

Bridging training and extension activities <Part 1>

Case study: Conducting training that contributes to the clarification on training needs and extension activities in Syria

Training should not be a stand-alone activity. We can only expect effective application of outputs from training, through using what is acquired in related work and activities. It is relatively easy to link training and action plans when training activities are conducted as part of a project on the ground. In this case, action plans can be directly based on training contents and training contents can be designed to suit the extension activities of the project concerned. By contrast, in the case of training in Japan, bridging between training and actual activities on the ground becomes more difficult, for reasons such as the fact that it is not necessarily guaranteed that the trainees can engage in the relevant activities once they return home. In this mini-series, we would like to introduce different mechanisms and innovations to link training with extension activities so that training will become more beneficial.

This time, we would like to introduce the project on Development of Efficient Irrigation Techniques and Extension in Syria. In this project, to promote the mindset of water saving irrigation to decrease water use for agriculture and to extend relevant technologies, a training course was organized targeting irrigation extension staff. The training was structured in “four steps”, aiming to provide skills and knowledge to them to deal with issues related to water saving irrigation, which farmers are facing. In the first step, training focused on teaching examples of surveys on farmers so that the trainees can understand water saving irrigation circumstances and the related issues farmers face. In the second step, training was provided on basic issues related to design and installation of water saving irrigation facilities, as well as operation and maintenance of the facilities. The third step focused on development of extension materials such as posters and pamphlets which will be useful for future extension activities. In step 4, trainees developed and implemented an action plan to implement extension activities fully utilizing knowledge and techniques they acquired in the training and extension materials that were developed during the training. As a follow up activity, support for implementation of the action plans was continued. The

support action plan included organization of a field day, field visits, seminars, mobile theater, and poster competitions. Well conceived or priority actions were selected from the plan, and projects, in the form of OJT and were implemented by dividing staff into groups.

Previously, training courses were mainly lectures in classroom, explaining old teaching documents. They felt that they had no techniques nor information to extend, did not have the know-how, and did not have confidence to teach farmers. The practical training this project offered provided the extension staff with the necessary means to deliver concrete and practical advices and supports to farmers. Moreover, in the past, extension activities were neither properly prepared nor planned. However, in the extension activities under this project, the staff set clear objectives based on farmers needs’, developed plans and undertook the activities after thorough discussions and preparation. As a result, extension activities could respond better to the farmers’ needs, and extension staff capacities increased. Furthermore, various efforts such as evaluation of understanding of participating farmers and review meetings after extension activities made the whole work much more solid and fruitful compared with the way things were done in Syria previously. Irrigation extension staff’s ability continues to improve.

This project consists of a cycle comprising; identification of training needs – selection of training themes – training implementation for trainee extension staff – implementation of extension activities by trainee extension staff – extension to farmers (resolving of farmers problems). Through this cycle, we could establish the “results-oriented training and extension method”. The main characteristic of this method is that trainees acquire knowledge and techniques that are actually needed on the ground, and the project provide “places” and “opportunities” to use them in the form of follow up projects.

The future challenge is how to make the results-oriented training and extension method as a norm and replicate it in other regions. Extension activities in Syria are not confined to irrigation, and it is necessary to apply this method in other extension activities.



At the irrigation research station



Problem analysis session



Extension activity



Discussion with farmers