"Human Resource Development"- Our Challenges in Training Activities

Part5: Acquiring agricultural technologies through the Third Country Training and the Technical Exchange Programs

As a scheme of the training program, JICA has overseas training programs. This type of training is organized by those who have been trained within Japanese technical cooperation programs in developing countries, or by organizations that have benefited from Japanese assistance. The training targets people in their countries (training on site) and from neighboring nations (third country training). JICA also has a technical exchange program, which is a type of training through visiting and learning about similar activities in neighboring countries. The advantage of these types of training is that the number of trainees can be maximized and that they can learn in the similar therefore comfortable environment in terms of language, culture and climate to their own homes.

As part of expert dispatch scheme in Syria, we organized a technical exchange program in neighboring Turkey, visiting an experimental farm to which JICA was rendering technical support. Through this project, our counterparts in Syria had an opportunity to see at first hand what a JICA's project type of technical cooperation entails. Simultaneously, they could learn various cultivation methods experimented within the farm, as well as witness agricultural extension activities conducted by the Turkish Government. Because of the similar climate in the two countries, there were many target crops that are common. It was also impressive that there were heated discussions about the cultivation of various fruits and vegetables.

In the Master Plan Study in Mauritania we dispatched our counterparts to neighboring Morocco. The counterpart trainees visited arid agricultural areas that spread to the south of the Atlas Mountains, and learned about irrigated vegetable and grain cultivation in the areas. They also collected information on the current situation regarding insect damage to date palms and the measures taken to combat the problem, which was also a major concern in Mauritania. Furthermore, the participants exchanged information with the local Moroccan NGO that had been assisting oasis development in Mauritania. This NGO had been transferring skills and technologies of fruit and vegetable cultivation and bread making, and our exchange project had materialized in collaboration with this NGO. In addition to the training benefits, counterpart trainees could obtain a number of technical documents written in French, their common official language.

Visiting experimental farm

Exchanging information at the farm

Japan has been offering technical and economic assistance to many developing countries. However, the natural and social environments of those countries are often very different from those in Japan. Training activities in Japan are very suited for learning cultivation techniques using special machinery and materials, for exposing trainees to various experimental research activities, and for learning about organized activities such as agricultural cooperatives. In the field of experimental cultivation, however, the climatic difference often makes it difficult to plan training curricula which are applicable to the environment of the trainees' own countries. Training on site can be very effective as training activities take place in similar environmental conditions as the trainees' home countries. It has an added advantage in that it is easier for trainees to fit into the society and living environment during training, as they are in a country with a similar language and environment.

We would like to make the following suggestions in order to improve third country training and technical exchange programs outside Japan. Facilities in developing countries that are established/run with Japanese Government's cooperation should be better utilized for many different purposes. Use of such facilities for training would not only nurture human resources in developing countries, but also promote exchange between the people in the country and Japanese technical experts who are working abroad. This would provide opportunities for exchanging opinions and technologies/skills. Furthermore, it should be possible for such facilities to host Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, NGO technicians and young researchers from Japan, as a means of nurturing future talents in the international cooperation field, and include joint projects between these Japanese researchers and technicians and trainees. This kind of training modality, technical assistance and exchange activity would be well understood by many as Japan's peaceful and tangible contribution to the developing world, at the same time fostering friendship between Japan and the rest of the world.