JICA's Achievements in the Nature Conservation Sector

As of February 2008, the implementation of JICA activities in the nature conservation sector has spread globally, providing support for sustainable use of natural resources by local residents, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable forest management.

Nature Conservation and Human Security

The concept of human security centers on the individual. Achievement of the human security aims at the creation of societies within which people can enjoy peaceful and productive lives. Central to this aim is the protection of both individuals and local communities, coupled with reinforcing of the capabilities needed to bring about human security. In the "JICA Reform Plan, Phase I," which JICA announced in 2004, human security is cited as one of the three main pillars of JICA.

Natural resources provide a variety of goods and services that contribute to the lives of local residents. The sustainable use of these resources is highly critical to protect the people's lives. For this reason, in the nature conservation sector, the sustainable use of natural resources is positioned as an element that is indispensable to achieving human security, while supporting the people and local societies.

For example in Laos, particularly in the northern provinces, forests have been excessively cleared due to the increased population, thus inducing shifting cultivation, illegal logging, and the change of land use. This deforestation is causing problems with soil degradation and water scarcity during the dry season, threatening the people depending on the forest for their daily life. In response to this situation, JICA supports recommended production activities to reduce the people's dependency on shifting cultivation that enables poverty reduction and promoting the sustainable livelihoods for the local residents through sustainable use of natural resources.

Achieving Harmony Between Human Activities and the Environment

- JICA's Approach to the Global Environment: Nature Conservation Sector -

Utilization of the wide variety of natural resource blessings, including forests, lakes, marshes and the ocean, has played a significant role in the development of human societies. In recent years, however, there has been a rapid deterioration in the quality of these resources due to overuse and wastefulness. This situation threatens the foundations of existence for future generations. Such deterioration, combined with poverty and starvation, could lead to serious social problems, including regional conflicts. So at this present moment, there is an urgent and increasing need to develop more appropriate interaction between human beings and nature, with the end in view that human society will live in harmony with the environment.

JICA recognizes nature conservation as an important area of international cooperation and aims to "Achieve Harmony Between Nature and Human Activities." Specifically, JICA emphasizes three conservation goals: Sustainable Use of Natural Resources by Local Residents, Biodiversity Conservation, and Sustainable Forest Management. Within the context of these goals, JICA provides support that enables developing countries to develop mechanisms for conserving their natural environments by themselves. This assistance is pursued by combining policy and institutional improvement, organizational strengthening, establishment of reliable survey and monitoring systems, appropriate technological development, supporting sustainable livelihoods, and raising environmental awareness.
JICA’s Approach

Achieving Harmony Between Nature and Human Activities

In all countries, whether developed or developing, it is crucially important for the international community to work towards establishing harmony between human activities and natural resources. For this reason, JICA recognizes natural resource conservation as an important area in international cooperation and extends support with the aim of achieving harmony between nature and human activities. JICA emphasizes the following three perspectives that are central to bring about this harmony: Based on such perspectives, JICA provides cooperation that emphasizes three goals: 1. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources by Local Residents, 2. Biodiversity Conservation, and 3. Sustainable Forest Management.

Three Major Areas in the Strategic Approach to Nature Conservation

JICA provides cooperation in the following three major areas in its strategic approach to nature conservation.

1. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources by Local Residents

In developing countries, many people use natural resources (water, soil, trees and fruit, herbs, plants and animals, fish and shellfish, etc.) in their daily lives. However, the rapid increase of population has resulted in overuse that exceeds nature’s ability to restore itself; thus degrading resources that are the very basis for people’s livelihoods. To conserve natural resources and protect people’s lives, sustainable use is necessary. Local residents need to work independently to maintain and restore the natural environment. For this purpose, JICA provides support for sustainable livelihood activities for local communities, natural restoration and conservation activities, and capacity development.

2. Biodiversity Conservation

Our activities, as human beings, are directly and indirectly supported by diverse biological resources from nature. The sustainable use of biological resources is necessary to ensure the stability of human life; and for this reason it is important to protect the natural resources rich in biodiversity. However, the institutional systems in many developing countries are inadequate for conserving their own rich biodiversity. In response to this problem, JICA provides support for the maintenance of data on the biodiversity, for the effective management of protected areas and national parks, and for environmental education.

3. Sustainable Forest Management

Forests are valuable not only to supply commodities but also to fulfill a variety of functions in terms of watershed protection and soil conservation. Forests absorb and fixate carbon dioxide, thus mitigating global warming. To maintain and restore these functions, appropriate maintenance and management of existing forests is needed. Concurrently, it is important to reestablish degraded forests. JICA provides assistance in the conduct of forest monitoring surveys, technological developments for afforestation, and raising awareness of the importance of forests. In recent years, JICA has also provided support for system establishment and capacity building to enable Afforestation and Reforestation Clean Development Mechanism (AR-CDM) projects to be implemented in developing countries to counteract global warming.

Addressing Various Challenges in the Field

Kenya

Intensified Social Forestry Project in Semi-Arid Areas

March 2009 - Feb. 2009

80% of Kenya’s land is semi-arid or arid, and less than 5% of the land is forested. As a result, people depend on firewood and charcoal. With rapid population growth in recent years, the demand for firewood and charcoal has increased. Furthermore, forests have been excessively cleared for conversion into farmland, thus leading to degradation of the natural environment. To help address these problems, JICA is providing assistance in the target area districts of Kiminjuk, Limuru and Tharaka, where the land is semi-arid and there are many poor people. In these areas, JICA is striving to encourage local community residents to plant trees on their own farmland, specifically adopting the Farmer Field School (FFS) programme for extension. This enables farmers to proactively learn about agriculture and forestry on nearby farmland. The project promotes FFS curricula and manuals, provides support to improve the facilitation capacity of state forest extension workers and promotes FFS implementation. The farmers who have participated in FFS are applying the technology they have learned on their own farmland. They are planting forests and improving agriculture.

Malaysia

Bornean Biodiversity and Ecosystems Conservation in Sabah, Phase 2


Borneo is one of the world’s most highly biodiverse areas. However, biodiversity has substantially decreased as large areas of natural forests have been demed to make way for plantation development. Along with the rapid disappearance of numerous species, the lives of people who depend on the natural forests have been adversely affected. For comprehensive conservation of the natural environment, Japan launched the Bornean Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation Programme. The main purpose of the programme is to transfer technology for conserving biodiversity and ecosystems. During the first five years (2002-2007) the programme initiated several activities in many fields, including research and education, farm management, wildlife habitat management, and environmental education. Phase 2 of the programme began in October 2007 with cooperation focusing primarily on reinforcing support for Sabah State government administrative systems and policies and building the positive technical results achieved thus far. Specifically, the programme provides technical advice and assistance on establishment of the Sabah State Biodiversity Center. Furthermore, the programme will support efforts by Sabah State to put in place a strong institutional system for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, while concurrently spreading Sabah State’s nature conservation technology to other areas through training.

Argentina

Project of Enhancement for Application of Afforestation and Reforestation CDM (AR/CDM)


Argentina is a large country comprising around 278 million ha (about 7.3 times the size of Japan). Approximately 20 million ha consists of land suitable for growing forests. But currently, trees are not being planted on these lands. Afforestation/Reforestation Clean Development Mechanism (AR/CDM) projects implemented in these lands would make a positive contribution to counteract global warming, conserving the natural environment and improving the livelihood of local residents. JICA is assisting the Government of Argentina in considering the possibilities for AR/CDM projects in suitable areas. This project aims to enhance the support capability and establish the networks necessary for formulation and implementation of AR/CDM projects. Initially, this objective will be pursued through implementation of a pilot project. Ultimately, the purpose of such cooperation is to have many AR/CDM projects established in Argentina in the future.

For information on other projects, see http://project.jica.go.jp/subject/nature/13_1.html