

## Reports on activities of ex-participants from Central America <Part 1>

In December 2012, in El Salvador and Nicaragua in Central America, a field survey was conducted regarding activities of JICA ex-participants from the vegetable cultivation technology training courses at Tsukuba (4 ex-participants in each country) for 2 weeks. We could see how they are utilizing knowledge and technology acquired during the training courses in their daily work. In this series, we would like to report activities of ex-participants in a 4 part series. This first part is an introduction and report on the background for conducting the ex-participants survey.

Human resource development is a priority theme of ODA. AAI place a great emphasis on human resource development. It is an important aspect of our work. We conduct training to transfer technologies to counterparts, and extend technologies to farmers and local people as part of the work of our long-term JICA experts and within the technical cooperation projects with which we participate. Since 2001, we have been entrusted with running the vegetable cultivation technology training courses which are directly implemented by JICA Tsukuba, providing capacity development training for extension workers, research staff and teachers. To date, we have been involved in 8 courses in the field of vegetable and upland rice cultivation, targeting 220 participants (159 for the vegetable courses and 61 for the upland rice courses as of 2013). One of the challenges we face is how to gauge and evaluate training results of the training that is conducted in Japan.

Since 2005, the JICA Tsukuba training curriculum has included development of action plans for the post-training period. A post-training program was also established whereby the participants submit a report on revised action plans after further review at their workplace after returning to their own countries and jobs. However, with the report submitted 3 months after going home, it is difficult to confirm and evaluate the training impacts on their work in their own countries, and the current situation is that expected results from the post-training programs are not very clear.

AAI is always examining ways to improve training contents. In 2005, we visited ex-participants in Botswana, and in 2010, we visited 10 ex-participants in two countries, namely Malawi and Zambia, conducting a follow-up investigation aiming to understand their actions and support needs. In both surveys, we could witness enthusiastic activities by the ex-participants, and confirmed the training impacts on their work after returning to their home countries. At the same time, we could also learn about the challenges which the ex-participants face. We are working towards utilizing the information obtained during the visits to improve the contents of future training courses.

The third follow-up visit to Central America this time was triggered by the action plan report submitted by Mr Louis, an ex-participant from El Salvador. His report

contained detailed descriptions on progress in implementing his action plan, and examples of application of knowledge and technologies he acquired during the training in Japan. Therefore, we thought by investigating Mr Louis' activities, we could further clarify some points about his action plan implementation and application of training results. Then we could also make the visit a preliminary study to see how we could provide follow-up support to Mr Louis based on his needs.

The vegetable cultivation technology training course which started in February 2013 as a new scheme no longer targets Central and South American countries. However there had been a yearly intake of participants from these countries, totalling 16 participants, since 2005 when AAI started conducting the vegetable cultivation technology training courses. Given this, we thought a field survey would be a good opportunity to summarize the achievements from the training courses. We chose El Salvador and Nicaragua as target countries as these countries had the largest number of ex-participants.

Number of participants in the vegetable cultivation technology training courses per region (2005 - 2012)

Asia	Pacific	Central America	Africa	Middle East	Total
40	10	16	18	2	86

Note: In this report, the vegetable cultivation technology training courses include the "Vegetable Cultivation Technology II (2005-2009), the "Vegetable Cultivation Technology for Small Scale Farmers (2010-2012), and the "Vegetable Cultivation Technology and Marketing Method for Small Scale Farmers (ongoing since 2013).

In this field survey, we confirmed, evaluated and analyzed how they are utilizing what they had learned during the training in Japan. Two objectives were: to feedback the findings to future training work; and to follow up to explore potential for providing support for activities that particularly motivated ex-participants.

In the next three volumes of AAINews, we will introduce the enthusiastic activities of the 8 ex-participants we visited. We will also introduce concrete case studies for creative actions to utilize knowledge and skills they acquired in Japan. We will further provide a detailed report on challenges and areas for improvements which emanated from our visit.



An interview scene and field visit at a target site