

Mini series

Reports on activities of ex-participants from Nepal <Part 3>

Effect of training in Japan for improving extension staff capacity

In this series, we have been reporting on results of this visit to Nepalese ex-participants in December 2014 as part of the “Vegetable cultivation technology and marketing method for small scale farmers” course. In this third part of the series, we introduce cases that show the contributions of training in Japan to capacity development of agricultural extension staff.

During this visit, we conducted interviews with the participants themselves and also farmers and local staff, asking if there is a notable difference between average extension staff and those who participated in the training courses in Japan. The result was that we received responses such as: ‘possessing wealth of knowledge and experience’; ‘thorough and meticulous way of teaching’; and ‘sincere attitudes when interacting’. We asked the ex-participants questions on these responses. One ex-participant said, that “in the past, I was frightened to visit farmers. But now I can deal with farmers comfortably and confidently. Maybe this led to my favorable impression.”

When we asked what were the most valuable experience during the training, 80% of the participants mentioned experiences in cultivation methods for many different crops. Many of the participants started to work as extension staff as soon as they finished university or graduate school. This meant that they had to start advising farmers on cultivation without sufficient cultivation experiences except for limited practices at university. It is no surprise that they felt afraid of questions asked by farmers on their own farming fields. Now they can at least talk about their own cultivation experience. When there is a difficult question, they deal with farmers trying to remember the actual cases they saw and learned about in Japan and what Japanese instructors taught them.

An ex-participant said, “Nowadays, even in Nepal, we can obtain knowledge and information through the internet and publications. However, cultivation experience and technology can only be acquired through actual work in fields and practices in training. It is because of cultivation experience in the training in Japan, I can now advise

farmers on cultivation.

Furthermore, a half of ex-participants responded saying that “logical thinking” which they learned in the training in Japan is contributing greatly to their work. For example, they can now analyze results of experimentation from experimental farms in a logical manner and hold meaningful discussion with researchers. Some of the ex-participants are now managers within their organizations. Logical thinking is also highly useful for them to conduct their managerial work, supervising a number of different strands of work. Additionally, they said they became capable of explaining more logically why something needs to be done, why certain management tasks are necessary, or where a problem lies, based on knowledge and experience gained in the training courses in Japan. The feedback from local staff and farmers is that many extension staff tend to provide one-way advice insisting on what one should do, but explanation of the ex-participants tend to be easy to understand and educational. One ex-participant also commented, “I used to think that there is no use explaining to farmers as they would not understand. It is totally changed now and I explain to farmers in the way they can understand.” “Compared with the past I can feel that I am much more relied on by farmers and local staff, which is a very rewarding feeling.”

As an extension staff, the most important thing is to respond to farmers requests in a sincere manner. However, inexperienced young extension staff tend to lack confidence and it is therefore understandable that they cannot deal with farmers with a feeling of authority.

In the training courses in Japan, practices on cultivation technology are always linked to lectures so that participants can acquire cultivation technology backed by logic. In addition, we create many opportunities for the participants to analyze experimentation results and present them logically. With this visit to Nepal, we could confirm that their experience in Japan is serving as a foundation for them to become extension staff who are trusted by farmers, instilling confidence in themselves as technicians.



The 2012 participant Mr. Ajaya Adhikari (left) diagnosing growth of crop from stem diameter and advising timing of top dressing



The 2010 participant Mr. Sudhir Shrestha (2nd from the left) investigating crops in farmer's farming field



The 2010 participant Mr. Arun Kafle (2nd from the left) and the 2011 participant Mr. Sandesh Dhita (2nd from the right) discussing with farmers on their farm management