

Current State and Issue of Environmental NPO in Japan

- "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" -

Yuki Sakamoto^{1,3} and Masahiro Yoshida^{2,3}

1. *Research Institute of Public Affairs (RIPA), Nara Sangyo University, Tatsunokita, Sango-cho, Ikoma-gun, Nara, 636-8503, Japan*

2. *School of Policy Studies, Kwansei Gakuin University, Uegahara ichiban-cho, Nishinomiya-shi, Hyogo, 662-8501, Japan*

3. *Specified Nonprofit Corporation* (NPO) Nara Environmental Counselor Association (NECA), Shibatsuji-cho, Nara-shi, Nara, 630-8114, Japan*

SUMMARY

In this study, the current state of the environmental not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) in Japan is rearranged, and then the issues with regard to the relationships of governments, companies, citizens and environmental NPOs and the role of each organization to perform the responsibility of each organization on "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" in the Rio Declaration are shown. There is a large difference of the expectations in the relationship between the specific stakeholders and the environmental NPOs, and the difference is the largest issue, in particular, with regard to the relation between the funds and the requirements in the both organizations. The environmental NPOs shall utilize various support measures and continue participate in the community so that the volunteer spirit is not lost.

KEY WORDS: environment, npo, management, current state, issue, stakeholder

1. INTRODUCTION

Regarding the necessity of not-for-profit organizations (NPOs), those roles and usefulness are realized again in Japan by various activities of NPOs in the Great Hanshin - Awaji Earthquake in 2005 and then the "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities; NPO law" [1] has been revised in order to strengthen the roles and functions by the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (CAO) in 2008. However, regarding to the support on the fund, the difference of the expectations between the support groups (the specific stakeholders) and the NPOs is highlighted in "White Paper on the National Lifestyle 2004" [2].

* "Specified Nonprofit Corporation" is a kind of NPO and also certificated by local government based on "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities; NPO law" established in 1998.

On the other hand, regarding the current state of the environmental NPOs in Japan, the various contributions and the necessity of environmental NPOs are recognized in Japanese environmental policies. However, regarding the expectations and the contributions required by governments, authors think there is the "difference or discrepancy" as the large issues for those expectations and contributions in the relation between governments and environmental NPOs in actuality and the citizens have the consciousness of the no value for the "public services" and the weak expectation for "the benefit principle".

In this study, the current state of the environmental NPOs in Japan is rearranged and the issues with regard to the relationships of governments, companies, citizens and environmental NPOs are shown, and some suggestions are presented to perform the role and the responsibility of each organization on "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" in the Rio Declaration [3] by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1992.

2. CURRENT STATE AND ISSUE OF ENVIRONMENTAL NPO

2.1. Environmental NPO required by government

The governments have the administrative functions as the power by "the separation of three powers". In particular, the local governments have the administrative functions as the business providing the public services as the "territory manager", and the governments recognize that the environmental NPO is necessary as the partner and the provider such as the benefits in order to perform the duties (the administrative functions) appropriately.

In the policy making such as the regulation and the rule on the administrative power, and in the "Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education" [4] revised by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE) in 2011, the governments can receive the policy suggestion from the environmental NPOs, and some of the environmental NPOs welcome this law. However, here the most important thing is "What do the governments require to the NPOs?". It is seemed that many governments require "suggestion contents" to the NPOs in general, although authors think that the governments rather require "the trust to administration with the system of the suggestion".

On the other hand, the citizens had distrust for the governments which have not been corresponding to the suggestion opinions, and then the trust recovery has begun on the public comment system [5] (switched to the "Administrative Procedure Act" in 2005) by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Government of Japan (MIC) in 1999. However, regarding the correspondence for the suggestion opinion, the governments make the effort not to change the views which the governments announced earlier. Regarding the opinions needing the change in the governments out of necessity, it is thought that the government often makes those opinions "the agenda in later".

In addition, regarding the development situation of the implementation plan in the office work business in the "Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures" [6], it is reported that approximately 1/4 of the total local governments have still continued the breach of duty in FY 2011 [7].

As mentioned above, authors think that the governments lack the intentions that take the initiative in carrying out environmental consideration, and give priority to pressure to others and make of the system by the regulations. Therefore, the governments require the environmental NPOs which can perform the environmental strategies. On the other hand, in various

NPO reorganizations, the NPO which believe the own activity is appropriate for the contribution to society in the administrative needs has the NPO's own way.

Authors think that the above mentioned environment NPO is hard to be the NPOs which are required by the governments and then it is an issue.

2.2. Environmental NPO required by business

The public services as the "territory manager" in the administrative functions are the "public service works" (including the maintenance and management of local infrastructures, etc). Regarding the public service works, in the viewpoint of the efficiency improvement of the public services, authors think that the public services are identical with the services of commercial purpose of companies as the businesses, and regarding the environmental considerations, those considerations are handled lightly as described previously (see 2. 1.), and also think the sense that the investment in those considerations are wasted is similar to in governments and companies. Furthermore, when the public works project presents to the inspection and the public hearing in the "Environmental Impact Assessment Law" [8], the governments make the effort not to change the views which the governments announced earlier as well as in the case of the public comment system as described previously. Of course the companies also think that the decided environmental impact assessments are most suitable and make the effort for the realization.

In addition, the " Law Concerning the Promotion of Contracts Considering Reduction of Emissions of Greenhouse Gases and Others by the State and Other Entities (Green Contract Law)" [9] has been established in 2007, However, the law has not been extended the scope of regulation for the local governments, now only for the relevant organizations of national government. From this situation, authors think that there is no large difference between the weak attitude of the environmental consideration for the whole public services and those of companies. As mentioned above, authors think that the governments and the companies as the businesses are the same kind in the view point of the environmental considerations.

Regarding the attitude that the businesses expect for the environmental NPOs, it becomes clear at the time of the establishment of the cooperative relations including the supports to the environmental NPOs. Many environmental NPOs cannot receive the benefits of adoption and cooperation such as the supports in actuality. On the contrary, it means that the environmental NPOs which receive the benefit become easy to the fixed relationship and the collusion relationship with the businesses. Hence it is necessary to take notice about the balance of the cooperative relations and the tense relationship in both organizations.

As mentioned above, the businesses require the environmental NPOs justifying the businesses' environmental considerations, hence there are the structures which make into the groups kept by the businesses called "Goyou-dantai " and/or "Okakae-shudan" in Japan, and it is an issue in the future. In addition, in order to perform the responsibility of the environmental NPOs, it is necessary to utilize various support measures as described below (see 3.).

2.3. Vitality of Environmental NPOs

Authors think the members of the NPOs have the excellent volunteer spirit and the active participation willingness to the community, and they tend to get the satisfaction for the participation consciousness by providing own knowledge, experience

and ability, and also the organizations which consisted of the members of the NPO with the vitality become the expected social units in the "New Public Commons" [10] established as the national strategy in 2010.

On the other hand, it seems that the aggregations which are consisted of the members having various and active vitality cannot adapt to the organized control such as governments and companies. Many organizations in the NPOs have the management structure of the "Flat organization" (also known as horizontal organization) are dissimilar to that of the "Hierarchical organization" (also known as a pyramid) in many companies. Thus, it is a characteristic of the environmental NPO that organized unification is difficult by "activities with the large enthusiasm of the members". As described above, authors show that the organized vitality of the environmental NPO and the posture which are going to be utilized the willingness and the ability of the NPO's members.

On the other hand, the vitality changes by the external influences too, there are influences by the stakeholders to the environmental NPO and by the environmental public values, and the category of stakeholders can be divided into two kinds, 1. Specific stakeholder: governments and companies which support to the environmental NPO or be suggest by environmental NPO and 2. Citizen. Authors think that most of the influences by the citizen depend on the social values.

2.3.1. Influence by specific stakeholder

Regarding the influences by the specific stakeholders, the influence at the time when the environmental NPO receive the profit business by the support of the stakeholder is the largest. Regarding the support, partnership and cooperation to the activities of the environmental NPOs, there are the funds of by the MOE, local governments and companies. However, the funds, supports and systems have the individual aims. At the time of the application to the supports, it is necessary to consider the requirements of the stakeholders more than the environmental considerations in the consciousness of the environmental NPOs.

On the other hand, as the above mentioned, the difference of the expectations with regard to the funds between the specific stakeholder and the NPO is highlighted in the above white paper [2]. In the paper, the ratio of the expectation for the funds of the support groups (specific stakeholders) of the NPOs is accounted for 64.9 % of the total NPOs, however, the support groups make much account of the supporting of the networking to various organizations and the promoting for citizen's participation to the activities of NPOs, and the ratio of the fund in their support plan is only accounted for 20.7 % of the whole supports amounts.

Authors think that the above described tendency corresponds to that of the environmental NPO. Even if the willingness and the ability of members of the environmental NPOs are high as described above, and also think that the vitality of the organization is not shown enough by the difficulty of the concentration of organized power in the inside of NPO and by the differences of the both requirements of the specific stakeholders and the NPO and then it is the large issue.

2.3.2. Influence by citizen as stakeholder

The social needs in regard to the environment occur in feeling an imminent environmental risk or observing the environmental disruption, and then various environmental NPO will make the activities. In addition, a lot of citizens participate in the environmental issue recognized as the social issue, and the support measures for the environmental NPOs by the governments are enriched.

However, when these "problem consciousness" change in the quality and/or go away, the social needs tend to disperse such as a transient event and most of the dispersed environmental issues have not led to the fundamental solutions. Therefore, the tenacious activity for the sustainable development is the socially necessary, as well as the actions for "Low carbon society", "Recycling society" and "Symbiotic society" in the national environmental strategies.

On the other hand, when this social needs disperse, authors think that the environment NPOs which carry out the activities for the environmental issues recognized as the social needs will be left behind by the society, but they will be continuously carrying out the activities in the environmental conservation in order to contribute to the community steadily. In this case, the requirements by the citizens to the environmental NPOs become the small, and the social needs have the tendency not to estimate the obligation of beneficiary for satisfying these needs be large. Therefore, the activities of the environmental NPO easily become the volunteer which is ignored or is the no value, and then it is a large issue.

In many environmental NPOs, the "NPO Asaza Fund" [11] taken up in the above white paper [2] is the rare success example as one of the large scale organization in the environmental NPOs of Japan. The situations of many environmental NPOs of Japan are far from those of the environmental NPOs in Europe and America, because the environmental NPOs in Europe and America can receive the supports and the large donation by tens of thousands of members.

3. COMMON BUT DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSIBILITY

In the Earth Summit of 1992, "Common But Differentiated Responsibility" in the Rio Declaration [3] has been stated clearly, and the international environmental actions such as the global warming measures have been begun. Although each situation and activity of governments, companies, citizens and the environmental NPOs are "different", these organizations have the "common" recognition with regard to the importance of the environmental conservation based on the "Basic Environment Law" [12]. Therefore, authors think that it is necessary to perform the "Differentiated Responsibility" with regard to the environmental consideration, and then authors summarize the "difference" on each situation and activity of those organizations and indicate the "responsibility" for the environmental consideration to keep in mind in future as follows.

Regarding the governments and the companies, those organizations are the organizations carrying out the business development for the given missions effectively. Hence, it is necessary for the missions to have the thinking of Social Responsibility (SR) shown in the guidance of ISO 26000 [13] by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the governments shall have the responsibility to perform proactively at least.

Regarding the governments which refuse the institutionalization of the activity to be related to environmental consideration or do not observe the environmental laws, authors think that those governments shall be given not only the publication such as the simple ranking but also the measures to keep a sense of guilt.

On the other hand, in the experience of the change to occur in citizen's immediate vicinity or the risk in the everyday life, the citizens have the consciousness of the environmental consideration. However, authors think that the most citizens usually live in obscurity in the lifestyle and also accept without the protest and/or the interest with regard to the actual situation of governments and the companies as described above.

Therefore, it is necessary continuously for citizens to have the opportunity when citizen can realize the imminent environmental risk.

Regarding the activity of the environmental NPOs, the environmental NPOs are the organizations that can provide the willingness, knowledge, experience and ability of the various members in the categories of activity shown in the law [4] related to the environmental educations as described above. However, it is known that the "green economy" shown in Rio +20 [14] by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in 2012 has not been advanced and also the environmental NPO is hard to obtain the reasonable value of public service for the environment too.

Therefore, it is necessary that the environmental NPOs shall utilize various support measures and continuously participate in the community so that the volunteer spirit is not lost.

REFERENCES

- [1] Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (CAO). (2008). "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities". (in Japanese).
- [2] Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (CAO). (2004). "White Paper on the National Lifestyle 2004". (in Japanese).
- [3] United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (1992). "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development".
- [4] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (2011). "Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education". (in Japanese).
- [5] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Government of Japan (MIC). (2005). "Administrative Procedure Act (Public Comment System in 1999)". (in Japanese).
- [6] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (1998). "Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures". (in Japanese).
- [7] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (2011). "Report of the State of Enforcement for Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures". (in Japanese).
- [8] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (1997). "Environmental Impact Assessment Law". (in Japanese).
- [9] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (2007). "Law Concerning the Promotion of Contracts Considering Reduction of Emissions of Greenhouse Gases and Others by the State and Other Entities (Green Contract Law)". (in Japanese).
- [10] Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (CAO). (2010). "New Public Commons".
- [11] NPO Asaza Fund. <<http://www.kasumigaura.net/asaza/en/index.html>>. (Accessed Aug. 28, 2012).
- [12] Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan (MOE). (1993). "Basic Environment Law". (in Japanese).
- [13] International Organization for Standardization (ISO). (2010). "Guidance on social responsibility: ISO 26000:2010".
- [14] United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). (2012). "Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication".