asia Arsenic Network)\*
  - Community Development: Toward Vibrant Local Communities Established through Collaboration and Mutual Learning
    - Hironori Shimoda (Japan International Volunteer Center)
  - Partnership: Creative Partnership Building across National Boundaries
    - Etsuko Nemoto (Bridge Asia Japan)\*
- Break
- Group Discussion on the Three Themes
- Plenary Session
  - Facilitator: Masashi Imase (Nara Machizukuri Center)\*
  - Panelists: Toshiyuki Doi (Mekong Watch)\*
  - Makoto Nagahata (i-i-network)\*
  - Etsuko Nemoto (Bridge Asia Japan)\*
- Closing Remarks
  - Makoto Nagahata (i-i-network)\*
- \* Member of the Council Steering Committee



community would lead to a way of interacting with the people in the community where activities are taking place.

In the Partnership Group, a discussion was held involving personnel of grant-making foundations, business corporations, NGOs, students and others. Many complaints were heard from the NGO side, such as the fact that there is insufficient support for non-tangible activities such as capacity building, and that grant applications have various kinds of restrictions. Thus, once granted, NGOs have great hardship in rendering compatibility between grant conditions and project implementation in the field. In response, the view was given that, with regard to the nature of the partnership, it may be very important for the supporting side and the supported side to engage in a process where they come together to have frank and intensive discussions to share the goals to be achieved.

In addition, there was a comment that the draft of the joint declaration regarding Partnership was biased toward funding issues, and that there should be some mention of learning and constructive relationships with the donor side.

## Learning Together into the Future

At the final plenary session, looking back on the discussions the following comments were given by the participants.

▼ From the standpoint of a company, I think that funds are important for whatever one wants to do. The economist Thomas Piketty (Professor of Economics at the Paris School of Economics and author of the world-famous book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*) has also talked about the redistribution of capital. I believe that the time has now come to talk about these things.

▼ Listening to the statements of the young people in the Water Group, I renewed my awareness of the notion that it is important to "think in contexts".

▼ After visiting Thailand and then taking another look at

Japan, since I now feel things that I was not able to see previously, I think I would like to think again about Japan. As from the viewpoint of adults we are the people who must shoulder the responsibilities of the next generation, I think I would like to share my experiences with students and teachers in the school.

▼ I am really happy with the statement from the high school students that they "would like to think again about Japan." The students said that comprehending water not as a substance but as a context was hard to grasp, but listening to their statements and impressions, I think they have reached a good understanding of it.

In concordance with this, the organizers also gave the following comment.

▼ There is now a movement in society to review the overemphasis on safety, convenience and efficiency, but I think language should also be reviewed to think in terms of "slow language" rather than "fast language". In the same way as local production for local consumption of food, there is also a necessity for the reinstatement of local production for local consumption of language, the language that is used in local contexts. I think it will become ever more important to visit the field and carry out sympathetic and engaged activities with the people in the local community.

▼ I have returned from field activities for an international NGO and have been working with people in Japan for some time. In this event, talking with NGO staff, I have realized for the first time in a long while that even though the location may be different, looking from the viewpoint of resolving local issues, there are close similarities in the things that people worry and think about, and in the methods of dealing with these.

▼ In the future, I think human resource development is important. I would like to tell people about the wisdom that Japan has. I have renewed my awareness that at that time, as everyone here has said, it will be necessary to communicate with people in a way that is appropriate for the local area.

In his closing remarks, Makoto Nagahata of the Council Steering Committee thanked everyone for being able to hold discussions based on the learning of each of the participants, and expressed his wish to maintain a dialog with the people whom the Council members had had the opportunity to meet with during the day's event and to walk forward together toward the future.





## **“DECLARATION OF THE NGOS WORKING TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC SOCIETY IN ASIA”**

The NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia is a consortium formed for the limit of one year (from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015) for the purpose of the member NGOs to develop prospects for new relationships with the people of other countries and regions of Asia.

Aiming for a better Asian future, we, the Council member NGOs, have for many years built up face-to-face relationships in Asia and have continued to work together on cooperative activities to resolve shared issues. However, in Asian countries and regions, which include Japan, issues such as poverty, widening economic disparities, environmental destruction, and community disintegration are deepening in the midst of economic growth. The causes of these issues are also becoming ever more complex as globalization advances, while the actors involved in the resolution of these issues become ever more diverse.

We therefore wish hereby to reemphasize the following.

We believe that in order to form a true vision of the future of Asia, it is crucial that the local residents of each country and region themselves realize that they are the main actors and begin to resolve issues themselves for the development of their own communities.

Further, we believe that while having mutual respect for each others' positions, learning together, and sharing the experiences and knowledge that we have cultivated in Asia, building partnership relations of mutual cooperation, mutual support and walking forward together will lead to the creation of a new Asia.



Based on the above, we hereby put forward concrete recommendations for fundamental principles and future actions in the three areas of Water, Community Development and Partnership.

### **Make Use of the Learning Gained from Activities on the Water Issue to Form Cooperative Relationships for the Future of Asia and Japan**

- Comprehend the water issue, which is becoming increasingly aggravated due to the pursuit of profits and convenience, as a series of interconnected challenges that includes forest reduction in water source areas, the degradation of rivers that foster life, and the erosion of lifestyles that are in harmony with nature.
- Re-evaluate the strength of rural communities in Japan, where community members have made use of traditional bonds between people to manage local forests and rivers, and have succeeded in securing water resources through putting such bonds to use even when technology such as the domestic water supply has been introduced.
- In order to resolve the Asian, including the Japanese, water issue, while aiding the development of the bonds between people in the community, establish appropriate technology that takes advantage of local resources, and engage in mutual learning regarding the experiences and wisdom thus gained.

### **Local Communities Revitalized through Collaboration and Mutual Learning**

- The basis is that the affected people themselves and the people around them should grasp the issues in their communities as their own issues and begin to take action toward their resolution. For that purpose, it is vital to build up multilayered relations that drive collaboration among diverse stakeholders.
- It is expected of us that, while forming trusting relationships with people in the communities, we will become a partner who will act together with



the people to, for example, “explore local resources” and “act as a bridge between the outside and the local community”. Further, while being aware of one’s own position as “being a part of the affected”, it is important to have a vision from which discussion and deliberation with the people of the community can be carried out not only on immediate issues but also with a perspective of future centuries in mind.

● There are a large number of common issues faced by people engaged in community development both in Japan and overseas, and there are many situations in which experience in one can be put to use in the other. It is therefore necessary to create opportunities that enable exchanges of experiences and mutual learning among the people of local communities, transcending the boundaries across countries in Asia.

#### **Building Creative Partnerships across National Boundaries**

● As NGOs that carry out international cooperation in countries with differing cultural, historical and social backgrounds, we believe that it is crucial to form partnership relations of mutual learning in which the partner’s position, endogeneity and

autonomy are respected to the maximum degree, the problem awareness (values) toward the development issues to be resolved is shared, projects to be implemented have shared goals, and each partner’s strong points are brought together in the process of planning and implementation of projects.

● From a long-term perspective, we are convinced that development cooperation based on these partnership relations will lead on to self-reliance and sustainable development of the local NGOs and residents of local communities, and that this will lead to confidence in Japanese international NGOs and the people and organizations that support our NGO activities.

● In order to realize the partnership relations mentioned above, we wish to build up our partnership relations with diverse supporters and supporting organizations within Japan. For this purpose, we shall engage in further dialog and mutual learning with citizens, people in government aid agencies, private foundations, companies, trade unions, education and research institutes and so on, and thus will build creative partnerships with the people and related organizations in Asia.

March 2015

NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia (in Japanese alphabetical order)

i-i-network (Research and Action for Community Governance)

Asia Community Center 21

Asia Arsenic Network

FoE Japan

OISCA (The Organization for Industrial and Cultural Advancement)

SHARE (Services for the Health in Asian & African Regions)

Shapla Neer—Citizens’ Committee in Japan for Overseas Support


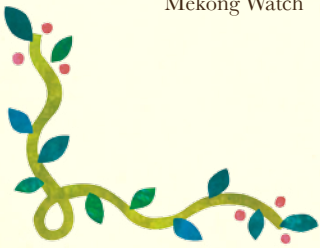
Nara Machizukuri Center

Japan International Volunteer Center

Bridge Asia Japan

Green Earth Network (GEN)

Mekong Watch





## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### – TOWARDS FURTHER SYMBIOSIS IN ASIA –

2014 marked the 60th anniversary of the inception of Japan's official development assistance (ODA). With formal affiliation to the Colombo Plan (i) in 1954, Japan initiated grant financial assistance in the form of post-war reparations as the first ODA. Following that, the era of high economic growth began, and with the rise in living standards support activities for other Asian countries by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also began to take shape. Among the organizations participating in this Council, OISCA was formed in 1961 and Shapla Neer was established in 1972. International cooperation activities for the people of Asia by Japanese citizens already has a long history, and I think you can get a strong sense of the fact that the organizations participating in this Council are involved in a broad range of activity areas.

As globalization advances, the perceived distance between Japan and other Asian countries has shrunk to a degree unimaginable in the past. There are, of course, the trade and investment relations, but the movement of people has also seen great changes, with the number of Asian tourists visiting Japan exceeding ten million in 2014, accounting for three-quarters of all people visiting Japan. (ii) Moreover, youth culture originating in Japan has caught the imagination of Asian youth with, for instance, 80 percent of all animations watched in Thailand and 70 percent of manga books sold in Indonesia being of Japanese origin. (iii) Furthermore, in shops in many Asian cities, we can see large numbers of Japanese game software packages, including pirated software, lined up on the shelves.

While the movement of people and information becomes increasingly dynamic, year by year the problems existing in Asian societies become more similar to those of Japan. In 2015, the proportion of people of working age (age 15 to 64) in the population in Asia as a whole will begin to decline, and it is forecast that by

2035 the whole of Asia will usher in the era of the ageing society, where those of age 65 and above will account for 14 percent or more of the population. (iv) Urbanization is advancing in all Asian countries, and as bonds with the people in the local communities become more tenuous, and the modernization of lifestyles and the trend toward nuclear families strengthen, the plight of youth vexed by the pressure of living in an education-obsessed society is no longer a problem seen in Japan alone. As the population becomes more concentrated in cities, the issues of solid waste management and urban transport become more serious, and all countries come to harbor the common issues of widening urban-rural disparities and poverty gaps.

As we strengthen the links between Japan and Asian societies, and common issues come to be harbored by each country, the question arises of how we should push forward Japanese NGO cooperation in Asia with its more than 50-year history. During our year of activities as the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia, we have looked back on our activities, shared experiences with each other, and deliberated on the directions to take in the future. This notion is condensed into several terms such as "affected persons as main actors", "mutual learning" and "partnership", as they appear in the "Declaration of the NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia". We very much hope that you will also join us in sharing these ideas, and we will be extremely happy if you will walk together with us as our companions toward a greater symbiosis in Asia.

Makoto Nagahata

Member of the Steering Committee of the NGO  
Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia

(i) The official name of the Colombo Plan is The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific.

(ii) Statistics published by the Japan National Tourist Organization

(iii) Asia trend map: <http://www.asiatrendmap.jp/>

(iv) Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry 2010 White Paper on International Economy and Trade

# REPORT TO THE TOYOTA FOUNDATION ON GRANT ACTIVITIES

The NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia has implemented activities for one year with the purpose of discussing how Japanese international NGOs have engaged in dialog with and have collaborated with the people and societies in Asia, through what kinds of themes, as well as with the purpose of sharing the results of the discussion widely with the people in Japan.

The Steering Committee members, elected from among the 12 participating organizations, have performed the central role in discussing and determining the principles and contents of the Council's activities. We decided on three themes (water, partnership and community development) that we wished to make an appeal to and share with society, the member organizations then forming three groups to push forward the activities. An overall symposium was held to share and make an appeal for the Council's activities, and all of the year's activities were recorded.

The symposium was not limited to reports on the activities associated with the three themes, but consisted of a program that emphasized dialog with the participants and learning from each other. As a result, opinions such as "I gained the new viewpoint of making use of what has been learned in overseas support inside Japan as well", and "I was able to learn about the kind of relation building that is required for international cooperation" were given. The "Declaration of the NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia" was later

adopted based on the opinions given on the day of the symposium.

With regards to the recording of activities, we spent much time in considering methods of getting our message across to people other than those that already have some connection with Japanese international NGOs, for example, those of the next generation who we hope will take an interest in the ways that Asia and Japan can interact with each other at the level of ordinary citizens and people who do not usually have any connection with international cooperation or international exchange. As a result, we were able to enlist the assistance of two specialists, the visual contents producer Teizo Taniguchi and the NPO/NGO coordinator Mariko Harada, to produce a video and a booklet summarizing the contents of the activities carried out under the three themes. By publishing these on the Council's website, the outcomes of the project will be freely available for browsing and viewing by interested individuals at anytime and completely free of charge. Furthermore, for positive promotion of information about the activities of the Council, we have also planned to distribute the booklet as a free ebook on ebook websites.

The international NGO network organization, the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC) was commissioned to carry out the duties of secretariat to ensure support for smooth activities by the Council.

Steering Committee of the NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia

Tamiko Ishiyama, Asia Arsenic Network

Michio Ito, Asia Community Center 21

Masashi Imase, Nara Machizukuri Center

Toshio Shirahata, Shapla Neer—Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support (until August 2014)

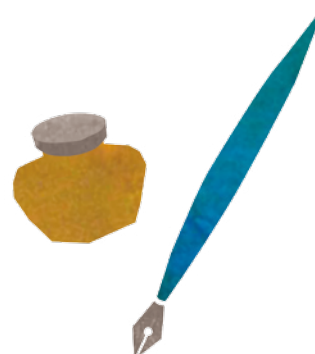
Toshiyuki Doi, Mekong Watch

Makoto Nagahata, i-i-network

Etsuko Nemoto, Bridge Asia Japan

NGO Council on the Prospects for the Future of Asia, Secretariat

Sawako Matsuo, Ayumu Noguchi (Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation)





# RECORD OF ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE NGO COUNCIL ON THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF ASIA

## 2014

April 11	First Steering Committee meeting held
May 21	Second Steering Committee meeting held
June 13	Third Steering Committee meeting held
July 16	Fourth Steering Committee meeting held
August 20	Fifth Steering Committee meeting held
September 9	Water Group: Lecture meeting held at Nika High School, Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture
September 26	Sixth Steering Committee meeting held
October	Partnership Group: Implementation of questionnaire survey on partnership
October 27	Seventh Steering Committee meeting held
October 31	Water Group Round Table Discussion: What Water Can Teach Us about the Future of Asia and Japan – Nature, Technology, Community –
November 14	Eighth Steering Committee meeting held
December 10	Partnership Group: Report to the Partnership Promotion Committee of the NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regular Consultation Meeting (Nagoya)
December 18	Ninth Steering Committee meeting held

## 2015

January 9	Tenth Steering Committee meeting held
January 22	Partnership Group Seminar: Dialog with Private Donor Organizations Based on Examples of Successful Partnerships. Meeting on the Outcomes of the Questionnaire Survey on Partnership
January 31	Community Development Group Workshop: 50 Ways to Make the Most of What We Learn from Local Communities – Linking Community Development in Japan and Overseas
February 2	Eleventh Steering Committee meeting held
February 6	Symposium: Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –
February 10	Twelfth Steering Committee meeting held
March 23	Thirteenth Steering Committee meeting held
March 31	Publication of the booklet “Japanese International NGOs Working Towards a Symbiotic Society in Asia – Our Experiences and Appeals –” Establishment of exclusive website for publication of the outcomes of the activities of this Council: <a href="http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/">http://www.janic.org/asiamirai/</a>



## JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL NGOS WORKING TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC SOCIETY IN ASIA – OUR EXPERIENCES AND APPEALS –

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