

Bridging training and extension activities <Part 2>

Clarification of extension needs and implementation of training that is directly useful for extension activities: Case study from JICA Tsukuba

AAI has been implementing the group training course: “Vegetable Cultivation Technology II” since 2005. From 2010, AAI has also been entrusted to deliver the group training course: “Vegetable Cultivation Technology for Small Scale Farmers”. The training program these days has an “action plan” as a training component, and training objectives have shifted from the previous leader training type to a train-the-trainer program aiming to develop the human resource base in developing countries in the broad sense through training participants to acquire skills for training others in their home countries. It is requested to formulate the extension activity action plan to increase effectiveness of extension activity. In this issue, we would like to introduce various procedures and twists to bridge the training in JICA Tsukuba and the work area of participants in their own countries.

Having individual themes and problems raised in the inception reports prior to coming to Japan, participants attend lectures, master theories through individual and group experiments and practical sessions, and see the actual application of the theories at field visits. The ambiguous problem at the inception report stage becomes clearer after the lectures and workshop on problem analysis and individual interviews/discussions with technical advisors, leading to the decision on the theme of individual experiments. Once individual experiments begin, field days, mid-term progress report presentation and group discussion meetings on the results are organized, which should guide the participants to develop action plans. The results of experiments and practical sessions are recorded in technical reports and an action plan to improve the participants’ jobs will be developed. Action plans are drawn up with careful confirmation of whether the information and knowledge gained through individual experiments and what was learned in the training course are reflected and whether these are really something that can be applied in the participants’ home countries. By revising through these checks, by the time of the action plan presentation session just before participants’ return home, their plans become more tightly focused on actions that can be implemented in their daily work in their home countries. For evaluation tests of newly introduced technologies, it is necessary to have an implementation plan of a minimum 3-year period, to reproduce the technologies in their home countries, as the results are evaluated using locally appropriate

materials and methods. Therefore action plans often entail on-farm experiments involving local farmers. Factors and levels that are important in experiment plans have to be developed with full consideration to issues such as social and natural environmental conditions and feasibility of material procurement at the local level. The final draft action plans are expected to be shared with other staff in the participants’ work division after their return home in November.

As described above, we have been trying to improve the action plan formulation process so that it will include actions that are implementable at the participants’ work place. This is one of our efforts to link training courses and the field. In addition, from 2010, in order to enhance the participants’ understanding, as part of the inception report presentation, participants will be asked to discuss what kinds of activities they would like to engage in, in their home countries after the training. This will enable the participants to reconfirm their post-training action plans during the training period. We also added a section “describe useful subject learned and applicable to your duty is preferable” in the weekly evaluation sheets that are filled out and submitted by the participants. Through the monthly consolidation of the evaluation sheets and our feedback to the participants, we hope to ensure that the action plans at the end will be meaningful.

Furthermore, in addition to the above mentioned efforts in our training activities in the field of extension, we hope to further improve the field day activities. To date, field days were merely the opportunities for participants to make presentations on the mid-term progress of their experiments. However, we hope to make the field day provide a place for practicing extension techniques so that the participants will be able to communicate necessary information in an accurate and effective manner for their extension activities. Through these efforts, we expect that contents of our training courses will become highly relevant to actual practical work on the ground.



Field day – participant play a role as an extension worker and others as farmers