

Consideration on remote operation <Part 6>

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic led us to the daily implementation of remote management in our projects. This series started with the aim of considering 'remote management' from various perspectives, including past projects, as well as implementation during the pandemic. This is the final summary of the series, and a brief review what we have covered so far.

○ **'Forced' remote management**

The remote management of the water-saving irrigation project (2005-2008, 2008-2011), which began with a break in the Syrian civil war, was described. This was our first long-term remote operation experience, but we were in the final stages of Phase 2 of the project, and the cooperation with the counterparts (CPs) was smooth. At that time, social networking and other tools were not as widely used as they are now, therefore the remote work was carried out based on e-mail, over a period of about a year. The major challenge was to bring the project to its final conclusion, and we attempted to use the Curriculum Development Based on Ability Structure (CUDBAS) method as a tool for summary and to support the CPs in becoming self-reliant.

○ **Effect of fostered ownership**

Case study of the Technical Cooperation Project in River Nile State, Sudan. The project was implemented remotely due to the sudden outbreak of a coup d'état, but as in the Syrian case above, there were no particular problems with remote communication with the local community because CP/NS training was well underway at that time. Through several meetings in Ethiopia, a third country, collaborative activities such as the development of manuals and guidelines were carried out. In an unusual space, the roles of CPs and NSs became clear, and this was an excellent opportunity for those who had been somewhat passive to become more aware and deepen their sense of ownership.

○ **A planned remote operation**

In the case of the training project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan, the Japanese experts' access to the field in the province was restricted due to serious security reasons. The project therefore needed to make the most of remote projects from its initiation and the M&E Officer, the eyes and ears of the Japanese experts, was the key element of the operation. The M&E Officer was assigned

the role of monitoring and reporting on the activities of the extension officers and was a good intermediary for the fieldwork and other remote work of the extension officers targeted for training. At the same time, however, the Japanese experts were only able to obtain information through the filter of the M&E Officer, which remained a challenge.

○ **Adaptation to the 'new normal' and tools for remote operation**

It seems necessary to adapt to a new operating paradigm as the combination of remote operation and on-site work has become commonplace. In this section, based on our experience of creativity and ingenuity in the unique environment of developing countries, we introduced the remote tools actually in use, such as social networking, online conferencing and video materials, and explored their usefulness and pointed out future directions. In this context, we also identified new challenges and targets, such as better communication skills, quick response, improved recordability and the level of quality required as a deliverable.

AAI has been refining its activities in developing countries based on the skills and knowledge accumulated from its fieldwork experience and the human networks that it has built in the field, but the prolonged remote operations of projects due to the Covid19 pandemic have taken us into a new dimension. The field has not disappeared, but we have to think about how we can replace what we have been doing in the field with remote based operations. In addition, we have no experience in setting up new projects or surveys through remote operations, and there are many issues to be addressed, such as how to use tools such as social networking, online meetings and video materials to deepen communication and build relationships with our new counterparts in the field. In the end, however, we can only look at this as a kind of accumulated experience and take a positive approach to the situation, despite our worries.

I am sure that you, the readers, are experiencing a lot of difficulties in your daily trials and practices with regard to remote operations of projects. We would be happy to hear your comments and opinions