

## JICA Tsukuba training past and present

Since September 2022, I have been conducting vegetable training again at the JICA Tsukuba center. After I left this office in 1997, I worked in the Philippines, Kenya, Afghanistan, South Sudan and others, and now I am back after a quarter of a century. Upon returning, I have noticed some changes and found many familiar with nostalgia. Compared to the days when personal computers were still new and mobile phones did not exist, the global spread of information and communication technology is remarkable today. With personal motivation, people can now easily obtain and learn various information even in developing countries. The income gap between Japan and the participant's country used to be very large, but now the gap has narrowed. For trainees, their allowances during stay in Japan are no longer as attractive as they used to be. The educational background of participants has also improved. On the other hand, I feel that there hasn't been much change in their English conversation skills and moral values.

This training, which involves interacting with the participants for about eight months, is more comprehensive and intense compared to short-term training. Interestingly, this vegetable course has been conducted in a form similar to Japanese agricultural colleges for over 50 years, dating back to the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA), the predecessor to JICA. Although there is a debate on whether this "traditional" training style is suitable in an era that demands pinpoint, efficient training based on problem-solving theory, the training has continued to adapt by incorporating new agricultural technologies and making revisions to keep up with the times.

The training here covers everything from sowing to harvesting and seed production of major vegetables, including planning and analyzing experiments, and further adding extension and management, making it comprehensive and practical. The curriculum allocates

60% of time to experiments and practical training, 20% to lectures, and 20% to observation and study tours, providing for a well-rounded training program, in my opinion. Recruitment for the trainees targets mid-level central and local extension officers, but actual participants include not only extension officers but also research and administrative personnel, making the group diverse. Therefore, while respecting the training concept, we aim to enable each trainee to acquire comprehensive knowledge and skills in vegetable production, fostering insight that allows for accurate judgment and decision making in their duties upon returning to their native countries.

Additionally, we hope that participants will take the opportunity to learn not only techniques and knowledge but also the sincerity, meticulousness, and altruistic elements of Japanese society experienced during their long stay in Japan, gaining hints for the development of their own countries. It would be ideal if participants, upon returning, are recognized as supervisors or directors who, having undergone long-term training in Japan, are rich in insight and excellent when it comes to balanced decision-making, and having become something distinctly different from the average. Those of us involved in international cooperation should reaffirm that this is an irreplaceable strength of Japan's international cooperation.



**Practical instruction in vegetable training  
(left: 1995, right: 2023)**

(April 2023, Nawashiro)