

# AAINews

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## Collaboration with local NGOs – AAI's attempts in Zimbabwe

This was my first visit to Zimbabwe in the last three years. Although Zimbabwe was said to be relatively rich and well developed for an African nation, as seen in recent media reports, the country is now suffering from an almost shattered economy with a 50% unemployment rate, and inflation running at over 60%. People's anger has exploded into strikes and street demonstrations, pushing the country into the worst economic crisis since its independence in 1980. The drastic drop in the international price of tobacco, which is Zimbabwe's primary export commodity (with approx. 30% share of the total export earnings), and the freeze of financial aid by donors like the IMF following Zimbabwe's military intervention in the civil war in Congo, led the country into serious financial difficulties and resulted in a shortage of foreign currency. Moreover, since early 2000 there have been a number of incidents of unlawful occupation of large farms owned by white farmers, and this has brought about severe damage to production and shipping of agricultural products including tobacco, dealing an additional blow to the country's economy. The general election held in June 2000 in this economic situation ended the era of single party rule which had lasted some 20 years since independence. A presidential election is scheduled in 2002, and more political turbulence is being expected...

As reported in the previous issues of AAI News, AAI has been trying to carry out projects in collaboration with local NGOs engaged in grassroots participatory activities, in order to realise more effective aid activities centred around local society and targeted at local people. As part of such efforts, in 1997 AAI started survey in Zimbabwe to identify some candidate NGOs for such collaboration and partnership. One of the identified NGOs, the Zvishavane Water Project (ZWP), is working on various community-based water-use-related projects in the semi-arid region in southern Zimbabwe, including the construction of small- and medium-size dams/reservoirs, support for vegetable cultivation by creating "Group Gardens", collecting and utilizing rain water (water harvesting), soil and water conservation etc. The purpose of my visit this time was to discuss a new project and prepare a proposal to apply for JICA's community empowerment programme with ZWP as AAI's partner local NGO.

The title of the project proposal is "Mobile Workshop". There is no need to stress the importance of training workshops for human resource development, but the conventional modus operandi of training at training centres has some problems like the cost of participants' transportation, accommodation and food, and inaccessibility for those living faraway from the training centre. To overcome such problems, what we proposed this time was a training centre on the move. Training staff would travel from village to village with a pick-up truck loaded with the necessary equipment, introducing new technologies and information to villages through the medium of AV systems like video, or conducting actual field work for example repairing farming tools or making new ones. In this way it is expected to spread appropriate technologies and techniques. The mobile training centre has the characteristics of a "village smith", repairing farming equipment or manufacturing new ones as noted above. Therefore we are hoping to create opportunities for the village youth to have some vocational training as well. The "Mobile Workshop" and NGO feature some common characteristics (sales points) – namely flexibility and mobility. We look forward to seeing what sort of synergy effects this combination would bring about.

(By Koto in Zimbabwe, Nov. 2001)



Watering vegetables in group garden



Group meeting in a primary school classroom