

Looking back on the DEITEX Project (continued)

2. Achievements and lessons learnt from the project

Phase 1 of the project targeted three governorates that had serious over usage of water resources for irrigation. Phase 2 focused on 5 governorates adding 2 northern governorates. The activities resulted in various water saving achievements in the fields of research, training and extension. Although one cannot say that water saving irrigation is totally extended, in addition to actual water saving achievements at the project sites, the project established a system for self-sustaining expansion of water saving irrigation technologies.

We organized the technologies, experiences and information on modern water saving irrigation which originally existed in Syria. We verified them in demonstration plots and conducted additional experiments, in order to present them in a manner that is easy for farmers to use. We established outputs-oriented training courses targeting irrigation extension workers, which was new. In addition to nurturing more than 230 certified extension workers, the training implementation cycle was established as part of training program of governorates, to ensure sustainable implementation of training activities. Extension workers repeated model extension activities, using what they had learned in the training courses. This led to the establishment of an extension activity cycle that was appropriate for modern water saving irrigation extension. Tools such as irrigation calendar and water saving irrigation management tools especially developed for farmers, and extension materials left in various brochures and posters etc. will continue to be used. The project also succeeded in digging up “know-how” for improving irrigation and for developing new irrigation systems in the minds of individual extension workers and other counterparts.



Training session as part of the project



A scene from the project Field Day

We learned a lot of lessons from the project. The DEITEX logo is very well known in Syria. This is because the logo is directly linked to the fact that the project is working on water issues, and it was easy for the residents to understand it. This clearly shows the fact that each resident was seeing water issues as things of importance and highly pressing. The project's success very much depends on how compelling and urgent the theme of the project is for people. This is one lesson we learned this time.



DEITEX logo

Extension workers were without appropriate technologies and information for disseminating water

saving technology, were without a good idea on extension methods and/or without self-confidence for the work. However, based on practical training received as part of the project work, they started practical extension activities. The project introduced an activity cycle starting from scrutinizing training themes, then moving on to implementation of training for extension workers, extension activities by trained extension workers, and then to achievement of extension objectives. Successful introduction of the results-oriented training and extension method, directly connecting the two, was a major fruit and learning experience from the project.

A “project” is implemented to temporarily augment insufficient functions of an organization. A project is also expected to come up with out-of-the-box thinking and to provide a coordinating function to bring various key entities to work together. Promotion of water saving irrigation cannot be achieved without collaboration between various related organizations and individuals. Fortunately, collaboration between various sectors for research, training and extension was realized well. It made a very good case study where there is traditionally little collaboration between government agencies. One reason for the success was that we were very fortunate to have great counterparts. In addition, the attitude of Japanese members working for the project to respect individual organizations and staff members, without diminishing their roles and responsibilities, had something to do with the achievement. Furthermore, the active use of a coordination role by the project was also considered a major success factor. Given that the project managed to advance collaboration between related organizations, the lesson learned here was that the project has a significant advantage when it comes to maneuvering freely between various related organizations, and of being able to play a role as a link between these organizations.

The project started running the Water-Extensionist Assembly (WEA), aiming to foster friendship and cooperation between extension workers. “Was what the project did something that will be continued and expanded after the project closure?” The answer to the question would clearly show whether a project was meaningful and successful. From this view point, the project established the necessary foundation for further work, such as the provision of necessary equipment, the establishment of systems and the fostering of human resources. It is very much expected that there will be future development and progress, building on the project's work.

The Project aimed to realize efficient irrigation agriculture, building on long years of experiences and accumulated knowledge. If the irrigation agriculture has been destroyed by the civil war, the objectives of the project may be becoming difficult to attain. It will probably be necessary to add an additional process for rehabilitation of the facilities and system.

(By Matsushima August 2012)