

## Reports on activities of ex-participants from Central America <Part 4>

Over the three reports in this series which started in the AAINews No. 81, we have reported on the survey of post-training activities of Central American ex-participants. In this closing report we would like to summarize the results of the surveys. The surveys yielded the following achievements.

### **Effectiveness and relevance of training program**

We could observe that all the 8 ex-participants whom we visited this time have been using what they learned in the training in Japan. This is evidence of the fact that the training program in Japan is effective and the program contents were relevant to their work.

### **Possibility for ex-participants to expand their work**

Cosme who works at the El Salvador University was selected as the coordinator in the university's investigation and research section because of his experiences at the training in Japan. Luis also from El Salvador is now a researcher and working to solve challenges he faced when he was an extension worker. Leonel of Nicaragua moved job from his researcher position at the national research center to take up technical sales staff work at a private company, providing cultivation advice to farmers. These examples suggest that accumulating a wide range of experiences during training in Japan provides the possibility for expanding participants work areas upon their return home.

### **Examples of use of Japanese technologies**

Cesar from El Salvador and three university lecturers at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua Leon (Miguel, Jorge and Adrian), provided examples of applying Japanese technologies such as raised planting beds cultivation, steam soil sterilization and Kuntan (rice husk charcoal), in their countries. These examples provide evidence that it is possible for participants to utilize knowledge, technologies and experiences they gain through training in Japan in their respective countries. On the other hand, the following challenges were also observed.

### **Examining applicability of Japanese technologies in participants' countries**

In order for an increased number of participants to be able to apply Japanese technologies in their own countries, it was felt that it is important to hold discussions with participants considering the possibility of achieving this transfer and reflect on the discussions in their training plan.

### **Necessity of regular reporting to participants' affiliated entities**

In order for the participants to be able to fully utilize training achievements, it is necessary for them to be able to obtain understanding and support from their domestic organizations. It is expected that by ensuring reporting on the training contents to these bodies it will promote understanding and make their post-training activities smoother after their return home.

### **Necessity of post-training visits and participants' activity survey**

Through the three post-training activity visits we have conducted at our own initiative we have obtained much more information on training achievements which could not be seen through traditional means such as questionnaires, reports and email exchanges. If

application of knowledge and technologies gained in the training in Japan in their own countries is an ultimate training achievement, post-training visits and activity surveys are essential. Therefore, it should be considered an integral part of the training programs.

### **Importance of participant selection**

Cesar of El Salvador was effectively using what he learned in the training in Japan, as a JICA project counterpart. In addition, the example from UNAN-Leon in Nicaragua taught us that universities can effectively conduct research for technology application and provide educational activities for technology extension. Furthermore, our investigation indicated that it is possible to create synergistic impacts by accepting participants from related organizations on a continual basis. Based on the findings, it is considered effective to select participants taking into account a wide range of issues including their duties and work environment after their return home, in order to increase effectiveness of training programs in Japan.

### **Necessity of continued support after training**

In addition to participant selection mentioned above, it is desirable to have a system that provides continued support for participants after their return to their home countries in order to increase efficiencies of application of training achievements. At UNAN-Leon, we observed that their experiments were hampered by a lack of plastic nursery pots. It is a pity that some good initiatives by ex-participants are stalled because of such relatively small obstacles.

This time, by directly interviewing the ex-participants, we could understand in detail how they are utilizing the outcomes of the training in Japan in their daily work. We could also see their Japanese-like earnest attitude towards their work. We realized that, through the training in Japan, in addition to new knowledge and technologies, we can also pass on to the participants other important qualities for improving their work. And we felt that they had become very fond of Japan. Some ex-participants who reported on their activities were those whom we had never met. Still they welcomed us with open arms as if we were their old friends, and we talked for hours as they reminisced about their time spent in Japan. We could confirm that there is a firm trusting relationship between ex-participants and us. A training program is often said to be about "making people". We felt at first hand that the most important element for "making people" is a trusting relationship that 'makes' everybody involved better at what they do.

For many ex-participants, learning in Japan is a once in a lifetime experience. We will continue to improve training contents so as to offer high quality training for the participants who come to Japan full of hopes and expectations that their experiences will be something which will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

