

ters as the situation of agricultural cooperatives in Asian countries, the reason that the Republic of Korea was not among the invited countries, and the reason that many Thai participants were present.

Subsequently, the visitors toured the hall and asked such questions as points to be noted when accepting foreigners in private rooms where participants stayed. As there were many cases where we have accepted foreigners from Asia as agricultural technical interns, this opportunity became a place of exchange of opinions on such matters as how to respond in such cases.



Group photo session in front of the entrance



Request:

To all ex-IDACA participants

Dear Mr. and Ms. IDACA Alumni:

IDACA wishes, above all, that its ties with you remain solid and long-lasting. So, why not keep us updated on your recent status and how we can reach you.

Please write us if your place of work, your position or your address have changed. There is no specific form that you have to follow in sending the information, but the following may serve as an example. We would appreciate it so much if you could mail (or e-mail) or fax it to IDACA, for the attention of Eiko Oshita.

Name (nationality): _____

Training course / Seminar _____

Changes

1) New address (home, telephone number and fax number): _____

2) New place of work (office, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address): _____

3) New position: _____

The Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia

4771, Aihara-machi, Machida-shi, Tokyo 194-0211 Japan
TEL: +81-42-782-4331 / FAX: +81-42-782-4384
E-mail: idaca-idaca@j.email.ne.jp

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The Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia

4771, Aihara-machi, Machida-shi, Tokyo 194-0211 Japan URL : <http://www.idaca.or.jp>
Tel: +81-42-782-4331 Fax: +81-42-782-4384 E-mail: idaca-idaca@j.email.ne.jp

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REPORT ON THE IDACA MYANMAR PROJECT

Initiative on Association Management Guidance That Nestles toward Farmers

Association's Initial Fiscal Year Plagued by Long Spell of Rainy Weather

During the initial fiscal year of the association that was established in October 2016, not only was rice harvesting significantly delayed due to a long spell of rainy weather but also it turned out to be the worst situation with regard to the operating environment for a combine because most of the fields were rain-fed paddy fields without irrigation and drainage facilities.

Due to a lack of skills and insufficient maintenance, the costs of repair and replace-

ment parts increased abnormally, and the single-year balance of income and expenditure of the association at Sin Ma Kaw Village registered a substantial deficit, eroding about 60% of the capital. The tractor introduction association at Tha Pyaye Thar Village made poor progress in its plowing operations due to prolonged rainfall, and its earnings were limited to about 60% of the business goal.

Toward Sound Association Management

The associations at both villages formulated rules for joint use of related agricultural machinery such as binders that were provided free of charge by the Japanese Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). They also conducted a review of the operator's fee, etc.

Tha Pyaye Thar Village registered a surplus of 4.46 million kyat* in the FY2017 business account settlement (3.85 million kyat in the previous fiscal year); the cumulative surplus



Advice by an expert (JA Shonan) on combine operation (Sin Ma Kaw Village)

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was 8.31 million kyat. Due to the shortage of parts for the binder, the operating rate was significantly lower than the plan, but the plan was nearly achieved overall.

Considerable improvements were made in Sin Ma Kaw Village through their own ingenuity such as making it mandatory for a wetland farmer to be present and ride together, with lessons learned from the first year and advice from Japanese experts serving as a source of encouragement. In the FY2017 business account settlement, the surplus amounted to 2.08 million kyat (-2.32 million kyat in the previous fiscal year). However, even though a

surplus was recorded, it was not sufficient to cover the previous fiscal year's deficit because of sluggish growth in revenue from usage by non-members due to unseasonable weather following the previous year (cumulative loss of 240,000 kyat).

Meanwhile, due to change in awareness related to agricultural machinery operations and maintenance, the fact that repair and replacement parts expenses, etc. were suppressed to less than half (1.6 million kyat) of the previous year (4.37 million kyat) was considered as worthy of evaluation.

(* 1 kyat ≒ 0.1 yen)

Expansion of Utilization of "Farming Calendar"

The expansion of the utilization of "farming calendars" among association members, or in other words, the dissemination not only to leaders (association officers) but also to members, etc. can be cited. The results of comparisons of yields at exhibition fields (rice production) as a voluntary effort based on the "farming calendar" showed an average increase of 30% at three farmer's fields in Sin Ma Kaw Village, and an average increase of 45% at three farmer's fields in Tha Pyaye Thar Village. The use of these "farming calendars" among farmers who are association members has spread to nearly 100% in Sin Ma Kaw Village

and about 80% in Thapyaye Thar Village.



Distribution of farming calendars to association member farmers (Tha Pyaye Thar Village)

Necessity of Efforts toward Establishment of Independent Management of Associations

We have made great efforts so that the financial statement forms that ensure the transparency of association management are easy for association members to understand, but after trial and error, we have come to settle on forms that show the status of important accounts other than the overall balance of accounts (working capital, capital, depreciation reserve funds,

IDACA repayment money, accounts receivable and payables) at a glance based on simple bookkeeping.

As an issue of association management, there is a concern about the so-called "black-ink bankruptcy" at both associations due to a large increase in outstanding receivables. Under these circumstances, management of working capital and outstanding receivables is becoming a more important aspect in the sustainable development of both associations in the future.

As of the end of June this year, the IDACA Myanmar Project has concluded business activities that lasted about three years, and the office has also closed. However, based on the situation of the associations that have been set up, we will continue to do a follow up (accounting guidance, etc.) mainly on the accounting aspects of both associations for one year to two years for the time being.

From the viewpoint of independent manage-

ment, it is desirable that financial statements are prepared independently, and a stable surplus level

is required where relevant costs will be covered by association expenses.

Association Management Guidance That Nestles toward Farmers

It has been decided that a workshop on association management will be held in both villages concerning resolving the issue of outstanding receivables. First of all, we had the associations think about "why does it (outstanding receivables) occur" and "what kind of problems will the accumulation of outstanding receivables cause," and conduct thorough discussions on the "means and methods toward a resolution." As a result, in addition to improving the publicity and collection system, it was decided that the fiscal year will be changed from the grain year to that (settlement at the end of August), which takes into consideration the farmers' operating conditions (working capital).

Looking back at the history of agricultural cooperatives in Japan, the establishment of the cooperatives after World War II and the subsequent era of management slump and business reconstruction continued until the middle of the decade between 1955 and 1965, and it was not until the 1990s when large-scale agricultural cooperatives that underwent mergers became a reality that "agricultural cooperatives with independent management and self-contained functions" came to be proclaimed.

In the early stages of the agricultural cooperatives, the preparation of account settlements based on accounting guidance was a major role of the branch offices of the prefectural union of agricultural cooperatives, and audits were conducted under a neutral



Convening a steering committee meeting (association/government/IDACA)

relationship from the viewpoint of fulfilling accountability to the members.

What truly comes to mind is the significance of the fact that the people at the branch offices of the prefectural union of agricultural cooperatives were engaged in management guidance and auditing for a long period of time since agricultural cooperatives were established. I remembered this when I was watching the local staff encourage and wrap up discussions among associations members at association management workshops.

That is exactly the same scene as the "association management guidance that nestles toward farmers" that was carried out by the people at the prefectural union of agricultural cooperatives.

* This project is carried out with support received under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

REPORTS ON TRAINING COURSES

(1) FY2017: JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program: Agribusiness Promotion for Small Scale Farmers in African Countries, Course (A)

Seven participants from seven countries including Angola participated in the FY2017 training program for widely studying business related to agricultural production, processing, sales, etc. of products ranging from rice, barley, and vegetables to potato chips. The training program lasted from November 6 to December 15, 2017, with the destination of their field study visits changing from Ibaraki Prefecture to Saitama Prefecture and Hiroshima Prefecture.

In the program, the participants inspected the projects of government agencies, JAs, hamlet-based farm management groups, private enterprises, etc. In addition to studying with great curiosity Japanese agriculture and related businesses that have developed, the participants have been greatly inspired through exchanges at the sites of their field study visits with producers, JA people, and people involved in business, and thus seems to have been encouraged to start



Workshop on joint use of agricultural machinery (Sin Ma Kaw Village)



Together with young farmers in areas under the jurisdiction of JA Saeki Chuo (Hiroshima Prefecture)

activities in their own countries.

At the end of the training program, the participants presented reports on their action plans such as “agribusiness promoting the introduction of agricultural machinery,” “value added

(2) FY2017: JICA Malaysia Country-Focused Training Course: LEP2.0* Capacity Building for Marketing”

Commissioned by JICA, we conducted a training program from January 21, 2018 to February 10, 2018 targeting lecturers at the Cooperative College of Malaysia (CCM) who provide various training and guidance to agricultural cooperatives in Malaysia. The purpose of this training program was to enhance knowledge and guidance capacity of lecturers at the CCM on the marketing of agricultural products; 10 lecturers came to Japan.

The participants learned about such matters as the agricultural product distribution system in Japan, the JA Group’s marketing business, and initiatives on import liberalization. They visited ZEN-NOH Fresh Produce Marketing Corporation, ZEN-NOH Agricultural R&D Center, and A-COOP Kanto Co., Ltd., etc. in the suburbs of Tokyo. In field study visits, the participants visited Okayama Prefecture and learned about the prefecture’s marketing and



Visit to A-COOP KANTO Nakata Store



Experiencing radish harvesting at “Roadside Station Yumesugito” (Saitama Prefecture)

business making full use of the one-village-one-product concept,” and “value added business making full use of packaging and processing ideas learned in Japan.”



At Kurashiki Station Okayama (enthusiastic welcome by staff of the Tourism Division, Industry and Labor Department, Okayama Prefectural Government)

branding strategy, the mid-term plan promoted by JA Group Okayama, JA ZEN-NOH Okayama’s business and sales strategy, and visited the factory of Okayama Pearl Rice Co., Ltd. As a case example of agricultural product sales of primary agricultural cooperatives, the participants visited JA Okayama and JA Ashin and learned about the initiatives of the farming guidance and producers’ group and the operations of direct sales shops. In addition, the participants toured Okayama City Central Wholesale Market, Aalam Japan Co., Ltd. (a company that produces and sells Halal bread), Kahouan (initiatives of young farmers certified for sixth industrialization), Yasutomi Farm (case example of green tourism based on dairy farming), etc., and gained a number of useful findings. At the end of the training program,

the participants prepared a collection of case examples summarizing successful cases of agricultural products sales in Japan, and they all departed for home.

* LEP 2.0: Abbreviation for Second Wave of the Look East Policy. It refers to the second wave of the Look East policy advocated in 1981 by Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia calling for “looking toward developed countries in Asia such as Japan as a model rather than Western countries.”



With ZEN-NOH Fresh Produce Marketing Corporation officers and employees (in the center is the president and representative director)

(3) FY2017 ICA Training on Formation and Management of Farmers’ Organizations in Africa

We conducted the above-titled training program from March 7 to March 29, 2018 with participation by 10 people from 10 countries in the African region: Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania. One coordinator from ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Office and another from ICA Africa Regional Office also participated in the program.

This training program was the first ICA training program targeting the African region, and it was prepared in cooperation with the ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Office and the ICA Africa Regional Office. In addition, prior to the training in Japan, a training program was planned in Malaysia from February 12 to March 6, and with full support from the Cooperative College of Malaysia, observation of case examples of agricultural cooperatives in Malaysia and basic lectures were conducted on such matters as the establishment of agricultural cooperatives,



Visit to JA Matsumoto Highland’s Direct Sales Shop

operations, and business plans.

With regard to training in Japan, the participants underwent training on the JA’s farming guidance and sales planning, management of agricultural products direct sales shops, processing of agricultural products, the JA’s educational activities, and SHEP (market-oriented agricultural promotion approach).

During field study visits, the participants visited the Education Center of JA Kanagawa Prefectural Union, JA Sagami, Kamakura City Agricultural Cooperative Federation Vegetable Direct Sales Shop, ZEN-NOH Agricultural R&D Center, JA Nagano, JA Matsumoto Highland, and JA Kamiina. In Matsumoto City, the participants experienced snow for the first time, and in the latter half of the training program, they could see the cherry blossoms, so it turned out to be a memorable training program where they were able to experience not only JA activities but also the nature and beauty of Japan.



Visit to JA Kamiina Agricultural Machinery Center

OVERSEAS BUSINESS TRIP REPORT

ICA/IDACA Follow-Up Guidance and Survey Program Report (India and Laos)

As part of the capacity building project implemented in cooperation with the International Cooperative Alliance – Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) Secretariat, we carried out a questionnaire survey on 12 countries that participated in training programs as well as a follow-up guidance and survey targeting India and Laos from February 11 to February 24. The targets were 109 people who participated in ICA/Japan training courses held from FY2014 to FY2017, with the aim of evaluating the impact and outcome of the training.

In India, the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) served as the contact point, and we interviewed a total of seven former participants in two regions – New Delhi and Bangalore. Although the participants had issues in



Presentation by a former participant (India)

terms of business management, material supply, women's capacity, etc., they gained ideas suitable for each issue, such as the method of the JA's business plan formulation and initiatives toward GAP, through their training. They applied these ideas to the activities in their country and had good results. Some former participants achieved supplying of materials suited to the needs of farmers and increased handling



Palwal Cooperative Sugar Mills Ltd. (India)

volume, while in order to have more people use cooperatives, some participants were observed to launch new mutual aid businesses and welfare projects, responding to the needs of local residents. Advanced initiatives involving the utilization of the Internet and SNS for communicating with farmers and sharing success stories were also introduced.

In addition to the interviews, we visited the NCUI, the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd. (NFCSF), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd. (KRIBHCO), Palwal Cooperative Sugar Mills Ltd., Yachenahali Primary Agriculture Credit Cooperative Society Ltd., Regional Institute of Cooperative Management, Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society, etc. and talked about the situation of each organization.



Retail store of the Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society (India)

Meanwhile, in Laos, the Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry served as a contact point, and we visited two regions – Vientiane and Champasak – and interviewed a total of eight former participants. In addition, we also visited target organizations of the participants' action plans such as organic vegetable direct sales shops, organic vegetable producer groups, cattle raising groups, and the Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative.

In recent years, the demand for organic agricultural products has also increased in Laos, and the prices of organic agricultural products are about twice as much as usual, so many participants were conducting activities to provide guidance and coordination so that farmers can ship their organic farm products to direct sales shops. With regard to women's activities, in



Scene of interview with former participants (Laos)

particular, the participants collaborated well and contributed to improving the lives of rural women. Women who worked individually so far and have been unable to obtain any information have received training and become capable of sharing information with other women, and now they have organized women's groups, and vegetables that they have cultivated have begun to be sold at direct sales shops.

Coffee-related cooperatives have also become organized so that farmers can obtain more profits, and the sale of coffee beans with added value such as fair trade certification was being promoted.

When I looked at the action plans prepared



Scene of interview with organic vegetable producers' group in an action plan target area (Laos)

by the participants at the end of the training program at IDACA, the contents were such that they required further consideration, such as the insufficient analysis of the current situation, lack of concreteness, or whether the projects were of an appropriate scale. In this follow-up,



Scene of interview with former participants (Laos)

however, each participant has been actively working on what he/she can do while achieving the goal by further examining the action plan, and he/she has achieved results exceeding expectations.

Some participants have no choice but to change the action plan for such reasons as personnel changes or lack of funds. As the side planning and implementing the training program, this has become an opportunity for us to think again about the content and method of the training, but it has turned out to be a follow-up guidance and survey program through which we were able to see the competence of the participants as a whole.



Presentation by a former participant (Laos)

REPORT ON VISITORS TO IDACA

Visit by JA Zenseikyo Officials

After a meeting of the Board of Directors of the JA Zenseikyo (National Council of JA Youth Associations) held at the JA National Education Center on Thursday, April 26, 2018, the chairman, vice chairman, and directors visited IDACA to observe our institution. In briefing them on the business of our institution, it turned out to be an active Q&A session on such mat-



Briefing on IDACA's business overview by Executive Director Konno

Tour of the facility