

International Conservation Working Holidays in Fukuoka, Japan and Strategy of BTCV in United Kingdom.

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Abstract

International Conservation Working Holidays (ICWH), which were carried out in cooperation with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), were held nine times between 1997 and 2005 in Kurogi-cho, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan. They were investigated in this study. Firstly, questionnaire surveys were conducted among the Japanese participants to evaluate the activities done during the ICWHs. Secondly, the number of repeat volunteers from previous years and the number of staff with their assigned responsibilities were analyzed. Finally, changes in the BTCV's international strategy as a result of having launched the Conservation Volunteers Alliance Accreditation Program are described. The purpose of this investigation is to clarify various problems related to the ICWHs and to demonstrate the necessity of commencing leadership training and of establishing self-sufficient regional organizations to overcome these problems. The number of valid responses to the questionnaire survey was 207 which represents 80.9% of the total number of returned questionnaires. The highest response to the question regarding activities was "Interaction with other people", although the highest reason given for participation was "Do actual environmental conservation work". It is conjectured that the safe and pleasant management not only enabled conservation tasks, but also fostered communication. Regarding the repeats status of volunteers, between 80 to 90% of the participants intended to participate in the ICWH program again, while 10% were interested in being involved in project management. The actual number of repeat volunteers increased each year from 1998 to 2005. The re-participation rate was approximately 10% and the proportion of return volunteers who returned as staff (as opposed to a normal participants) was approximately 50%. Thus, it is apparent that the activities done on ICWHs not only encouraged volunteer participation but also promoted training. However, relatively few participants chose to do conservation tasks on a regular basis or to participate actively as local leaders. Distinct roles were assigned to ICWH staff and a large number of staff (between 22 to 52) attended due to the fact that we lacked a trained leader and a large number of participants were involved in the project (between 50 to 80). However, the international nature of the project combined with the need to employ a lot of staff increased the cost of the project preventing it from continuing and extending to other regions. Consequently, commencement of leadership training and reconsideration of the number of volunteers needs to be done to ensure the continued operation of ICWHs in the future. Furthermore, recently BTCV have decided that it would be more efficient if volunteers were dispatched to just one host group that really requires their support in each country. On the other hand, International Conservation Volunteer Alliance (ICVA) commenced the ICVA Accreditation Program in 2006. Japan is expected to form core-organizations, which could manage leadership training and environmental conservation projects.

Keywords: *conservation, volunteers, BTCV, Citizen participation, Satoyama*

1. Introduction

At the commencement of the 21st century, natural resources are abandoned in rural areas of Japan due to consumerism, aging of the population and a reduction in the total population of Japan. Balanced environmental conservation will be increasingly difficult to achieve in the future. In addition, the young generation has insufficient experience of nature as a consequence of living an urban lifestyle. Environmental education and field studies are thought to be essential measures for achieving sustainable conservation in rural environments. Against this background, we focused on practical environmental conservation, in particular the scheme known as the “International Conservation Working Holiday” (ICWH) ¹⁾²⁾. Table 1 shows the history of ICWH that have been held in Japan along with their locations and host organizations. They have been run jointly with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) a total of 28 times throughout Japan ³⁾. The nine ICWHs held between 1997 and 2005 in Kurogi-cho, Fukuoka Prefecture were investigated in this study. Furthermore, changes in the BTCV’s international strategy as a result of having launched the Conservation Volunteers Alliance Accreditation Program are described ⁴⁾. The purpose of this investigation is to clarify various problems related to the ICWHs and to demonstrate the necessity of commencing leadership training and of establishing self-sufficient regional organizations to overcome these problems.

2 . Overview of ICWH and Research Method

1) Activity style

International Conservation Working Holidays combine conservation tasks with leisure activities. Participants share the same accommodation for periods of a few days to two weeks. Table 2 shows the number of participants for ICWHs held between 1997 and 2005 in Kurogi-cho, Fukuoka. The duration of the ICWHs varied from eight to ten days and they were held in the fall since the weather was generally comfortable for working in and it was also a convenient time for students to participate. There were between 20 to 45 Japanese volunteers, 2 to 13 foreign volunteers and 22 to 52 staff. Short-term participating volunteers included Japanese participants and staff. Major activities of the ICWHs included thinning and pruning of conifer plantations, constructing footpaths and steps, restoring stone walls of terraced paddy fields and doing housework such as cleaning and organic cooking inside the accommodation. Furthermore, volunteers interacted and spent time doing conservation work with local elementary and junior high school children as part of an integrated study. Agro-forestry facilities named “Shiki-sai-kan”, which were owned by organic farmers, were used for accommodation each year

Table 1 The history of International Working Holidays jointly held with BTCV in Japan.

Year held	Number of times held	Location	Host Organization
1994	1	Wakayama prefecture	Hashimoto Satoyama Conservation Action Team
1994	1	Oosaka-fu	Koudachi Satoyama Conservation Project.
1995	1	Kouchi prefecture	Nakatosha-tyou Machidukuri committee
1997-2006	10	Hokkaidou prefecture	Kinashibetu Wetland Trust
1997, 1999	2	Hyougo prefecture	Hyougo Forest Club
1997-2005	9	Kurogi-cho, Fukuoka	The Executive committee of the International Countryside Working Holidays in Fukuoka
2001-2003	3	Nagano prefecture	Shinshu Forest Work
2005	1	Aichi prefecture	The Forum for Forest Creation

Table 2 The number of ICWH participants and activities for 1997-2005 in Kurogi-cho, Fukuoka prefecutre

Year held		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
Dates		10/25-11/3	9/19-9/28	10/31-11/7	9/22-10/1	9/21-9/30	9/21-9/29	9/19-9/28	9/17-9/26	9/16-9/25	Total
Number of days		10	10	8	10	10	9	10	10	10	87 day
Number of general participants	Japan	20	26	20	24	33	45	27	39	22	256 person
	U.K.	6	5	4	7	5	4	0	8	1	40
	Other countries ^{*1}	0	2	0	6	1	4	2	3	1	19
Staff number		52	29	22	30	36	35	44	35	39	322
Total number of participants ^{*2}		78	62	46	67	75	88	73	85	63	637

*1: Other countries are; Holland, Philippines, Argentina, Korea, U.S.A, China, Thailand, Australia.

*2: Short-term participants are included in the general Japanese participants and staff numbers. However, elementary and junior high school children, parents, teachers, guests of honor, media representatives and temporary visitors are excluded from these

except 2004 ⁵⁾, and a partnership was formed between a local community group “Sanson-jyuku” ⁶⁾, the laboratory of university, a subsidy organization and the local government.

2) Research methods

Firstly, questionnaire surveys were conducted among the ICWH Japanese participants every year from 1997 to 2005 except 1998. The questionnaires were distributed on the final day of the ICWH to the volunteers, which they completed before leaving the accommodation. The number of valid responses was 207, which represents 80.9% of the total number of returned questionnaires. Secondly, the number of repeat volunteers from previous years and the number of staff with their assigned responsibilities were analyzed. Finally, the BTCV strategy regarding the ICVA accreditation program was raised, and the ensuing discussion was summarized.

3. Results and Discussion

1) Questionnaire results

Table 3 shows the results of the questionnaire survey for the Japanese participants. Fifty-one percent of the participants were male, while 59% were under 30 years old. The highest response (55%) for Q.1 concerning motivation was “Do actual environmental conservation work” and the second (41%) was “Refresh the mind by participating in nature”. The highest response (67%) for Q.2 concerning activities was “Interact with other people” and the second (59%), “Experience the reality of the countryside and the woodland”. By comparing these results with the motivation results, sharing conservation task with other volunteers was one of the main reasons for participating in the ICWH. It is conjectured that the safe and pleasant management of the BTCV leader and Japanese staff enabled not only conservation tasks to be performed but also fostered communication between participants and contributed to the sense of fulfillment that the participants experienced.

2) The number of repeat volunteers and advancement to management

The numbers of repeat Japanese participants are shown in Table 4. Those who were on their first ICWH made up 89.1% of the total number of volunteers, while those who were back for their second time made up 10.9%. The number of repeaters in the participants and the staff is shown in Fig. 1. While the numbers of participants and staff varied each year, the number of repeat volunteers increased consistently each year from 1998 to 2005 until there were a maximum of 11 repeat participants and 10 staff in 2005 and the proportion of return volunteers who returned as staff (as opposed to a normal participants) was approximately 50%.

Table 3 The questionnaire survey of Japanese participants.

Questionnaire questions and responses		Ratio	
Gender of participants	Male	51	%
	Female	49	
Age of participants	Under 30	59	%
	30's	17	
	40's	9	
	50's	6	
	Over 60	9	
What made you decide to join this working holiday? (Multiple answers)			
	Do actual environmental conservation work	55	%
	Refresh the mind by participating in nature	41	
	For leisure	19	
	To make friends (interacting with other people)	26	
	A friend encouraged me to participate	13	
	Other	16	
What did you feel or experience through this project? (Multiple answers)			
	Obtained mental satisfaction from working in nature	57	%
	Exercise for health by working in natural surroundings	46	
	Interacted with other people	67	
	Experienced the reality of the countryside and the woodland.	59	
	Understood the necessity and the purpose for doing conservation activities	50	
	Understood the purpose and aim of individual tasks	41	
	Mastered the technique for each tasks	21	
	Other	6	
Will you join a working holiday like this if there are any in the future?			
	1. Definitely.	50	%
	2. Yes, but only a working holiday in my district.	43	
	3. Never.	0	
	4. Other	7	
If you answered 1 or 2 for the previous question, please answer this question			
	I hope to lead a group	9	%
	I hope to join this kind of activity as much as possible	60	
	I want to join in my spare time.	19	
	I may join sometimes, but not every time	9	
	Other	2	

Thus, it is apparent that the activities done on ICWHs not only encouraged volunteer participation but also promoted training. However, relatively few participants chose to do conservation tasks on a regular basis or to participate actively as local leaders.

3) The staff assignment and profile

The breakdown of the staff roles is shown in Fig. 2; the labels are defined as follow: “Local” refers to an inhabitant of Kurogi-cho, “Academic” refers to staff who work and study at a university, “Public” refers to someone who lives outside of Kurogi-cho. The highest proportion of staff was assigned to the role of “Group work support” (44 academic, 29 local and 18 public). Their roles as supporting leaders involved communicating with the participants, recording information and writing reports after the project had finished. The role of “Livelihood support” (35 publics, 27 locals) involved cooking and cleaning up, and staff

Table 4 Number of times of participation

Number of times participated	Number of Participants	Percentage
Once	228	89.1
Twice	19	7.4
Three times	6	2.3
Four times	3	1.2

assigned to this role worked together with the participants. Almost all of the technical leaders (forest and paddy field) were locals (104) since terraced paddy fields are constructed by special techniques and forest is privately owned and management of the forest requires the support of the Kurogi-cho Forestry Association. In addition to these roles, there were staffs assigned as leaders and translators. Leaders were in charge of the university staff and volunteers and had gained sufficient experience of ICWH. In addition, they assisted with farmer-participant communication and also acted as translator for the non-Japanese participants.

As Fig.2 shows, distinct roles were assigned to ICWH staff and a large number of staff (between 22 to 52, see Table 2) attended due to the fact that we lacked a trained leader and a large number of participants were involved in the project (between 50 to 80). However, the international nature of the project combined with the need to employ a lot of staff increased the cost of the project and prevented it from continuing and extending to other regions. Generally, BTCV usually dispatches one international leader who has received the required amount of training together with 6 to 12 volunteers to the country where the ICWH is to be held, and they do conservation work jointly with the local host organization. Consequently, commencement of leadership training and reconsideration of the number of volunteers needs to be done to ensure the continued operation of ICWHs in the future.

4) BTCV's international strategy

BTCV's teams have been dispatched to ICWH held in Japan to directly support several local host organizations up until 2005. However, BTCV has been experiencing difficulties in getting sufficient numbers volunteers as the result of increased competition from similar conservation groups ⁷⁾. Consequently, they decided that it would be more efficient to dispatch volunteers to just one host group that really requires their support in each country ⁸⁾. The Kinashibetu Wetland Trust was selected in Japan, while the Fukuoka group was judged as not requiring BTCV support so much since it had greater experience in running ICWH. On the other hand, ICVA commenced the ICVA Accreditation Program

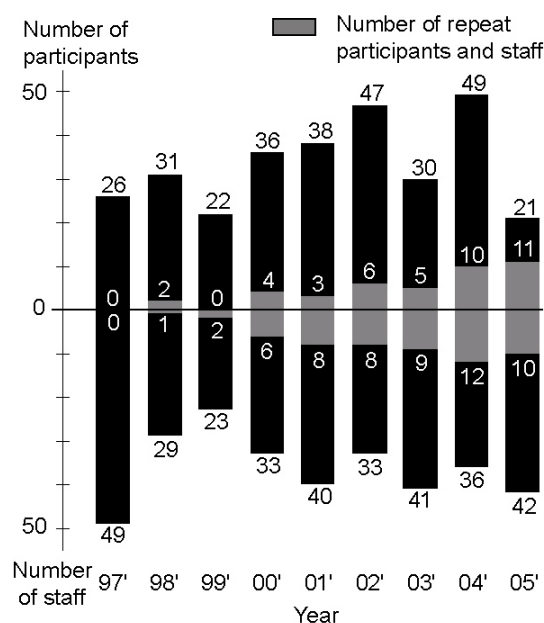


Figure 1 The change of repeater number in the participants and staff.

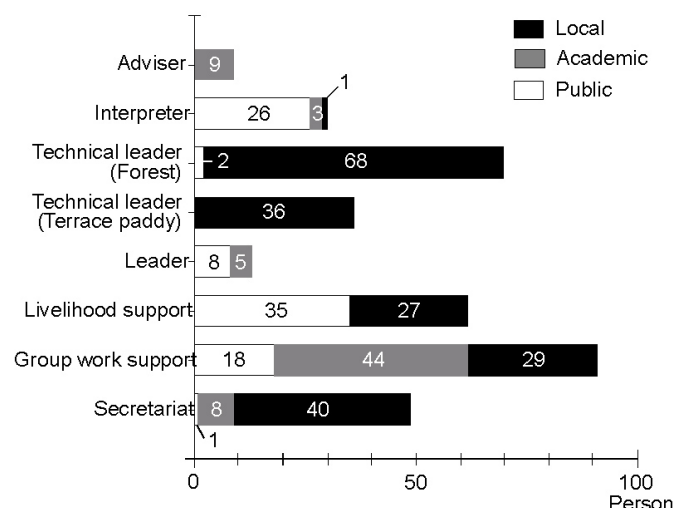


Figure 2 The total number of staff assigned to different tasks between 1997 and 2005.

from 2006. This program provides certification for the administration of organizations, and aims to set standards for conservation work. Japan is expected to form core-organizations, which would be able to manage environmental conservation projects, which have world standard quality.

5. Conclusion

As the above discussion demonstrates, the ICWH in Fukuoka has been firmly established as a shared partnership project involving the BTCV, local groups, universities and general participants. The number of repeat volunteers increased each year and the capabilities of individual participants were developed. However, relatively few participants chose to do conservation tasks on a regular basis and to participate actively as a local leader. Also the international nature of the project combined with the need to employ a lot of staff increased the cost of the project and prevented it from continuing and extending to other regions. It is essential to overcome this problem, by commencing leadership training and reconsidering the number of volunteers, in order to continue the operation of ICWH in the future. As regards supporting trained leaders and organizing ICWHs in the future, core-organization, which could manage leadership training and environmental conservation project and accredited from the ICVA program also needs to be established.

Footnote and References

- 1) T. Shigematsu (1999) *Atarashii-Satoyama-Saiseihou*, National Forestry Extension Association in Japan.
- 2) T. Shigematsu (1992) BTCV's Conservation Activities for Countryside and Woodland Wildlife Habitats, *Journal of the Japanese institute of landscape Architecture* 55(5), 325-330.
- 3) BTCV is the representative U.K. charity organization that held practical countryside conservation holidays in U.K and elsewhere in the world. For more information see their web site at <http://www.btcv.org/>
- 4) The International Conservation Volunteer Alliance Accreditation Program was launching by the International Conservation Volunteers Alliance (ICVA), which was established as a charity organization in U.K., in 1999. For more information see their web site at <http://www.cvalliance.org/>
- 5) The former elementary schoolhouse of Kurogi-cho was used as accommodation in 2004.
- 6) Sanson-jyuku is a local group which carries out countryside conservation on terraced paddy fields and forest management in conjunction with urban and local people. For more information see their web site at <http://www.h3.dion.ne.jp/~sannsonn/>
- 7) Though Shinshu Forest Work had been planed holding ICWH in 2004 and 2005, but ICWH operated as domestic activities due to BTCV could not dispatched volunteers team.
- 8) BTCV (2005) *BTCV Holidays your chance to change the world International Program*, p1. U.K.