

Abstract

This research aims to study the Japan's Official Development Assistance to Thailand by taking up the Reforestation and Extension Project in the Northeast of Thailand (REX) as a case study. This project is chosen because it is an environmental project which is given priority by both Thai and Japanese governments. From Thai side, the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) of Thailand No. 4 contained the guideline for the utilization of national forest resource, and the national forest policy was firstly indicated in the NESDP No. 5. From Japan's standpoint, the ODA Charter 1992 emphasized on the protection of environment and preservation of natural resources.

The study tried to investigate whether the REX project was successful in achieving the goal of improving people's standard of living after plant species were distributed to people in Nakornratchasima province during 1995-1996. The study was based on data from both documents and interview with selected samples of 71 local residents in Nounesung, Chokchai, Kornburi, Banluerm and Sikuew Districts of Nakornratchasima Province. The study applied the statistics percentage, mean, median, mode and standard deviation to process data, and the National Interest Theory was the framework for analysis.

It was found out from the study that the outcome of the chosen REX project could not reflect the achievement of the goals set up by both Thai and Japanese governments. The result of the study showed that most of households still could not gain any benefit from the plants. And although some households could get some money from the plantation, that earning was less amount than that they could get before they joined the project. Moreover, the study also displayed that some ecological problems occurred due to the Eucalyptus plantation. The major problem which was found out from the study was the inefficiency management done by the Royal Forest Department (RFD). Therefore, it was recommended that the ODA re-allocation should be done in order to provide more assistance to farmers; such as, fertilizer and insecticide. Moreover, more and appropriated knowledge about plantation should be distributed to farmers to help them succeed in planting.

However, it was found out that although there were many problems, the REX project was supported by both Japanese and Thai governments because it responded to the national interests of

both countries. For Japan's national interests, this project enriched her national prestige and provided well-being for Japanese private sector in Thailand. At the same time, Thailand's national interest was served by this project through the reforestation and improvement of people's standard of living.

In my opinion, I think that both governments proceeded the aid program without understanding the real problems and recognizing the long-term objective too. They tended to pursue their own national interests rather than giving priority to the objective of providing ODA. I think the Japanese government, as an aid donor and a higher developed country in science and technology, should play a prominent role by suggesting guideline or direction to the recipient country. Moreover, Thai government by RFD, as a recipient, should pay more attention to the project's management for higher efficiency in utilizing ODA from Japan.