

# AAINews

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## **Capacity Development of Engineers and Technology Transfer: Within the Framework of Iraq Reconstruction Assistance**

Iraq is said to be the first country in the world where intensive agriculture began, exploiting the abundant water resources of the Tigris and Euphrates. In the past, Iraq was an advanced nation for irrigation agriculture. However, Iraq has been facing a number of problems such as decreased water flow in the two rivers due to increased water resource use in Turkey and Syria and the construction of new dams upstream. Other problems include deteriorating irrigation and drainage facilities and decreased water availability due to inappropriate resource management. In order to assist Iraq's efforts to solve these problems, the Japanese Government, through the JICA, has been providing technical assistance to the country as part of the overall post war reconstruction assistance. Japan's cooperation entails support to enhance water management techniques to realize effective use of water in irrigated farms and to increase crop production, the formation of water users associations, and technical cooperation necessary to disseminate technologies.<sup>1)</sup>

The Iraqi engineers who participated in our training course were mainly young promising engineers from the central and local governments. Their specialties ranged from cultivation, soil, extension, irrigation and drainage technology, and they will be the backbone of Iraq's future irrigation agriculture. Our assignment this time aimed to develop the capacity of the trainees in the field of irrigation agriculture. We organized lectures, practical exercises and visits for them to enable them to learn cultivation techniques under irrigation, facility operation and the theory of water users association. In addition, with the trainees, we assumed an irrigation project in Iraq and collected the information required for implementation, requesting the Iraqi trainees to investigate and collect information that was lacking.

The Iraqi trainees were highly motivated. There always were questions at lectures, and we constantly felt their proactive attitude as they tried to absorb as much information as possible. During field visits, they did note many things down in their notebooks, take photographs, ask many questions and put forward requests for future training. As we cannot enter Iraq at the moment, the only sources of information for formulating a project for Iraq in a remotely controlled way was through documents brought by the trainees and their own acquired knowledge. We felt quite frustrated not to be able to see, hear and feel Iraq directly, when providing training in Iraq's neighbouring country.

After the old regime collapsed, I hear many qualified engineers have been leaving Iraq. Insecurity in the country also continues. The trainees who were participating in the course, ensured that their families were safe over the phone. By spending time with them, I realized that participating in training can be a task that requires significant efforts and decisions. In this study, capacity development activities are to be implemented through a series of training sessions related to irrigation agriculture. I sincerely hope that the new capacity will not only be accumulated as a personal benefit, but also will benefit other engineers and farmers in their areas. I also hope that I will be able to go to Iraq to support the people in their own country.

(By Zaitzu, July 2006)



**Listening to participants at a water users association meeting**



**A scene from our training**



**During a field visit with the trainees**

<sup>1)</sup> As entry to Iraq is currently restricted, irrigation agriculture capacity development activities for Iraqi nationals were conducted in Jordan, using technical resources in Jordan and other neighbouring countries.