# Consideration on remote operation <Part 2>

## "Forced" remote management

Local operations of a project may be interrupted due to unforseen circumstances such as the outbreak of a civil war or a coup d'etat. One of the cases we have experienced is the suspension of the "Project on Development of Efficient Irrigation Techniques and Extension" in Syria, which degenerated into civil war in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" that began in Tunisia in 2010. This time, based on the case of Syria, where the Japanese were forced to evacuate and the project was operated remotely, I would like to look back on my experience and knowledge for overcoming remote difficulties and maintaining projects by distance collaboration with local staff and counterparts (CPs).

The Syrian project was conducted to strengthen training and dissemination of water-saving irrigation technology in the agricultural sector, which is the largest water utilization sector, in response to the tight supply and demand on the country's water resources. In Phase 1 (2005-2008), the activities were targeted at the three prefectures of Damascus, Hama, and Daraa, and in Phase 2, which started as a successor project in 2008, two prefectures of Aleppo and Raqqa in the north were added. Just as it had become a wide-area activity that covered 5 prefectures nationwide, it was suddenly interrupted for the reasons mentioned earlier. In 2011, increasing political instability made it difficult for Japanese experts to travel and on-site work had to rely on the Syrian CPs. As the civil war itself became increasingly bogged down every day without any hope of recovery, remote project activities such as training and extension at demonstration farms continued for nearly a year.

In collaboration with CPs, the core part of the project activities such as training and extension related to water-saving irrigation was carried out quietly, but as the project implementation period came to an end, what to do with the final conclusion became a big issue. Various possibilities were considered, but in the end, it was not possible for Japanese experts to return to Syria and hold a JCC or seminar with CPs from the Ministry of Agriculture of the central and local governments and related parties. However, we were able to invite the CP representatives to Amman, the capital of neighboring Jordan, and hold a final workshop to complete the project activities, and we were able to have a happy reunion with the Syrian CPs.

At the two-day workshop in Amman, the efforts and current situation of each prefecture were reported by the participants and we shared the issues they faced in the project, and discussed what was needed to solve such issues. In addition, we reviewed the ideal role of extension officers and reconfirmed future issues as irrigation extension officers and Subject Matter Specialists (SMS). The abilities required for irrigation extension officers and SMS were evaluated using the CUDBAS (Curriculum Development Based on Ability Structure) method. Originally, CUDBAS is a tool used at the start of a project to create a training curriculum and a training plan. However, in this project, it was used as a summary of the capacity building training to confirm the achievement points at the end of the project and to clarify future issues. Although the project activity ended with a slight incomplete feeling in a somewhat inconvenient environment using remote operation, we have obtained an unexpected by-product namely developing a new method to use CUDBAS in project wrap-up work.



**Summary work using CUDBAS with Syrian CPs (Amman)**

Despite this remote work, the project goals were fully achieved through cooperation between Japan and Syria. Above all, it was a great piece of luck for the project that a large number of talented human resources such as irrigation extension officers and SMS were trained as a result of the accumulation of activities from Phase 1.

Next time, I would like to take up the case of Sudan, which has become a "forced" remote management like Syria, and deepen the discussion on the significance of "internalization" of the project.