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< contents >

The Fishing Industry and Fishermen in Japan	p. 1
Summary of Preparatory Convention for the Founding of the “Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit”	p. 4
Farmers and Indigenous Communities Confronted by Foreign-Owned Large Scale Mining Activities in the Province of Nueva Vizcaya (The Philippines)	p. 8
Justice As Power and the Power of Justice (Palestine)	p. 10

The Fishing Industry and Fishermen in Japan

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(Translated by Etsuko KAJI)

1. The Present Situation of Japanese Fishery

On July 15, 2008, the fishing operations stopped all over Japan, the first time in the fishing history in this country. As fishing depends on weather and fisherman is allowed to get a first catch of marine products, it is said that fishermen never miss a work. It has been almost impossible that they took a day off all together. Nevertheless, they stopped the operation because they felt the pressure of “fishing crisis”.

The fishing crisis was triggered by higher cost of oil products caused by a jump in international crude oil prices. Today fishing industry including fishery, farming and distribution totally depends on oil.

Oil was not an only factor of the crisis. Fishing industry cannot assign a reasonable price to the products to cover the cost, for the price of marine products is exclusively controlled by distributors. Both fishermen and the administration have been interested in the fishing production rather than the trend of market and consumers. That is, they tried to make up with a catch of fish from dropping the price rather than to control of marine resources properly. Now that the food crisis becomes the important issue, the marine resources in Japan are not controlled enough and ecological concern is almost neglected, which is contrary to the growing voice of the international community.

2. An example of Japanese fishing industry

Let us take a look at mackerel, a typical fish in Japan.

In 1970s, catch of mackerel in Japan reached 4 million tons per year. As environmental change and over fishing affected the mackerel fishing, the quantity decreased to much less than one million tons. And yet, around 600,000-ton would be enough to be distributed in consumers market in Japan. Now the mackerel sold at market here are mostly imported from Norway caught from Atlantic Ocean.



Almost all mackerel caught in Japan are small ones, younger than two-year old, and sold for feed and canned food. In other words, in Japan fishermen catch mackerel before they grow and do not encourage sustaining the resource. Meanwhile, the fishing industry in Norway catches large mackerel for Japanese market, successfully having acquired the large share of the market.

Thus, the marine policy in Japan runs through its own resources cheaply and imports food from abroad. At the same time, fishing rights of either large or middle sized round haul netters, one factor of over fishing are subsidized generously, leaving coastal small fishing in plight behind.

The world population is over 6.5 billion, which is expected to 8 billion by 2030. As food production is reaching the limit, it seems difficult to increase food supply. Some parts in the world have already faced with food crisis. It is useless to estimate how much food could be supplied per capita according to the current food output, because food problem is derived from unequal distribution in the international market.

When we eat beef, we consume ten times more grain. When we eat tuna, we eat ten times more sardines. This is the system which produces either meat or fish through the food chain. We have to think the food crisis as the problem of human being living on earth, and those who enjoy affluent society in the both developed and developing countries should not forget the rights and obligations to eat proper food moderately. In Japan, we should be reminded once again our food culture to each sardines and other small fish from seashore.

3. The Present Situation of Japanese Fishery

Coastal fishery in Japan has been driven into a corner by round haul netters which catch large amount of fish by using bright fishing light device. In addition, fish food distribution is controlled by supermarkets and many local fish shops for local consumption have put up the shutters. Thus, most fishermen in Japan engaged with coastal fishery are now forced to leave fishing because of decrease of catch, long slump of fish price, cost rise, and difficulty to find their successors.

Meanwhile, it is apparent that the coastal fishing can save energy and fishing people do their best to supply food staff with high quality by utilizing marine resources as much as possible. The Seki Mackerel is an example. This mackerel is strictly controlled as marine resources to sustain the quality and now is traded as a high-quality fish in the domestic

market. Japanese sand lance, small fish called “Ikanago” in Japanese, used to be mainly sold as feed are now processed to popular side dish by being boiled in sweetened soy source and other seasonings. Now the fish has become favorite dish of local people. However, these success stories are still rare cases.

At the same time, coastal fishery in Japan with fishing rights, though the scale is quite small, has contributed to develop local communities around fishing villages. For the political forces to seek profit by land development, sustainable development of coastal fishery meant to grow resistance force. It could be said that the policy has taken to put coastal fishery on the decline.

4. Small Fishermen under the globalization

Fish production in Japan now seeks to export the products that cannot sell in the domestic market. Instead of dealing with decreasing of catch caused by over fishing as is seen mackerel, the trend is to expand the market. This is based on the idea that fishing on the sea can take as much as possible, which neglects the voice growing internationally for effective use of food resources. Under the current marine policy, fishing community cannot resist the distribution system that controls the price and they have to rush around the small margin of the products.

Nevertheless, we find some small communities trying to sustain traditional fishing and foster desirable fish-eating culture. Ikanago fishing at Akashi Strait located eastern part of Seto Inland Sea is a good example.

Nowadays, “Ikanago no Kugini” is famous as special product of Akashi and Kobe region in west Japan. Every year in March, people line up at fish shop to cook home-made “Ikanago no Kugini” with soy-source, sugar and ginger. The product delivered all over the country brings the fresh feeling of spring. It should be noted that only twenty five years ago, the fish were sold at only 30 yen/kilo as feed for fish culture and stock farming. In means that Ikanago was not considered to be eaten by human being. Still, fishermen were competing with one another to get the fish as much as possible for small amount of money.

More than half of the Ikanago caught at Akashi Strait are coming from Bizen Seto, the area of sea near Okayama Prefecture. The rampant sand extraction at the area caused the drastic decrease of Ikanago which settle in sandy soil of the area. Thus the catch of Ikanago at Akashi Strait also decreased. Apparently, decline in fishermen’s income was caused by the sharply lower fish price.

Faced with the situation, women associated with fishermen’s union devised and promoted the new product called “Ikanago no Kugini”, which provided value added and renewal of Ikanago fishing. Fishermen did not rest on higher price but tried to restrict fishing to sustain the resource refraining from over fishing. Today, the Ikanago is mostly marketed as food, only a few is traded for feed. As local people cook the fish to share the product throughout the country with their families and friends, the price hiked to several hundred or thousand yen per kilo.

5. "Production in season, Taste in season"

The case of Ikanago shows that marine products could enhance value added by linking with local environment, supporting sustainable fishing and protecting food culture. They don't have to look cheap and be sold cheaply.



Traditionally, people in Japan have been eating fish. Sustainable fishing industry should take back the local food culture. The idea of "local production, local consumption" is not enough. We should aim for "production in season, taste in season." In stead of "local production, local consumption" based on regional egoism, we should establish the relationship between fishermen who supply marine products in season and consumers who enjoy food in season.

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Summary of Preparatory Convention for the Founding of the "Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit"

Prepared by Naoe AKIYAMA

(Translated by Yasuo KONDO, Etsuko KAJI)

1. The Background of founding the "Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit"

The world economic crisis would inevitably lead to the collapse of the present global order led by the United States.

The crisis has been caused by the greediness of the US, but again, the weakest and the poorest have been victimized and most seriously suffering.

Yet, we are convinced that nothing else but solidarity between the people in the South and the citizens in the North shall help people on earth to be saved from the global economic crisis and an outbreak of another world war.

We have built the network of people's trade in the past twenty years as well as solidarity between the people in the South and the citizens in the North. Our network started by the trade of Balangon bananas and Mascobado sugar to support people on the Negros island, the Philippines and then expanded to people's trade with other countries including Indonesia, Palestine, East Timor and so on.

Based on our accumulated experience, we should further widen, strengthen and deepen

the solidarity between the people in the South and the citizens in the North, especially the Asian-wide solidarity, so that we could forward to a new stage.

Therefore, it was confirmed at the Preparatory Convention the “Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit” to be founded aiming for the following objectives.

To establish an Asian-wide network of people and citizens, and develop it into the network of multi-lateral exchange and solidarity.

To launch the people’s finance system that would contribute to promote diverse, promising activities of the people in the South, to develop more comprehensive and progressive people’s trade as well.

2. Philosophy of the “Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit”

Harmonious Symbiosis of South and North: The South should become self reliant, neither abandoning its organic natures nor following the North with inorganic natures, while the North should be close to the South supporting the effort to be self-reliant. When the South becomes virtually self reliant, the North shall be relieved.

Respect for human life as the basis of the people’s trade movement: We should never forget that the people’s trade movement is based on respect for women and children, namely respect for human life. The Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit shall also lie with respect for women and children, namely respect for human life.

Having recognized the philosophy, we confirmed that the Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit, though only a small boat rowing into the age of disturbance, is definitely “the boat of hope.”

3. Recognized Principles and Objectives of the “Asian People’s Fund for Mutual Benefit”

(1) To establish an Asian-wide network of people and citizens, and develop it into the network of multi-lateral exchange and solidarity.

At the convention most countries emphasized the importance of “Self-Efforts and Self Reliance achieved through Agricultural Practice”, in their report of domestic situations and problems. In particular, acquisition, recovery and holding of land are the common challenge. It means to protect producer-farmers both in the South and the North, and to secure food supply as an essential source of life of people and citizens. We confirmed that food self-sufficiency should be improved, safe food should be supplied, and ecosystem should be sustained. In order to achieve the goals, it is also required to strengthen and develop community economy and people’s economy through producer-consumer linkage and people’s trade.

We confirmed that women as leading resources should be empowered, opportunities of education and capacity building for the youth and the people should be provided, and the right to self-determination should be acquired.

Along with mutual cooperation and support to achieve the goals, national/local-governments-level advocacy is required.

- (2) To launch the people's finance system that would contribute to promote diverse, promising activities of the people in the South, to develop more comprehensive and progressive people's trade as well.

Fund shall be raised by adding JPY10 for one kilogram of Balangon bananas and JPY5 for 100 gram of Eco-shrimp handled by Alter Trade Japan, Inc. as well as its shareholders of the Fund supplied to their member consumers, as requested by the Preparatory Committee for the Founding of the Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit.

< Views and Proposals of Participants >

Participants unanimously agreed on the founding of the Fund and the consensus was that the Fund would be useful for farmers and others engaged in small-scale industries to improve their socio-economic situations. Their views and proposals presented at the Convention include:

Technical committee should be set up to deal with screening of credit standing, foreign exchange risk, procedures of loan application. How to sustain the fund itself and interest rate in beneficiary's countries should also be studied and adjusted. Advisers and specialists from other countries could be invited to implement the Fund.

It is important that both for beneficiaries and fund raisers to share the function of the Fund and to participate in decision-making together.

Possibility to provide both with grant and loan in order to handle such cases that interest rate might be too high for potential borrowers or loan could not be feasible for whatever reasons.

< Responses from the Founding Groups >

Basically the Fund is not a loan business in general, but a mutual aid to the members.

We would invite any organization present here to become a member among the four categories. The organizational structure is made to allow all the members to participate in the decision-making process at the Annual General Assembly.

Member organizations in beneficiary countries shall be required to provide their expertise to conduct screening of credit standing of loan applicants and to secure loan repayment. The business practice of the Fund would be a simple one.

The necessity of providing two different functions of loan and grant is understandable. But because of the capacity of fund-raising, we cannot help but focus on loan activities as the function of the Fund. We believe that fund donation, sharing of specific issues, sharing of techniques and wisdom and etc. are important matters among us and could be handled at different occasions.

For the time being, we expect JPY 35,000 thousand per year will be raised and the loan should be within this limit. Loan amount and the borrowers shall be decided at the

Annual General Assembly.

The Founding Groups have some idea on interest rate and foreign exchange control, but these matters should further be considered taking various circumstances into account.

We would appreciate it, if members attending here present by the end of May specific loan matters with business plans, requested loan amount, desirable interest rate, terms of loans and etc. Let us present them open to members, discuss and examine, and make final decisions at the Annual General Assembly.

Above replies from the Founding Groups were accepted.

4. Resolution : The Formation of the Preparatory Committee for the Founding of the Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit

It was agreed and resolved to form the Preparatory Committee for the Founding of the Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit and the Founding Groups were elected to members of the Preparatory Committee.

Following the election, The First Meeting of the Committee was held and Mr. Kazuyoshi FUJITA, President of DAICHI WO MAMORU KAI, was elected to the Representative of the Committee.

5. Founding Convention of the Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit

It was requested that Dure Consumer's Cooperative Union in Korea be a host organization for the Founding Convention of the Asian People's Fund for Mutual Benefit to be held in autumn in 2009.

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Farmers and Indigenous Communities Confronted by Foreign-Owned Large Scale Mining Activities in the Province of Nueva Vizcaya (The Philippines)

CORDEV (Cooperative for Rural Development) Chairman
Gorio LAS-IGAN

The province of Nueva Vizcaya is not only a prime agricultural place but is also rich in mineral resources like gold, copper, manganese and chromite. The abundance of its mineral resources have triggered the entry of several foreign-owned large scale mining companies like the MTL Mining Corporation, (British-owned) with approved mining Exploration Permit covering a land area of 3, 100 hectares located at Runruno, Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya; the



Royalco Resources Limited (Australian-owned) with approved Exploration Permit covering a land area of 5,873.687 hectares located at Kasibu (where Kongkong valley is situated), Nueva Vizcaya; and Oceana Gold Philippines (New Zealand-owned) with approved land area covering more than 25,000 hectares also in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya. This is aside from other mining companies still in the process of securing their permits.

These large scale mining explorations however are confronted with strong opposition from various environmental groups like CORDEV, and by the affected indigenous communities. Oppositionists strongly believe that allowing the mining companies to operate would cause massive environmental destruction, community displacement and dislocation, local food shortage, destruction of indigenous cultures and other adverse effect to host communities. There would be no assurance of its safe operation despite claims of the mining firms that they will employ responsible mining practices in their operation.



CORDEV is actively working with local affected residents sending petition letters and in setting up mass actions including road blockade and human barricade to prevent personnel, vehicles, and equipment of mining companies enter the exploration sites.

In response, the mining firms, using the military and private guards, have resorted to forced and violent dispersals of protest actions. They have sued the community leaders opposing their destructive mining explorations. Up to now, the case is still under litigation in court. Unfortunately for the communities, the exploration activities still continues and some families were forced to sell their farms to the company. The families who did not sell their lands have sought the legal assistance of cause-oriented groups in demanding payment for the damages caused by the on going exploration to their land & properties.

In another development, thousands of people from nine barangays in Kasibu have successfully stage and sustained a one year human barricade in Barangay Pacquet opposing the entry of exploration equipments of Royalco Resources Limited. However, the lead people's organizations (POs) opposing the mining explorations have several support requirements. Due to lack of financial resources, they are not able to inform and capacitate their own members on the issue of mining, and they are not able to expand their constituents and support groups. CORDEV believes that IEC (Information Education Campaigns) and

capacity building are effective strategies to empower the local people to establish a defense system against the challenges of mining firms affecting their rights..



Currently, CORDEV is focused on increasing public awareness on the issues and effects of large scale mining so community residents shall be able to decide and collectively plan on effective strategies that will ensure that their rights are protected and safeguarded against destructive mining activities. Together with the affected communities, CORDEV believes that all stakeholders must first agree on a mutually beneficial terms leading to a socially acceptable minerals industry that is sensitive to the aspirations of the communities. The affected communities should be assured that compensation schemes are comprehensive, long - term and sustainable.

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Justice as Power and the Power of Justice (Palestine)

By Gen SANDER (photos by author)

Ramallah, Occupied Palestine; February, 2009.

(Article is a reprint from PARC information)

Life has never been easy in Ein El-Sultan camp, Palestine's smallest refugee camp. Established in 1948, the camp once accommodated 20,000 refugees, but the vast majority were forced to flee to Jordan during the hostilities of the Six Day War in 1967. Nestled at the foot of the Mount of Temptation, just outside the historic city of Jericho, the camp's population currently sits at roughly 2,000. Many once relied on employment in Israel to make ends meet, but when the brutality of the occupation was intensified after the second intifada most people lost their jobs because of the severe movement restrictions that were imposed. Today, poor socio-economic conditions, inadequate basic infrastructure such as roads and sewers, severe water shortages, all of which are compounded by the Israeli occupation, cause tremendous hardship for the refugees, who continue to be largely dependent on food rations and various other forms of international aid.

A portrait so acutely drenched in misery is difficult for anyone to confront, let alone those actually burdened by it. Fortunately, though, the spirit's resolve is an amazing tool for change and was the trigger for a remarkable group of women from Ein El-Sultan camp to

come together a few years ago to devise an innovative way in which to break free from the shackles of their destitution. And so begins the inspirational story of Jericho's women's fair trade couscous cooperative.

The idea was born out of a longing to improve their situation and become independent. "Unemployment is very high and we can't always depend on our husbands. Sometimes they have work, and sometimes they don't. We want to be able to contribute," explains Zahra Abu Shrar (right), one of the coop members. Armed with a brilliant idea but lacking the resources to launch it, the women approached the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC) about contributing the necessary infrastructure and logistical assistance. Without delay, PARC accepted and they began working in concert to see this project come to fruition.



Now, two years later, the women are still beaming with pride. "This is our initiative. We care about it, and cannot imagine doing anything else," reveals Helen Abu Al-Haija (left), one of the co-op founders and 27-year-old mother of three who was born in Ein El-Sultan camp. Due to her extensive experience with local, grassroots organizations, Helen was elected as acting supervisor of the co-op. She somehow finds the energy and time to dedicate her days to the co-op, her evenings and weekends to her family, and whatever spare time she has left to completing her university degree. Everyone shares her strong commitment to the project as well as a common history and struggle that, as Helen explains, binds the women together as "one big happy family."



Apart from the obvious benefits of carving out your own position in the world alongside your kinfolk, are the added perks of working in the fair trade industry. Everything down to the bare bones of the co-op is based on principles of justice - even the wheat acquired to make the couscous comes from the organic, fair trade wheat co-op in Jenin. The concept of solidarity is very important for the women, made clear by Helen's confession that "if it weren't for the fair trade farmers, we wouldn't have this job." There is also the ground swell of solidarity and cooperation between the co-op and the international organizations that support their work by buying their high quality couscous. "We feel the solidarity and we know our work is appreciated," Helen explains. The proud smile she wears echoes her statement.

The women unanimously agree that since they've been working at the couscous co-op

their lives have improved dramatically. Before the co-op days, Helen's husband was the only income generator for the family of five which, considering the irregularity of his employment and wages, was barely enough to survive. Their home was very old and "needed so many renovations to make it look like a decent house." Once Helen secured a fair and stable monthly income through the co-op, her and her husband managed to accumulate enough funds to fix the floors, ceilings, doors and windows of their home. They were also able to get a loan from the bank in order to buy a taxi, enabling her husband to have a steady job and source of income for the first time in years. Everyone's got a similar story to tell; Zahra sings that her family is "no longer dependent on humanitarian aid." Not only are the women now independently taking home their well-earned wages, but they are finally able to simultaneously provide opportunities once inconceivable to their children, and fix-up their run down homes. Furthermore, their self-confidence has grown exponentially alongside their social status, which has been propped up by virtue of their fortitude, self determination, and goodwill.

Similar success once seemed promising in the Gaza Strip, where six women's fair trade couscous cooperatives once shared the same dreams and aspirations as those of the Jericho co-op. Over two years ago, however, all six co-ops were forced to shut down thanks to the crippling blockade that prevented them from importing production requirements and exporting their produce. The closures had a direct impact on over 400 people whose lives depended heavily on their continued existence. More recently, after Israel's brutal three-week assault on Gaza, one of the co-ops in Sheikh Radwan was damaged beyond repair. With a heavy sigh, Helen explains that they would have liked to work alongside their sisters in Gaza. "All co-ops have the same objectives, are supported by the same organizations, and would like to work together," she says, adding that all the members of the Jericho co-op are with them and "hope the closure will end soon and that the couscous co-ops will open again." It's only a matter of time before the world realizes how insidiously cruel and vindictive the blockade has been and demands that it be lifted so that the people of Gaza can resume living their lives with dignity and integrity.



Having survived so much injustice and impunity over the past 60 years, most Palestinians know how important it is to defend and uphold concepts of justice and fairness. Fair trade, for this reason, has a unique niche in Palestine; all that is needed is a safe space to sow the seeds and the means to cultivate the yield. The will clearly already exists, as the women from Ein El-Sultan camp have so gracefully displayed, and the power for it to create real, meaningful change is at all of our fingertips.

*** Since 1983 PARC has been a leading Palestinian NGO working in the field of rural development, environment protection, and women empowerment. They offer superior technical assistance and support, along with extension services, to individuals and organizations working in similar fields. For more information please visit their websites <http://www.parc.ps/> and <http://www.palestinianfairtrade.ps/> or call them at + 970 2 296 38 40

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