

"Human Resource Development"- Our Challenges in Training Activities

Part 3: Multiplying the training effects through follow-up activities

For the past four years AAI, commissioned by the JICA Tsukuba International Centre, has been undertaking training courses on vegetable cultivation for Tajikistan and southern African countries. Other than crop cultivation, trainings on farm machineries, irrigation and drainage etc. are conducted at this Centre for a number of trainees who wish to contribute to the development of the agricultural sector in their respective countries. The goal of such training is for the trainees to be able to make use of the techniques they learn in Japan and apply them to improve the livelihood of the farmers in their own countries, and in the long run to make a positive contribution to the agricultural development of the country or the region they come from.

The country focused vegetable cultivation course for Tajikistan, carried out over several years by AAI, has been completed last year. Then, in order to evaluate the activities of the ex-trainees and identify the future training needs, a follow-up survey was conducted and our staff also participated in the survey to Tajikistan as a member of the team. Most of the ex-trainees had been chosen from different sub-sectors/occupations. They were researchers, extension workers and farmers, and they were making good use of knowledge and techniques gained from the training course in Japan. For instance, by applying the techniques learned during the training in potato production, they reduced the amount of potato tuber used from 5 tons/ha to 3 tons/ha, they were removing sprouts, making pot seedlings, and creating fodder from the hay which they used to throw away. Also they were using materials and videotapes obtained in Japan to teach techniques such as grafting to the local people, and such efforts of them were rather admirable. On the other hand, however, we found various problems as well. For example equipment brought back from Japan is not being used properly. Or, because it is difficult for them to obtain appropriate equipment locally, they were being unable to practice the techniques they had learned in Japan. Also, they are not able to produce good translations and therefore they were not being able to make full use of the training hand-outs which are mostly written in English. Moreover, the problems we witnessed were not only in the vegetable cultivation sub-sector but also in fruit production and extension activities.

There is no doubt that the importance of training as part of capacity development activities in the field of international co-operation will increase from now on. Also it is very meaningful to promote good understanding about Japan among the people from many countries through the training activities to make friends for Japan. With this background it is important to continue technical assistance by providing training courses taking into account a good consideration of each country's needs and conditions. Moreover, since the trainees are selected as representatives of their respective countries, it is important to let them realize and bear in mind that they are the main actors in the agricultural development of their own countries.

Ex-trainees are making good efforts to contribute to the agricultural development of their home region while struggling with various problems and challenges. Through the follow-up survey of this time, we strongly felt the need to provide a certain form of after care to deal with their problems. There may be a need to establish a follow-up support system which is linked with the actual training conducted in Japan, in order to maximize the effect of the training courses back in their respective countries. For instance, as a scheme to encourage trainees, a support system for the implementation of good action plans may be an idea. Also probably it should be possible to link the follow-up support activities with the grassroots technical assistance. If feedback can be obtained from the ex-trainees regarding their problems and challenges after their return and their views can be incorporated into the next training tasks, it will be a valuable input to improve the training courses to provide better information and techniques for the next set of trainees. AAI now considers follow-up support for talented trainees as part of our own grassroots co-operation activities. For that purpose we are trying to keep feeding the ex-trainees with information, exchange opinions and provide technical support upon request from them. We believe that, through such thorough follow-up activities, the effects of the training courses in Japan can be maximized.

