【Episode 11】

The large-room system

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

One of the main features of Japanese institutional culture is the 'large-room system'. Bureaucratic organisations in most developing countries take their lead from Europe and the United States in employing the 'private room system' with a succession of rooms set on either side of the corridor, and with the size of the room corresponding to the degree of seniority of its occupant. Middle-ranking administrators have middle-size rooms, and ordinary staff members are allocated places at random wherever they happen to be available.

In contrast, in Japanese organisations, senior members of staff such as the departmental head sit at the centre by the window in a large, wall-free room. Several rows of desks (known as 'islands') are then set facing each other in parallel. A middle-ranking manager such as a sectional head sits at the head of each 'island' so he can see everything that is going on. This is the standard form of a Japanese office and is shared by institutions ranging from central government offices to prefectural and municipal offices all over the country.

In recent years, in the name of devolution, there has been an increase in the number of projects aimed at strengthening the organisational capacity of local government in developing countries and nurturing good governance. More and more trainees in this field are now visiting Japan. But although they are able to attend a variety of lectures, they would seem to have little opportunity to visit these 'large rooms'.

Officials from Burma and Bangladesh who came to Japan as JICA trainees visited Kamikatsu-cho in Tokushima Prefecture in the middle of March 2006. Kamikatsu-cho is a mountainous region with a population of around 2,100, and has been attempting to take advantage of its unfavourable conditions, such as its ageing population and the small availability of arable land. It has succeeded in commercialising the production of leaves such as maple and nandina that are used to decorate dishes in high-class traditional Japanese restaurants. Production of such items has now attained an annual turnover of 250 million yen, and the main producers of these items are elderly people.

Hearing of this success, around 3,000 or so people from within Japan as well as from developing countries visit this town every year. The officials responsible provide an explanation at the Kamikatsu-cho town office, after which the standard course takes visitors to the places where these items are produced and shipped. However, on this particular occasion the trainees from Bangladesh expressed the desire to learn about the whole range of work performed by local government authorities in the town offices.

Having received this unexpected request, Mayor Kazuichi Kasamatsu, born in 1946, made an announcement using a microphone so as to reach all the offices at the start of work in the morning. He said that JICA trainees would be wandering around the offices and he asked for everyone's cooperation in providing them with appropriate explanations. This would not have been possible if the private room style of work had been used. In that case it would have been necessary to circulate documents so that everyone was aware of what was going on, and to introduce the JICA trainees again and again as they entered each separate office.

However, all fifty or so employees could be informed of exactly what was going on with this single message because of the use of the 'large-room' system. The mayor himself offered an introduction to all the departments on this floor, which included the General Affairs Department, the Tax Affairs Department, the Residents Department, the Industry Department, the Accounts Department, and on the next floor, where the Construction Department and local assembly were located.

The five trainees were extremely satisfied, saying that they had managed to understand the Japanese administrative system as a consequence of their visit. They pointed out furthermore that the large-room system helped to raise the transparency and efficiency of administrative work. Constantly sharing information with other people in the same department and bureau and seeing how people outside one's own department and bureau engage with their work are factors that improve the flow of information through the office as a whole and allow for mutual routine checking of how other people are engaged on their work, meaning that checks are placed on improper behaviour and slacking on the job.

The points made by the trainees are important. The 'large-room' method is indisputably a product of Japanese common sense, and it also results in reduced building costs for administrative facilities. This is surely a strategy worthy of consideration in connection with devolution in development countries, where national finances are inadequate and prevention of corruption is a pressing issue.

The town office at Kamikatsu-cho in Tokushima Prefecture, which was visited by JICA trainees (March 2006)

【Episode 12】

DDT spraying

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Many members of the baby-boomer generation who are hitting retirement age this spring (2007) will remember having had the insecticide DDT sprayed over them from the head down when they were children. During the chaotic period that followed the defeat of the Second World War, malnutrition caused by shortages of food and poor health due to parasites and harmful insects were serious problems.

In response to this situation, GHQ (General Headquarters, which was effectively the US military and was governing Japan at the time, issued an order to establish a new public health system. Doctors, public health nurses and nutritionists were assigned not only to prevent and treat infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, but also to play a wide-ranging role in areas such as mother and child health, nutritional improvement, and environmental hygiene.

Following institution of this new public health centre system in 1947, in 1949 GHQ and the Ministry of Health and Welfare as it was then known jointly produced a PR film with the title of 'New Public Health Centres'. This 20-minute film began by quoting Article 25 of the newly promulgated Japanese constitution, which states that 'All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.' The film then explains the various activities in which public health centres are involved so that they can perform this role. These activities include immunisation, medical diagnoses, prevention of tuberculosis, mother and child health, nutrition and cooking classes, collective health screenings, venereal disease examinations, statistics, health education, environmental health, food hygiene, and home visits by public health nurses.

The Japan depicted in this film is identical to current developing countries that are attempting to make reforms in their health sectors under the auspices of international organisations and aid agencies. New systems are being installed to deal with various health problems, but such efforts are being hampered by forms of social resistance whose origins lie in poverty.

The film presents a person with the appearance of a factory worker who is suffering from tuberculosis and says that he can't go into hospital because taking time off work would mean that he would lose all his income. There is another scene in which a public health nurse visits a home in which the husband, who is suffering from tuberculosis, is lying on a flattened out mattress in a ramshackle house with broken paper walls, while his wife, who already has many children, has a new baby wrapped up on her back. The nurse recommends that her husband has a medical examination, but he refuses on the grounds that he would be told to go into hospital if he were to be examined. Going into hospital would require money and he says that, being poor, he would rather die of hunger than of illness. The nurse tries to persuade him by providing him with information indicating that he would be able to receive assistance if he made use of the welfare system now in effect. The role played by home visits made by nurses was extremely important in terms of combating tuberculosis.

In another scene, an exorcist wearing a traditional Japanese kimono is praying for a sick person to be cured and is spied through a fence by a nurse on her bicycle. She laments the fact that such customs unnecessarily increase the mortality rate. Reliance on such traditional methods of medical treatment still existed as late as 1947 even in Tokyo. In this particular film, the Suginami Public health centre appears as a model public health centre.

GHQ made a variety of reforms in the field of social development, but the public health centre system was not necessarily enforced on Japan in the form of the American system; various measures were taken to implement a domestic system in accordance with Japanese society at the stage when the new Public Health Centre Law was implemented. For example, the system of public health nurses and national health insurance was incorporated, the activities of 'Aiiku-han' mutual help organisations were introduced to improve mother and child health, 'the squad of hygiene officers' (Eiseihan) were employed to create job opportunities for soldiers who had been demobilised after returning from the war front, and birth control public lectures were held for the benefit of women's associations in rural areas . The extent to which reform of health systems in developing countries needs to involve adaptation to local conditions is a question that needs to be studied on the basis of Japan's past experience.

An exorcist praying for the recovery of a child from illness
Source: 'New Public Health Centres' (Atarashii hokensho), CIE educational film, 1949.

Mera's treasure

Snow-clad Mount Tateyama soars up
The blue sea spreads out at the foot of the mountain
Mera's treasure, Abugashima Island
Full of living things, the bountiful sea

Looking behind, the mountains
Gently gaze on us all
The flow of the water from Mount Sekido
Swaying in the wind, terraced paddy fields, the bountiful mountain

Surrounded by Mera's treasure
Mera's children growing up healthily
At times of joy, at times of sadness
Let's keep our hands joined in friendship.

This is a choral song with a text by a girl who graduated in 2005 from Himi Municipal Mera Primary School, which is located at the eastern tip of the Noto Peninsula located on the western side of Japan facing the Japan Sea. Farmers who take a break from their work planting rice in the terraced paddy fields overlooking the bay of Toyama can look up to see the towering peaks of the Tateyama mountain range. This is the subject of this song. When I heard this song for the first time I realised intuitively that it was a new 'school anthem' created by the pupils themselves.

Japan, kingdom of school anthems

There are no doubt many members who have been assigned to schools in the areas where they have been posted. There are also surely large numbers of former members who have been active at schools in developing countries.

But is there, or was there, a school anthem in the school to which you were assigned? In comparison with Japan, where every school has its own anthem as a matter of course, there are surprisingly few schools outside Japan that do have their own school anthems.

In the case of Japan, every educational institution from primary schools through to junior and senior high schools and on to universities have their own anthems, as do even nurseries and kindergartens. Even some university cram schools, where students only spend a brief time, have their own anthems.

School anthems came into being during the process of modernisation that followed the formation of the social institution known as the school and the introduction of modern Western music. There are already some schools that have instituted several anthems in the course of their history from one generation to the next, and it is evident that these songs have been handed down with the changing of the generations.

Pupils who, assuming that they do not change schools in mid-course, will have attended just one primary school, one junior high school and one senior high school are likely to find that these songs remain in their memories long after they have graduated.

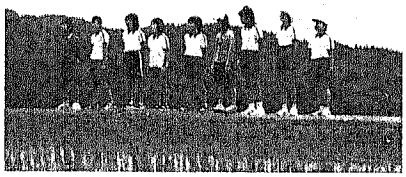
The role of school anthems

The most popular subjects for school anthems, especially in the case of primary school and junior high school anthems, tend to be connected with mountains, rivers and the sea in the areas where the schools are located. A splendid school anthem will emerge when lines are incorporated into the anthem describing the growth of bright and healthy children. Primary and junior high schools have been built all over the country, and most mountains and rivers to which local people feel particularly attached are likely to make their appearance in school anthems somewhere or other. Before the Second World War Japanese cities were still surrounded by plentiful natural environments, and there is thus very little difference between schools in urban areas and in farming areas in terms of their texts.

The fact that every school has its own anthem extolling the area where the school is located has given schools a totally different function as educational institutions. There can be no doubt that such songs have the effect of enhancing the sense of belonging felt by children born and bred in the areas extolled in the song texts.

But conversely, the fact that it has become possible to carry around one's native place by singing about it has meant that people can take this place with them wherever they go, and has had the effect of causing large numbers of young people to move away from farming villages.

One wonders what young people in developing countries where schools do not have their own anthems are able to put in their pockets to remind them of the places where they were born and grew up.



Children from Mera Primary School singing their school anthem on a terraced paddy field at Nagasaka in Himi City. Photo by: Eitaro Kobayashi.

【Episode 13】

The effects of school anthems

Text by Masami Mizuno

A history of radio calisthenics

Radio calisthenics in the morning have for a long time been a distinctive feature of schoolchildren's summer holidays. The custom itself was started by an American insurance company in 1925. Taking its example from this, the Insurance Bureau of the Ministry of Communications in 1928 instituted a system of 'National Health Exercises' involving radio broadcasts that were started the following year and covered the whole nation. The background to this campaign was the desire to improve the health of life insurance subscribers.

Before the war, radios had not yet spread to every home. But everyone, irrespective of age, gender, time and place could take part in these exercises, and the ease of participation meant that the custom soon spread throughout the country.

After the end of the war, the first radio calisthenics movement was officially started in 1951, the second getting under way the following year, and radio broadcasts began nationwide. The familiar 'Summer Touring Radio Calisthenics Sessions' were then started in 1956. At the start of the television era, radio calisthenics entered the living rooms of ordinary families through the medium of television broadcasting. Further down the line and with the advent of the 'ageing society', a new system of 'Calisthenics for All' was created in 1999.

New fields of radio calisthenics

If you ask Japanese people what they associate with radio calisthenics, the reply in most cases will be something along the lines of 'having to get up early in the morning during the summer holidays when at primary school in order to take part.' However, in recent years the decline in the birth rate has meant that there are some regions where it has become impossible to organise radio calisthenics any more.

On the other hand, in the wider world radio calisthenics retain a solid degree of popularity despite their lack of flamboyance.

For example, on building sites everywhere in Japan it is possible to hear the music used to accompany radio calisthenics before work gets under way in the morning. Once the exercises are over, the workers take up their respective positions with a renewed awareness of the need to prevent accidents from occurring throughout the day. Radio calisthenics thus assist both in enhancing safety in the workplace and in increasing productivity.

In Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district, where the buildings occupied by the organs of central government are located, there are ministries where the music of radio calisthenics can be heard echoing through the corridors at 3.00 in the afternoon. I myself joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Tokyo in 1974, and at that time I recall being extremely surprised to see my fellow employees lining up in the corridors at 3 o'clock and practicing radio calisthenics. Having checked in connection with the writing of this article, I discovered that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries still today organises radio calisthenics, Forestry everyone participates at the same time.

【Episode 14】

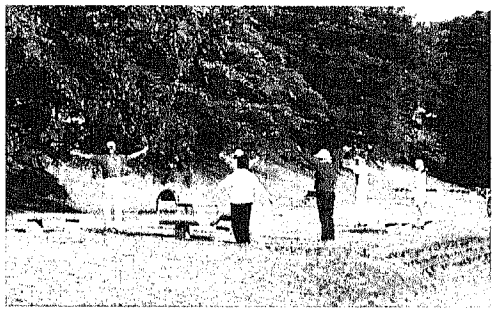
Radio calisthenics: one, two, three

Text by Masaru Mizuno

Summer holiday radio calisthenics are unpopular with children who have been forced to get up early in the morning to take part, but they are extremely popular as levers of regional regeneration among local governments and in shopping arcades, especially in forms such as the 'Summer Touring Radio Calisthenics: Exercises for All', which are held every day throughout the summer holiday period, and the 'Special Touring Radio Calisthenics: Exercises for All'. These two events are held fifty times a year, and fierce competition occurs amongst prospective venues for holding these early morning sessions. Despite the short duration of the broadcast, selection of a particular venue provides the municipality where the venue is located with the chance to present its history, its distinctive produce and its main tourist attractions, thus offering a great opportunity for self-advertisement.

Elderly people with a strong interest in health contact their friends in neighbouring areas, and they all get together to take part in morning radio calisthenics (see photograph).

Thought of in culinary terms, radio calisthenics are a kind of appetiser that goes well with the main dish. This is why they have become so popular among Japanese people everywhere.



A group of elderly people enjoying radio calisthenics in the morning. Photographed by the author in August 2007 by the side of the River Kamo in Kita-ku, Kyoto.

Beginning with hardball

The Koshien Stadium is synonymous with high school baseball for most Japanese people. The summer national tournament held in 2008 marked the 90th time the event had been held. By the time this issue of the magazine is published, the schools that won through the regional tournaments to book themselves a place in the national tournament will be engaged in a fierce battle with the aim of raising the victor's flag. The appeal of high school baseball at the Koshien Stadium lies not just in seeing which side is going to win, but also in the exchange between sportsmen who have devoted their youth to the same sport and are competing with each other with a display of technique and teamwork.

The tentacles of the spring and summer Koshien tournaments are wide-reaching. Beneath the national tournament are the regional tournaments organised on a prefectural basis, and beneath these are the locally organised tournaments, meaning that the system is divided into three stages.

The spread of Koshien

The organisational structure of Koshien has been incorporated into the 'Manga Koshien', an event well suited to Japan with its flourishing manga (comic book) culture. Senior high school manga clubs that have won their qualifying rounds on the prefectural level gather in the city of Kochi, where they take on the challenge of single-frame cartoons in order to obtain the victor's prise. A plate with each year's winning submission is used to decorate a street in Kochi.

A similar tournament is the National Senior High School Haiku Tournament, generally known as the 'Haiku Koshien'. This tournament is held in the city of Matsuyama, the birthplace of the celebrated poets Shiki Masaoka and Kyoshi Takahama, whose efforts resulted in the haiku form becoming a popular form of artistic activity among ordinary people.

Although not restricted in terms of participation to senior high school pupils, there are Koshien events in which the participants compete over their calligraphic skills (the National Calligraphy Tournament) and an 'Agricultural Koshien' with participation from pupils of agricultural high schools and high schools with courses of study related to agriculture. The pupils vie with one another to solve practical issues facing farmers, exercising their ingenuity to come up with ideas for improving farming methods and putting them into practical application.

Community development Koshien

High school pupils couldn't be expected to tackle issues such as the diffusion of agriculture, livelihood improvement and the building and development of local communities, but events similar in concept to the Koshien idea have been held for many years in fields such as these involving competition on a national scale.

One such event is the National Agricultural Competition sponsored by the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper company, which dates back to 1952. The campaign to popularise improvements in living standards was introduced on the

【Episode 15】

Sights set on the Koshien stadium

Text by Masami Mizuno

basis of the Agricultural Improvement Promotion Law (1948), and the first national event at which the results of improvements to living standards were announced was held in 1953, with the most outstanding contributions being presented to the public. The first National Tournament for Technical Exchange among Young People from Farming Communities was held in 1961.

The participants in such nationwide tournaments are individuals and groups involved in farming selected as representatives of their respective prefectures. In order to represent one's prefecture, a would-be contestant has to be able to demonstrate commensurate results in the area falling within the jurisdiction of an agricultural extension office. It goes without saying that the final decision as to whether someone is able to represent their prefecture is dependent upon the activities and practical records of the extension officers who are directly in charge of community-building activities on the front line.

The purposes of holding tournaments and competitive exhibitions in fields such as diffusion of agriculture are, firstly, to propagate and standardise agricultural technology and know-how and, secondly, to enable people engaged in agriculture to express themselves by presenting their own personal experience. However, a yet more important and effective consequence of these events is that they make farmers aware that their colleagues throughout the country are directly facing the same problems as they are, and are all trying somehow to overcome their concerns.

A community-building experience presentation held with the participation of people from neighbouring villages. Photograph taken from 'A History of Community-Building over Ten Years' (Niigata Prefecture Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Department, 1982, p.154).

【Episode 16】

Democracy in farming communities

Text by Masami Mizuno

It is now generally assumed that democracy is indispensable for development. In post-war Japan too, recovery in farming communities began with the process of democratisation. But what exactly was the content of this democratisation?

Reform of agricultural land: half in half

Democratisation of farming communities centred on the reform of agricultural land. The purpose of this reform was for the government to purchase agricultural land from landlords and to sell it to tenant farmers to enable them to set up on their own. The practical work involved in buying and selling agricultural land was undertaken by the agricultural land committees of local municipalities.

In the first agricultural land reform implemented in 1946, the number of committee members was set at five, consisting of tenant farmers, landlords and owner farmers. However, in the stronger second agricultural land reforms of 1949 made on instructions from the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces, the ratios of tenant farmers, landlords and owner farmers were changed to 5:3:2. Committee chairmen were selected through co-option, meaning that if the tenant farmers bandied together to appoint the chairman, it would be possible for the interests of the tenant farmers to be protected through the casting vote of the chairman if the opinions of the two sides were equally divided.

Democracy in this case was all about the beneficiaries of agricultural land reform occupying one half of the number of committee members. However, the position of chairman of municipal agricultural land committees was occupied in almost 40 per cent of cases by the representative of landlords, with the effect of suppressing the representatives of tenant farmers (see table).

Land improvement projects: two-thirds

In order to deal with shortages of food products, along with the diffusion of agricultural skills, a start was made with shaping and enlarging farming zones, making improvements in irrigation facilities, and building farm roads on the basis of the Land Improvement Law of 1949. This land improvement corresponds to the irrigation farming development projects being implemented in developing countries today.

Application for implementation of such projects was dependent upon approval by at least two-thirds of farmers in the affected area. At the stage when the law being formulated, the figure was actually one half. GHQ reckoned that this was undemocratic and turned down the original proposal, and the final proposal was for an absolute majority comprising two-thirds of the affected farmers.

The precursor of the Land Improvement Law was the Arable Land Adjustment Law of 1899. This law stipulated that the condition for implementation of zoning projects involving farmland was approval of at least two-thirds of landowners occupying at least two-thirds of the land area and of land value in the affected area. However, this rule was relaxed ten years later in 1909 and a change made to one half of the number of landowners in order to make it easier to implement projects. This reform was made to reflect the opinions of the landowners.

This would appear to be the source of the 'one half' rule proposed by the government with the aim of encouraging land improvement projects and increasing food production. On the other hand, GHQ was intent upon encouraging the introduction of democracy into farming villages. In contrast to the situation in the case of farm land reform, GHQ placed importance on the autonomous expression of opinions by landed farmers, and it was for this reason that the 'two-thirds' rule was instituted.

Imposed democracy and autonomous democracy

From the standpoint of farming communities, all the examples introduced above involve development projects introduced by outsiders. The lack of correspondence between the expectations of those who introduced democracy and the response of those on whom it was foisted is clear to see, bearing in mind that farmland committees were not necessarily always run by tenant farmers. Moreover, because alternative land involving the exchange of land ownership was indispensable in order to expand farmland zoning by means of land improvement projects, it was only natural that agreement should be obtained from all the farmers affected.

Farming communities and farmers are not going to be affected by standards based on majority votes involving some specific figure. The tradition of Japanese farming communities is rooted in autonomous democracy based on the principle of equality, whereby every farmer who forms part of the community has an equal vote.

Ranks occupied by the chairmen of municipal farmland committees (unit: %)

	Tenant farmers	Landlords	Landed farmers	Neutral	Total
March 1947	24.8	39.1	34.5	1.6	100
December 1948	26.6	37.1	34.5	1.8	100

* Neutral committee members were appointed by the prefectural governor on the recommendation of elected members. Few such members were actually appointed. From Farmland Reform Records Committee, ed., Nochi kaikaku tenmatsu gaiyo (A Historical Outline of Farmland Reform), 1977, p.514.

[Episode 17]

Incense water

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Although it's hard to notice when you're in a city, moving around the countryside of Japan in a train makes you aware of the changing of the seasons as you look out onto the paddy fields that pass by beneath the train window. Early in spring the dry fields are ploughed and at the end of April and early in May they are filled with water and rice planting begins. Paddy fields look just like ponds and it's quite possible not to notice the seedlings at all unless one pays particular attention.

The seedlings begin to grow a week or so after planting and they become increasingly green. When the rainy season arrives, the fresh greenery can be seen clearly from the carriage window. With the arrival of summer the ears of the rice ripen, and by the end of summer they form a sea of gold. The rice is harvested from the end of August through the month of September. Green shoots appear from the stalks immediately after the rice has been harvested, but they lose their colour with the advent of autumn and change into the colour of straw.

The view from the train window is of modern paddy fields covering a relatively large area and divided into squares. But it was primarily as a result of the farmland reforms and land improvements made after the Second World War that this view of well-ordered, regularly sized paddy fields began to appear. A glance at paddy fields today shows that they have carefully structured irrigation channels of various sizes, and pump huts can be seen here and there. This hints at the presence of a network of drainage pipes beneath the ground surface.

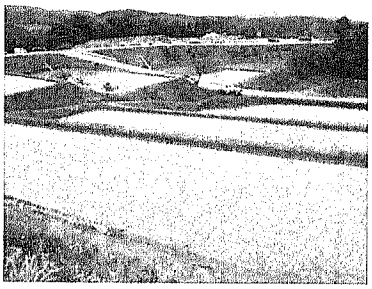
Paddy fields have of course existed since centuries back, but it was traditionally only a few wealthy farmers who owned paddy fields covering large, clearly defined areas. Most small farmers and tenant farmers had small, irregularly shaped paddy fields scattered over the landscape in different places. The size and location of their fields was dependent on factors such as how fertile the land was, the lie of the land, differences in height, and previous land disputes. With the aim of obtaining the maximum harvest from a restricted land area, highly labour-intensive agriculture was practiced.

Irrigation facilities with their sources obtained from reservoirs and streams were slowly developed during the Edo Period (17th to 19th century). Upstream fields were generally favoured because water could be supplied first. If a drought were to happen and the water levels in reservoirs were to sink, or if little snow had fallen the previous year and the flow of rivers had decreased, water would not reach downstream fields in sufficient quantities. Such a situation would result in frequent serious disputes over water, sometimes resulting in the spilling of blood.

Various systems were thus devised in agricultural communities to ensure that everyone would be able to use water in a peaceable manner. One of these systems was known as 'mizuban'. These 'water officers' were allocated to water-dividing facilities that allocated water to downstream fields. The system was a simple one in which clay would be piled up onto water inlets or panels would be inserted to control the flow of water. These officers would thus take control over the supply of water. Mizuban officers were appointed with the agreement of everyone in the community, and in compensation for their work they would receive rice provided by everyone concerned. This was a completely autonomous, self-governing system independent of any interference from the government.

Another innovatory system was known as senkomizu ('incense water'). In order to make sure that the length of time during which water was supplied was fair and equal, an incense stick would be lit, and when it had burned down, the supply of water would move on to the next field. This made it possible to measure time exactly without having to use a stopwatch. Today, we associate incense sticks with family altars and tombs, but they also used to be effective in preventing disputes.

This story shows that when irrigation facilities controlled by the state were introduced along with civil engineering techniques from the West, the rules of water allocation were exactly the same as the autonomous rules involving mizuban and senkomizu that had existed since the Edo Period. This process of assimilation offers valuable lessons for avoiding conflict as much as possible with local communities as modern irrigation facilities are introduced today into developing countries.



Terraced fields between mountains in an area where land improvement has occurred (Nagasaka, Himi City, Toyama Prefecture). This particular terraced field has been designated as one of the 100 best views of such a field in Japan.

【Episode 18】

The formidable attractions of premiums

Text by Masami Mizuno

The roots of premiums

The extras and supplements attached to monthly magazines are often more lavish than the magazines themselves. This is particularly the case with inaugural issues and issues that appear at the start of a new school term. I expect there are many people who have actually purchased a magazine primarily because of the premiums that came attached to it.

The origins of this custom of incorporating premiums when selling products are thought to lie with sellers of medicines in Toyama who were well known for their leased medicine kits for use in the home. From the second half of the Edo Period, it was common for merchants to add gifts and souvenirs to the goods they sold to their customers. The extras they offered included woodblock prints, calendars, talismans, teacups, lacquered chopsticks, can openers, ladles and a host of other household utensils. Another typical item of this type was paper balloons (see photograph).

The evolution of premiums

These premiums were given a variety of names such as supplements, prises and presents, and they became an important aspect of sales promotion strategy. As the economy grew, fierce competition occurred between businesses attempting to increase their share of the market. This resulted in establishment of the Law for the Prevention of Unreasonable Premiums and Misrepresentation Concerning Products and Services of 1962, which set limits to the value of premiums in respect to the price of the products to which they are attached.

But despite this, there was no let-up in the efforts made by companies to produce premiums and they have now spread all over the world, overstepping national boundaries. In today's age of information technology, premiums offered include points cards which are available in Japan at department stores, supermarkets and bulk-sale outlets, and, internationally, the mileage cards offered by airline companies.

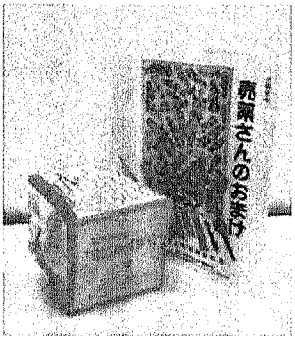
Premiums have thus come to flourish in the context of sales strategies aimed at achieving higher levels of profit, but it is customary for the party that offers the premium to decide on its content. Accordingly, rather than attach a premium that is unnecessary and not likely to be of any use, consumers are much more likely to be interested in seeing the producers lower their prices as far as possible.

Premiums that cost nothing

Premiums were an effective strategy for Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers). For instance, in order to increase attendance at monthly meetings of Livelihood Improvement Practice Groups, the LIP workers would incorporate the preparation of a simple dish made from easily obtainable local food products into the programme of activities on each occasion. It goes without saying that they would themselves try preparing the dishes themselves at home many times to get ready for a study session on cooking methods.

Some time ago, efforts were made to modernise agriculture in Tottori Prefecture by encouraging the production of fruit trees. This involved the introduction of the so-called 'Twentieth Century' type of nashi pear. Study sessions on how to grow the pears were held for the wives of fruit farmers. A local university teacher who provided technical instruction would end his training session one hour early, which would allow the farmers' wives to go shopping before they returned home. The women were all very happy, the reason for this being that this was an age when it was still regarded as unacceptable for women in farming households to leave their homes unattended without first informing their husbands and mothers-in-law. This meant that they were unable to go shopping to the local market even to buy things for their own families.

The university teacher in question was well versed in the techniques of pear production as well as being fully aware of how women in farming households led their lives, and this prompted him to devise a premium without precedent anywhere else in the world that involved no expense.



A paper balloon attached as a premium to medicines. Collected by the author at the Toyama City Proprietary Drugs Museum. Photograph courtesy of Koichi Watanabe.

[Episode 19]

Activities of team members based on the example of long-distance road relay races (ekiden)

Text by Masami Mizuno

The origins of ekiden

Long-distance road relay races (ekiden) were instituted as a system of transport and communication, and they stretch back a long time in history. The systems of relay runners that operated in ancient Mesopotamia (7th century B.C.) and ancient Persia (6th century B.C.) are well known to us from history textbooks. Similar systems used to exist in ancient Rome and China too. A system of relay stations was introduced under Chinese influence into Japan during the eighth century, when the Japanese capital was located at Heiankyo. Later on, during the Edo Period, a system of post stations was established with horses running back and forth between stations set at prescribed distances apart.

The birth of ekiden races

A postal system was established in Japan in 1871, and the ekiden system of post stations was abolished. But the institution was revived in 1917 in the form of ekiden races in which tasuki sashes would be handed on from one runner to the next. Over a period of three days beginning on April 27, 1917, two teams, one from eastern and one from western Japan, competed in the 'Tokaido Ekiden Road Race' which began at Sanjo-ohashi in Kyoto and ended at Ueno in Tokyo (see photograph).

The appeal of the ekiden lies in the coupling of the relay as a group event and the competition between individual runners that occurs between the separate relay points. The word ekiden has now achieved international currency and is often used internationally to refer to road relay races. It has spread from road races to include water-based events, and canoe ekiden are now also practised. Outside the world of sport, appeals have been launched for maintenance of national highways involving runners carrying a petition in place of a sash between neighbouring municipalities.

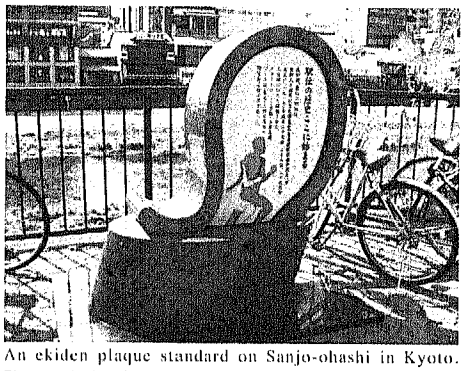
JOCV members' ekiden

How can the activities of JOCV members be likened to ekiden races? The most difficult aspect of JOCV members' ekiden is the question of successors. There are three sides to the question, namely position, work and activities. The first two are connected with the institution at the place where the appointment is made, meaning that solutions cannot be found merely through the efforts made by individual JOCV members. In contrast, individual JOCV members can leave records of actual activities. This means that, instead of a sash, records of activities can be left behind and the competitors can aim to achieve prises for separate stretches along the route.

The most important thing in terms of recording activities in general is their continuity. There are no established rules as to how to make records, and the best thing is for each individual to devise the simplest method he can come up with. Anyone who is good at poetry or painting might be advised to engage in activities such as writing haiku or drawing sketches. People making records should ideally express their own opinions and assessments too.

The next question is that of how the separate legs of the team members' ekiden should be considered. I would like to stress that this is not necessarily restricted to the period of temporary dispatch. Sumiko Inagaki, who was born in 1928, was once a Livelihood Improvement Extension worker active in Shiga Prefecture, and for a long time she kept an extensive collection of records and materials related to her time as an officer in this position. A special exhibition based on these materials intended to cast light on the Rural Livelihood Improvement Movement was held in spring 2009 at Ibukiyama Culture Museum at Maibara-cho in Shiga Prefecture. Visitors were once again reminded of the enormous changes that have occurred over a period of fifty years in living conditions in farming communities.

Many years may thus be required before the records of extension activities are actually used. But outstanding records are sure to be used at some time in the future. Use of the Internet means that it is no longer necessary to await the appearance of successors, and it of course opens the way to the transmission of information autonomously and at low cost.



An ekiden plaque standard on Sanjo-ohashi in Kyoto. Photographed by the author.

Chapter 2
Facilitator and rural community

The key to improving living standards in village communities is the existence of facilitators in the form of Livelihood Improvement Extension workers. In Chapter 2 we will be focusing on people who provide both material and psychological support to villagers, and who play key roles in changing village communities.

Who became extension workers?

The agricultural extension system was established in 1948 on the basis of instructions issued by the GHQ (General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Occupied Japan), and there was an immediate need for people to become extension workers. Agricultural experts who had received their training before the Second World War would have been able to act as Agricultural Extension workers, but female LIP (Livelihood Improvement Programme) extension workers had never existed before in Japan, and nobody had the slightest idea of how to train such people or of what kind of people would be able to undertake this work.

The initially engaged LIP workers were generally people with teaching experience including nutritionists and midwives. There were many war widows at the time, and this proved to be a valuable employment opportunity for such women, many of whom had been educated to a relatively high level.

Born in 1924, Taeko Kiyota belonged to the first generation of LIP workers in Kumamoto Prefecture. From a young age she felt the need to strengthen women's economic position and she wanted to engage in work that would enable her to be of assistance to other people. After leaving a girls' high school, she taught for three years at a primary school, after which she entered a teachers' training college. She graduated two years later at around the time the Second World War ended. Having worked for three years as a senior high school teacher thereafter, while on the way to work by train one day she noticed an advertisement in the newspaper aimed at recruiting would-be LIP workers. Having read the explanation of the work involved, she decided that this was just up her

[Episode 20]

Feedback from the front line

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

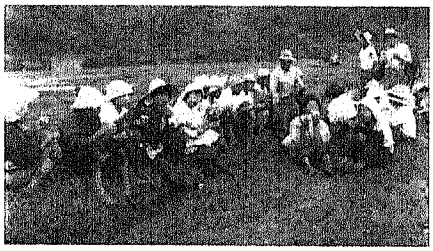
street and she applied to attend the first ever LIP worker recruitment examination held in Kumamoto Prefecture in January 1949. The first batch of twelve recruits included war widows and people who had been evacuated back to Japan from China at the end of the Second World War.

The first agricultural village surveys and bread-baking

LIP workers became active all over Japan in the spring of 1949. Taeko Kiyota was sent to an area known as Kamimashiki-county, but she had no idea of what she was supposed to do. Relying on an acquaintance from her days as a high school teacher who lived in the area, she carried out a survey on the subject of meals and physical health during rice planting in order to gain an idea of the current situation in the village. She discovered that 64 per cent of people experienced stomach problems while planting rice.

During the busiest farming season everyone is active in the fields, and the women have no time to make meals. People in the area would snack on yakidago, a kind of kneaded wheat, but it was hard to digest. And since the farmers spent most of the day bending forward to work, Kiyota reckoned that this was causing them to suffer from indigestion and stomach cramps.

She therefore suggested that the women should snack on soft bread instead. Since nobody knew at the time how to make western style bread, Kiyota formed a group that would gather in a farm where she would teach baking methods to the women. This proved highly successful and news of the group's activities spread by word of mouth to villages in the vicinity. Kiyota reckons that this was probably the first Livelihood Improvement practice (LIP) group in Japan. It was formed in June 1949 under the name Himawari-kai ('Sunflower Group').



Eating jointly prepared rice balls in the intervals between work in the fields. Courtesy of Toshiko Fujino, Fukuoka Prefecture, photographed in the late 1950s.

LIP workers all over the country were instructed and controlled by the Livelihood Improvement Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Tokyo. The department at the time was headed by Miss Matsuyo Omori, but just like LIP workers on the front line, the members of this department were initially groping around in the dark since they had very little idea of how to make improvements in everyday life. They came to the realisation that the only way to proceed was to learn from the examples set by people on the front line. LIP workers from all over Japan gathered in Tokyo in 1951 for the first time. As well as reporting on the results of their activities, each of the participants gained ideas from their colleagues and benefited from the experience of sharing each other's tales of hardship. The results of this gathering were subsequently published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in 1951 under the title of 'Anthology of Examples of Livelihood Improvement Activities, Vol. 1', which remains a document of the highest value.

The head of the Livelihood Improvement Department was extremely impressed by Kiyota's report on the results of her group activities, and this prompted her to issue instructions to the effect that a group strategy should be implemented in the context of Livelihood Improvement activities in other prefectures too. Of course, LIP workers in other prefectures had been carrying out similar trial-and-error activities on their own initiative, and group activities were not necessarily a totally original idea stemming from Kiyota herself. But it is clear that such reports of activities from the front line had an influence on policy-making in central government, and instructions based thereon were then fed back onto the front line in the form of guidelines. This system of feedback was not restricted to Livelihood Improvement activities but was used also in public health and hygiene activities and the new lifestyle movement.

This is one of the features of social development in the Japanese manner and is likely to provide a practical lesson in connection with social development in developing countries.

【Episode 21】

Settlement nurses

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

One hundred settlement nurses in Hokkaido

Even among public health personnel in Japan, there are very few people who are aware that there was once an occupation referred to as 'settlement nurses'. A system of 'emergency agricultural development projects' was instituted by the Cabinet in 1947 in order to do something about the serious food crisis that occurred after the Second World War was over and the shortage of opportunities for employment and accommodation available to people returning to Japan from overseas. Many areas including mountainous regions and former military facilities were earmarked for reclamation and settlement, and efforts were made to find people who would be prepared to take part. A system of 'settlement nurses' was instituted to support the farmers who responded to the call for people to work on newly opened-up farmland.

The assessment placed on settlement nurses tended to differ depending on the position of the person making the assessment, but it would be no exaggeration to say that this was the sole social service made available to poor people who were given land and had to survive without capital or machinery and get by completely on their own.

During the heyday of this system there were more than 300 settlement nurses in action, of whom around 100 were based in Hokkaido, the far northern prefecture of Japan. Around 120,000 families moved to Hokkaido over a ten-year period during the era of emergency development. In newly opened up areas there were communities that became completely cut off by snow during the winter, and the development nurses were the only people who could be relied upon when someone fell ill or when a woman was about to give birth.

In Hokkaido, LIP workers were generally concerned with existing farm villages. As regards areas opened up for development, livelihood improvements for settlers and their health control were entrusted to settlement nurses. Most settlement nurses resided in the areas where they were posted, and many of them were themselves settlers. Many settlers set themselves up after the Second World War in Shibecha-town between Kushiro and Abashiri. There were places such as the village of Iyasaka, which was populated by people who had returned to Japan after being involved in similar pioneering projects in Manchuria, but most such settlers came from the ranks of former city-dwellers who had had no previous experience of farming but whose homes had been destroyed during the Second World War, and the second and third sons of farmers who possessed neither funds nor equipment. These people had to begin by felling trees and opening up the land in an unfamiliar environment.

The areas developed after the Second World War tended to be those with poor soil that the original settlers during the Meiji era (late 19th century) had given up on. Starting off living in oval tent-like structures, the settlers would move on to live in huts and eventually come to live in so-called 'settler huts', that finally afforded decent living conditions. The trials and tribulations that such people had to go through were immense, and if the husband or the wife fell ill during the first few years before their lives could achieve a degree of stability, everything would fall apart. There were those who took their own lives out of desperation and others who furtively disappeared.

Settlement nurses and LIP workers could travel around by bicycle in such regions during the summer months, but when winter came around, they had to rely on horse-drawn sledges, simple railways and their own two feet in order to get through the snow. Having set out from home, they would be unlikely to return for a few days. If they were called out to attend a birth, it was of no consequence whether it was a Sunday or at night-time, and no bonuses or overtime pay were offered for having to rush along to be with someone in need. But Chie Honda, who was born in 1916, recalls that, considering how impoverished these farmers were at this time, such benefits were things that they would never have even considered demanding.

Development workers placing their own lives on the line

The system of settlement nurses came to an end in 1970. The era during which these personnel were active was one when Japan was desperately attempting to extricate itself from poverty, and there were settlement nurses who put their lives on the line.

They were more than mere nurses since they sometimes had to serve as doctors in places where no qualified doctors were present. They were also teachers involved in adult education, and on occasions even had to act as adoptive parents for babies who had been abandoned due to the poverty of their actual parents. Discord between wives and mothers-in-law in already settled farming communities was a major problem, but at least in such cases there was a safety net present in connection with childbirth and child rearing. But the young wives of settlers who had settled in previously undeveloped areas having cut off all links with established society were unable to rely on anyone else when it came to giving birth. In this sense, settlement nurses, who before the Second World War had indeed been known as 'settlement midwives', performed the role of mothers.

It often happens that people are obliged to move from their homes due to development projects such as the building of a dam or urban planning. The experience of settlement nurses can surely teach us many valuable lessons when we stop to consider the plight of people who are forced to move as a consequence of social development.

Birth of a second-generation settler in the village of Nijibetsu in Shibecha-town, Hokkaido prefecture. Photograph taken in August 1955 and lent courtesy of Mie Ohashi

【Episode 22】

Avoid 3U expenditures

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Household accounts book as a participatory survey

After food, clothing, and housing, the fourth item of support provided by LIP workers was home economics. The idea behind this was to create 'self-reliant farmers' who were able to manage their homes and household finances in an autonomous and planned manner. Keeping a household accounts book was regarded as the ideal entry point for such activities. The LIP worker came up with the catchy phrase 'avoid 3U expenditures' meaning life without Unbalanced (muri), Unnecessary (muda) and Unplanned (mura) expenditures, which women in farming communities would find easy to remember.

Unbalanced expenditure (Muri) was all about spending more than one could afford on ceremonies accompanying the rites of passage in order to show off or keep up with the neighbours. Unnecessary expenditure (Muda) was all about things such as spending money on vegetables and snacks that most people could produce for themselves and using excessive amounts of firewood in ovens with poor thermal efficiency. Unplanned expenditure (Mura) was concerned with making sure that people did not spend money without a plan, so that indispensable expenditures could be made immediately after harvest time, when there would be an inflow of cash. The idea was that people would become more aware of these problems if they kept a household accounts book, and the different problems facing different households would also be brought into focus thereby. Keeping a household accounts book might be thought of as the origin of participatory surveys.

Household accounting gradually entrusted to wives

All the same, even in the case of pocket money, many people find themselves so occupied with one thing and another in the course of their daily lives that they are unable to continue filling in a household accounts book. Moreover, in most farming households, the purse strings are held by a wife's parents-in-law, meaning that it was regarded as overstepping one's position for a young wife to try and find out about how money was being earned and spent. Objections might be raised on the grounds that keeping a household accounts book wouldn't result in money coming in every day. Furthermore, when instruction was given to groups on how to keep accounts books, many women would often put on airs and write a series of falsehoods. To get round this problem, the LIP worker would provide instruction with her back facing the members so that it wasn't possible to see what she was jotting down in her notebook. It was necessary to persuade the LIP group member over and over again that keeping a household accounts book was all about becoming aware of one's own daily life.

One particular Livelihood Improvement group in Ehime Prefecture managed to discover as a consequence of keeping household accounts books that every household was spending too much money on snacks. The women then learned how to make doughnuts in a cooking class, and the response from their children was that these doughnuts tasted much better than the snacks that their mothers had been buying previously. The savings gradually accumulated thereafter, as a result of which the wives gained the confidence of their mothers-in-law and were gradually entrusted with the household finances.

The importance of cutting back on expenditure

Many farmers in Yomitan Village in Okinawa prefecture, far south of Japan, had their farmland confiscated so that the US military could build the Kadena air force base nearby, but employment provided by the base and by American families made it possible for them to obtain a respectable cash income. Yukiko Chibana, who was born in 1938, was active as a LIP worker in 1963 prior to the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. This was a time when there were some homes that were well off due to the employment provided by the military bases on the island, and expenditure on ceremonial occasions in the area was becoming increasingly lavish. But employment on the bases tended to be unstable, and Chibana felt that people might find themselves in trouble in the future unless they used their money in a more planned manner. She thus started providing instruction in how to keep household accounts books.

Since there were some people in this Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) group who were only semi-literate, the classes were divided into beginners, intermediate and advanced. Sensitivity to money was inculcated into members of the beginners class by, for example, when they consumed spinach in their own homes, entering 'two bunches of spinach, 20 cents' based on the market price. Of course keeping a household accounts book doesn't itself result in an increase in income, but being able to plan out one's life in a rational manner had the effect of compensating for the vulnerability of the poor.

In recent years many development projects aimed at alleviating poverty have been all about increasing the income of economically deprived women. However, it should not be overlooked that living standards can be improved by cutting back on expenditure (i.e. doing away with 3U expenditures) and without leaping into the market economy and increasing cash income. The importance of reducing expenditure as a survival strategy for the poor is surely suggested by Japan's experience with the household accounts bookkeeping campaign.

Slide texts used around 1960 by LIP workers for educational purposes. On the left is a book with the title 'Living Household Accounts Books: From the Records of the Mutsumi-kai in Toyoshina in Nagano Prefecture' (1961), and on the right is 'Household Accounts Books in Local Communities: Until the Wife Obtains a Monthly Income' (the example is from Fukushima Prefecture) (1959).
Both texts were produced by the Rural Culture Association of Japan.

【Episode 23】

The power of collaboration and the power of aid

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

After the end of the Second World War, a series of 'Autonomous Economy Films' were produced by the Public Relations Department of Kagoshima Prefecture in the context of Livelihood Improvement activities in rural areas. These films introduced the activities of 'advanced regions' and were intended to provide insights that would benefit other regions. Not only were they very interesting as records of how rural communities looked at the time, but they also offer hints for the development of rural communities today. For this reason they are often shown to visitors from developing countries in JICA's training courses.

One of these films is entitled 'The Strengths of Working Together'. Produced in 1954, its aim was to encourage the revitalisation of agricultural cooperatives . The story is about the rebuilding of the agricultural cooperative in Sashi-village Satsuma-county Kagoshima Prefecture .

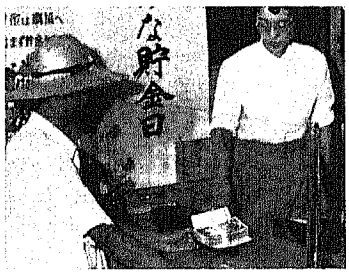
In 1947, the Agricultural Cooperatives Law was enacted on the orders of GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Powers), whereupon agricultural cooperatives began to appear in every part of the country. Most of these were simply 'agricultural associations' which had been organised to provide and distribute food during the war and were now reappearing under a different name. Because of this, with the transition from a controlled to a free economy, many associations found themselves floundering due to unreasonable business planning and non-cooperation from association members in forms such as selling agricultural produce directly to merchants without supplying it to the agricultural cooperative first. The agricultural cooperative in Sashi-village became strapped for cash and was unable to pay the charges for the rice supplied by its members. The cooperative thus collapsed and its chairman was forced to resign.

The next chairman was Seisuke Tahara, who was a businessman with experience gained during the war of running a sugar factory in Java, Indonesia. He made a start by running of the cooperative's starch factory, promoting the breeding of pigs and chickens, encouraging the off-season cropping of peas and other vegetables, and assisting sericulture. With local participation he also engaged in culvert drainage works in paddy fields with poor drainage and the construction of village roads. As well as rebuilding the agricultural cooperative, he also made a major contribution to post-war recovery of the local community. This was truly 'participatory rural development', and the film stresses the importance of 'working together'.

We recently had the chance to visit the place where this film was made more than 50 years ago, and to talk to people who knew what the community was like at the time. Seisuke Tahara died some time ago, but more than twenty people now aged in their seventies and eighties who had worked together with him were kind enough to gather at the Sashi Community Centre, where we showed them the film and asked them to talk about their memories of that time.

Tahara would travel around all the hamlets in the village, visiting individual homes and trying to persuade people to cooperate with the rebuilding of the cooperative at village meetings. However, a man called Yasuke was particularly obstinate and refused to pay to the cooperative the special levy (this was used to pay the salary of the cattle breeding instructors) charged in accordance with the number of head of cattle held. One day, Yasuke's house was burnt down in a fire. Not knowing what to do, Yasuke went along to Tahara, who pointed out to him that the cooperative was needed precisely for times such as this and lent Yasuke the money he needed to rebuild his house, after which Yasuke provided his full cooperation with the cooperative. This is a story that enshrines the spirit of mutual assistance.

It was certainly the case that the key to rebuilding the agricultural cooperative in Sashi was the managerial ability of the chairman of the cooperative and the spirit of mutual assistance, but there was another key to this success, namely the fact that funds for the culvert drainage works and village road construction were made available by a subsidy from the national government for land improvement projects. The agricultural cooperative at Sashi took note of this system of aid at an early stage. By obtaining funds in advance, money was obtained for ensuring that rotating funds could be acquired, and business was expanded. Looking at this in terms of a substitution with today's developing countries, these subsidies were a type of foreign aid. What this implies is that is a residents organisation possesses its own distinctive and autonomous image, it is likely to be possible to use funds introduced from outside with great effect.



A farmer saving money at an agricultural cooperative window
Source: Slides entitled 'Japanese Agriculture, Rural Development and Population'.

[Episode 24]

When invited to perform...

Text by Miho Ota

When Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers (LIP workers) were invited to gatherings in the villages, they would call it 'being invited to perform.' LIP workers were often invited by the women's associations and Livelihood Improvement Practice Groups to their gatherings and lectures to talk about improving the daily life of the farmers. Back in the 1940s, it was rare for young women to become lecturers, so the villagers gathered more to watch a woman speak in public than to listen to her livelihood improvement talks.

You might also have opportunities to be invited to workshops, seminars and trainings as a lecturer. Attending these mean getting to know the place, community and people, and to get them to know you in return; an excellent occasion to expand your network. Therefore, especially at the introductory phase of your activities, steady and constant rounds of these workshops are very useful.

In the course of accepting the invitations, you may also get preoccupied with going to such gatherings to give technical assistances, demonstrations, lectures and workshops. As long as you are invited, you may feel you are accepted by the people. You begin to think that if a number of invitations increases, your popularity also increase; thus your activities are going well. The same goes for LIP workers.

This would be fine if it was only popularity that was vital for your job, like for TV stars. However, LIP workers' mission is to nurture people through improvement of daily life. They are educators; not idols nor engineers. The mission is not completed in just one event, but involves working with people for long term prospects. 'Nurturing the farmer's independence', what is now called people's empowerment, is the LIP worker's goal. In a broad sense, doesn't that also apply to your work?

Ms. Kazuko Tahara (Kagoshima) was a subject-matter specialist who guided and assisted LIP workers around 1950s. She pointed out that there were many LIP workers who 'failed to recognise the opportunities to nurture farmers in gatherings'(*). What she meant was that the LIP workers became so eager in technical guidance that they neglected 'to enhance farmer's independence'. On-site LIP workers were likely to get too busy organising various workshops so that they could not take enough time for each preparation. It was inevitable for them to teach what they themselves believed good for the audience in a top-down and self-satisfactory manner, without paying attention to farmer's autonomy. This had led Ms. Tahara to conduct trainings to remind LIP workers of how each gathering is a precious opportunity to nurture a farmer's independence. The training syllabus covered the details of organising a meeting; including how to develop a programme, how to pick up a topic, how to proceed with the meeting, how to explain and demonstrate, how to prepare teaching materials, supplements and seating arrangements, as well as how to conduct reflection sessions.

It is interesting how many parts of this training syllabus emphasised the contents of the 'Participatory Workshops'(**) that are widely used among present day development workers. The same purpose of 'How to Interact with Farmers,' described by Ms. Tahara in 1956 was emphasised half a century later as 'Facilitator's Attitude and Behaviour'.

The training included observing workshops that were actually conducted by LIP workers, and analysing their attitude and the farmer's reactions. For example, during a peaceful food tasting after a cooking class, the farmers would say, 'It would be better if the ingredients were to be distributed before the class', or 'Wouldn't it better to be clearer on assigning tasks among us...' These conversations are usually overlooked, but they are actually a splendid 'reflection' among farmers, which is a good opportunity to promote voluntary thoughts and actions. The observers looked for good points from what the farmers said, and further discussed how to expand on it in order to nurture farmer's independence. Though LIP workers who were observed would need considerable courage and preparation, this workshop-observation style training programme was popular since it was an excellent chance to develop an LIP worker's nurturing skills as well as to increase their morale.

Training such as this is likely to start free of charge. Should you ever be invited to perform, how about getting your friends together and turning it into your own capacity development self-training programme? Workshops can also be opportunities to foster your independence as well as the participants.

* Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 'Extension Activities Records,' 1958

** Chambers, Robert, 'Participatory Workshops: A Sourcebook of 21 Sets of Ideas and Activities' Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2002

LIP workers sitting in circles and reviewing their activities
Slide 'Livelihood Improvement Extension Work, Photo & Poster Exhibition'
(Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 1956)

Rural development in post-war Japan was not limited to women belonging to Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) Groups. People from the Agricultural Extension Office, Public Health Centres and local government also worked for the same purpose. And in all cases, there was always someone who would cause trouble, no matter how well the LIP workers or public health nurses as facilitators argued their case.

Their reasons could have been personal interest, a reaction because they were greeted in the wrong order, or even antagonism between cliques within the group. But whatever the reason, most of them were small matters when compared to the objective of the job at hand. Nonetheless, this attitude could not be ignored because it not only prevented matters from moving forward, but also lead to the spread of unfounded 'malicious gossip' about the facilitators. This also occurred in developing countries when development workers tried to do something new.

In June 2006, we visited Abu Town in Yamaguchi Prefecture, and had the opportunity to exchange opinions about Rural Development with the local residents. Ms. Akiko Honma (born in 1925), who was a LIP worker until 1980s, and had even served as Abu town councillor and chairman of the town council after she retired, had

【Episode 25】

Dealing with a 'spoiled child'

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

recalled with a really troubled expression that the biggest challenge had been people she called 'jira'. 'Jira' is a word from the local dialect meaning 'naughty', 'perverse', and 'to hold back others from achieving success'. While it is natural for people to resist new things, according to Ms. Honma, 'It is alright if the reason has a logical basis, but not if it is merely 'jira' due to personal feelings'. She also shared a bitter experience of 'deciding on a schedule and planning a Livelihood Improvement Practice Group training trip in advance, only to find the protestors taking a trip somewhere else, riding on the same train on the same day'.

People like this are called 'jira', and they are the biggest problem for facilitators because they break up friendships, which causes a group to split up. Of course, in such cases, there is the option of leaving out the 'jira' people and forcing one's way through based on the belief that 'they will follow once they see the results.' However, that option does not necessarily work all the time, and there are also many cases where it leads to short-term success but a bigger long-term failure.

In the same place, Ms. Honma's successor as LIP worker and also current Abu town councillor, Ms. Yoshiko Nishimura (born in 1943) alluded to the positive aspect of 'jira' people. Of course, 'there was no such thing as a positive 'jira' at the beginning.' However, when someone was absent from a meeting, the LIP worker would ask close friends why the absentee did not attend, or the LIP worker paid a home visit to the absentee and asked the absentee herself, thus understanding precisely the complaints or the reason why they could not attend, and thinking about how to assuage someone who left the meeting angry. This kind of attitude determined the stability and continuity of the regional activities. It is normal to have a 'spoiled child,' but overcoming it, making plans through a persuasion process, will make the community stronger.

Matters carried out where the villagers persuade the 'spoiled child' together with the facilitator and after reaching total agreement within the community will have better sustainability afterwards than matters carried out without giving any chance for the 'spoiled child' to emerge under the legal force of the government, strong leadership within the community, and in case of aid, under the donor's financial power.

Perhaps the idea of looking at the emergence of a 'spoiled child' as an opportunity is necessary for facilitators.

Ms. Akiko Honma, on the 'Green Scooter' of the Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker.
Courtesy of Ms. Akiko Honma

【Episode 26】

The things we learn from the 'Extinct' 4H Club

Text by Yoko Fujikake

4H Club absorbed by youth group

Ms. Yoshi Sato (born 1928) was born and raised in Taguchi Village, Minami Saku-Gun in Nagano Prefecture (today's Saku-Shi). Around 1950, under the instruction of the Nagano Prefectural Office, a 4H Club* was established in Taguchi Village, and Ms. Yoshi joined it.

For rural nutrition improvement, the 4H Club planted potatoes and beans, devoted themselves to study how to prepare food using the produce harvested, and showed each other techniques.

The activities were fulfilling, but most of the topics overlapped with the activities of the Youth Group, which had been long established in the village. So, two years later, the 4H Club was absorbed into the Youth Group.

Ms. Yoshi said, 'I can't prove it, but I think the 4H Club would have grown if there had been no Youth Groups (existing groups)." (Writer's insertion in brackets.)

Most of the leaders of the Youth Group are men, but the broadminded Ms. Yoshi was chosen to be the deputy leader of the Youth Group. From there, she attended a symposium on 'Working and learning, or both?' which was held in Tokyo, and also attended lectures by Sumie Tanaka (a famous writer) and Hideko Maruoka (a famous researchers on rural women's issues) on the theme of 'Independence for Housewives'.

Then, Ms. Yoshi began to give lectures on women's independence in areas around Minami Saku-Gun, based on what she had learned in Tokyo, including gender equality. However, despite high participation from women, the number of men participating was small.

Later, Ms. Yoshi was nominated for Youth Group Director, but talk of this disappeared due to the reason that 'you can't let marriage get away from you.' Thus, Ms. Yoshi failed to become a director.

At that time, weddings were held separately by both families, and it took a lot of work and money. It was then that community center weddings were conceived and Ms. Yoshi became the first bride to have a 'Community Center Wedding' in Taguchi Village.

In the international cooperation perspective...

In the field of international cooperation, though there are advantages to the formation of offshoot organizations realized by a project, there are also disadvantages, such as the extra workload to the inhabitants and overlapping activities with other existing organizations.

Ms. Yoshi used the expression 'redundant activities' to describe 4H Club and Youth Club. When supporting projects, by making use of existing groups, redundant activities can be avoided, and activities that had taken roots in the community can also be more enriched. However, it wasn't easy for women to be in a decision-making position in the Youth Club mentioned above. When specific people were removed from decision-making positions, creating another group as a counter space would have certain significance.

There are several groups and communities within a rural community. These groups and communities can be something visible or something that is hard to discern, and also something invisible. Moreover, there are even groups or communities that manage in a specified duration. The people within that community determined or have determined their involvement with the groups or communities, or based on the level of self-interest and their relationship with other people.

When field worker runs a project, it is necessary to consider with the people within the community whether it is desirable to create a new group for the purpose or whether it would be better to use the existing group while taking into account the community's situation. To that end, field worker would be required to make sure of the existence of groups or communities that are crowding in the area, and how the people positioned them while looking at those relationships from the gender perspective.

* The 4H Club originated from a program for rural boys and girls in Iowa, United States from late 19th Century to early 20th Century. The four Hs stand for (1) Hands: to polish one's skills in order to improve one's life and reform agriculture; (2) Head: to train oneself to think things in a scientific way; (3) Heart: the heart is full of fellowship and sincerity; (4) Health: to promote health in order to live happily and to work well.

【Episode 27】

Suiton and Onigiri

Text by Miho Ota

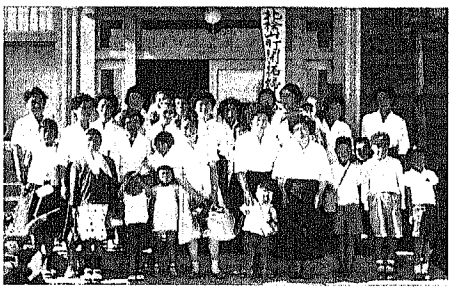
Ms. Miyoko Nakamura (born 1928) of Kitahiyama-Cho (present day Senata-Cho) in Hokkaido came from a merchant family. After getting her Public Health Nurse license, she got married instead of working. Soon, she came to know first-hand the harsh life of a farmer and farming. This included Goemonburo (a bath heated directly from beneath), and drawing water from a well to name a few. But still, in her husband's home, rice and fish were served, and life was relatively stable.

In 1951, Ms. Nakamura received a letter from a Hiyama Town Office looking for qualified people as 'Settlement Public Health Nurses'(*), even if this was in name only. She accepted the appointment reluctantly as she couldn't really refuse. The position was supposed to be in name only. However a few months later, she was surprised to receive an order to submit monthly reports. Not knowing where to start, she began making rounds in the settlement communities in order to have something for her monthly report.

Around 1945, the livelihood of pre-war settlers (colonisers from 1870s) was rice production, and it was largely stable. But things were different with post-war settlers, who were under a considerable hardship. They were cultivating poor and barren land left over by earlier settlers that produced 'potatoes that were smaller than seed potatoes,' or burning early forest growth of kumazasa (striped bamboo), and using stump-pulling horses to clear the land. Even settlers who began in high spirits quickly used all their subsidies and savings, and were exhausted by harsh manual labour. At the time when Ms. Nakamura began her community rounds, the gap in the living standards between the pre- and post-war settlers was apparent. The latecomer's children had to help the family work without going to school, and moreover they were laughed at for being dirty and smelly.

As the existence of public health nurses for settlers became known, there was a woman who walked over mountains to come and see Ms. Nakamura. As a new nurse without any clinical experience, Ms. Nakamura was helpless to assist her, and was only able to tell her to see a doctor. Seeing what was happening, her husband asked her, 'She can't afford to see a doctor, that's why she came here. Isn't there anything you can think on your own that can help her?' She was ashamed of her lack of understanding.

Since then, Ms. Nakamura was determined to 'think and do something herself.' She began to think that making community rounds was not simply about walking around. Many of the settlers had never farmed before, and did not even know to cull the seedlings. She looked for what advice she could give, no matter how small, even if it was to tell people how to cull seedlings while standing around talking. She gradually began to understand the life of settlers.



Members of Kitahiyama settler women's association (circa 1960). The uniformed gathering dresses were made after saving 50 yen every month.
Photograph courtesy of Ms. Miyoko Nakamura

On the day of her community rounds, her sister-in-law would give her an onigiri (a rice ball). She was glad, but she knew the settlers didn't even have rice to eat. At lunch time, she would say, 'I'd love to have suiton (flour dumplings in soup),' and shared what the family was having, then left the family the onigiri as thanks. She was not giving away the onigiri for free, but exchanging it for suiton.

At one house, she was served tea with a strong smell of camphor. She was surprised for an instant. Tea leaves are probably a pricey thing for settlers. Without mistake, they were serving Ms. Nakamura something very valuable to them that had been kept in the wardrobe since they settled there. Ms. Nakamura was touched. As thanks, she gave them precious caramel candy that her mother-in-law gave her to eat when she got tired of walking.

No matter how difficult their lives were, these settlers had their dignity and pride. What hurt young Ms. Nakamura, more than the harsh life of these settler families, were perhaps the gaps in living standards between these families and the earlier settlers, and furthermore, the unfairness of the situation these settlers were in as they were isolated because of the cold prejudice thrown at them stemming from this gap. For someone who began her village rounds looking for advice to give, her eyes were always warm and gentle. Ms. Nakamura stood by the weaker at all times.

Nowadays, when we walk among communities, what can we do? We should think about it on our own, and come up with something ourselves.

* The 'Urgent Settlement Project' was initiated in 1947, in order to solve the post-war food crisis, to create work opportunities for the repatriates, and to solve insufficient habitation areas. 'Settlement Public Health Nurses' engaged in public health and livelihood improvement activities in the settlement areas. During its peak in 1964, more than 300 settlement public health nurses were dispatched nationwide. They were reassigned to public health centres in 1970. See Page 31

【Episode 1】

20 B-Yen

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Ms. Keiko Matsuda (born 1927) of Zakimi, Yomitan village in Okinawa Prefecture is the leader of Okinawa's first household bookkeeping group and a veteran of Livelihood Improvement activities with experience representing Okinawa in the national workshop for good practices.

During the Second World War, the Yomitan villagers fled with their life deep into the mountains when Okinawa became a battleground. They kept alive by eating grass and fruits, and returned to their village shortly after the Second World War. Most of the village was confiscated by the US military base, and they had to begin again from nothing on whatever was left of their scorched land.

They built barracks using wooden boxes and cartons gathered from the US military base and planted food all over the village empty lots. Since they didn't even have pots and pans, they would gather steel army helmets strewn all over the field and use it for cooking. And because they didn't have clothes, they bought not just old cast-offs from the US army, but also flour sacks and parachutes (sometimes men who worked on the US army base would scavenge it from garbage bins and sell it), and used them to make children's clothes. The US army 'gave them things to stay alive, so there were no hard feelings'. They didn't have any other choice.

Ms. Matsuda's generation, who were robbed of their chance to learn due to student mobilisation during the Second World War, were also hungry to 'learn'. Learning was necessary in order to stay alive, and learning was also something they looked forward to. The Livelihood Improvement Extension Services in the form of the Livelihood Improvement Practice Group was the only chance of giving these women a 'place to learn'.

They farmed during the day, so it was at night that they finally got their chance at learning. On the days they had classes, these housewives, with nursing babies who were born during the baby boom shortly after the Second World War, would rush to finish their housework, and ran to gather at Ms. Matsuda's house. There were no proper notebooks, so notes written down diligently on the back of rough paper picked from the US army base became the only source of information. They would help each other by calming down crying babies so that their mothers could take notes.

There were hardly any absentees in these 'learning' and 'teaching each other' gatherings. Since the cost for materials was necessary in cooking classes, everybody would pay 20 B yen (the Okinawan currency under the US rule, having almost the same value as Japanese currency) per person. Those who failed to come up with this money would not be able to join the cooking class, but sometimes when the Agricultural Extension Office provided the materials, everybody could join for free.

In around 1950, there was an average of five children per family, and all of them were malnourished. Ms. Yukiko Chibana (born 1938) was an LIP worker who wandered around advocating nutrition improvement. She taught in the village, that if a family had only one egg, then the egg should be given to the children first. Since this kind of message contradicted Okinawan culture and its respect for elders, there was a flood of protests from the village elders, marking her as 'an extension worker who disseminates disastrous ideas'.

When Ms. Matsuda reported this to Ms. Chibana, Ms. Chibana stood by her convictions, leaving Ms. Matsuda stuck between a rock and a hard place. Finally the elders were persuaded with, 'vitamins are made for blood and bones, so eating eggs will make the children smart'.

Later, life settled down after experiencing rapid economic growth and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan (1972). Even after turning over the Livelihood Improvement Practice Group's activities to the younger generation, Ms. Matsuda still remained active in the area. It is now the 21st century, and when they began to revitalise the area under government leadership, the village men tried to stop the activities due to lack of funding, but Ms. Matsuda and the women were determined to do whatever activities they could without funding. Then, they began a movement to plant flowers throughout the village, which led to picking up trash for environmental beautification, and acquiring funds through collecting empty cans until they were awarded with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Award in 2003.

Improvements that do not cost anything are surely the true worth of the Livelihood Improvement Movement. Perhaps what Zakimi has shown us is the importance of a learning place provided by the government, and the stubborn sustainability of that effect.

JICA Tsukuba conducts training courses with Japan's livelihood improvement experience as its theme for government officials, extension workers and NGO staff involved in rural development in various countries. In these trainings, the participants would observe the initiatives taken in Gunma, Yamaguchi, Iwate and other prefectures, deepen their understanding about rural development through exchange of ideas with persons in charge or local people, and then establish action plans for their own country.

Among the returning trainees, the Central Americans were particularly active so that consultations on implementation issues began to pour in. Therefore, as a part of the follow-up programme, the first Livelihood Improvement Television consultation, relayed by JICA offices in seven Central American countries was held in November 2007.

A common issue brought up by all participating countries was individualism. It was commonly said 'Individualism is so strong in our country that group activities are not popular', and 'People are likely to expect that newly formed groups would have a higher chance to receive grants or aid... under such conditions, groups can be established easily and quickly but sustaining their activities is difficult', among many other things.

The commentator for this consultation was Ms. Chizuru Shimizu, a livelihood extension worker in Gunma Prefecture. Besides her routine work in Gunma, she hosted the JICA trainees from all over the world, and was once dispatched to Mexico by JICA in order to give practical advice for rural development projects utilising her more than 30 years experience.

【Episode 29】

Individualism vs. group activities

Text by Miho Ota

The women's group episode introduced by Ms. Shimizu was very interesting. About 30 years ago in Japan, there was no money for a farmer's wife to use as her own. In 1980, three women began unattended sales of their surplus farm products, aiming to earn some money they could use freely. Once they began earning some daily cash for their own use, the women got more motivated. They became enthusiastic in learning cultivation techniques, such as multi-item cultivation and increasing yield in order to gain more income.

Moreover, the family was happy when they served rare vegetables. Happy with the response, they also began to devote themselves on coming up with cooking methods. The three women studied and exchanged techniques while increasing their income. With their constant effort, the money they saved slowly reached 200,000 yen in one year, which surprised even their families. At last, one of them bought her heart's desire - a refrigerator to preserve homemade processed foods. Observing their success, other women also showed interest and their fellow increased to 10. To develop their activities, they formed a group for farm product processing. A tiny processing room was built with materials contributed by members and completed by their husbands and them together.

The area specialty, butterbur tsukidani (food boiled down in soy) and miso (fermented soybeans) paste became popular items, and the production could not keep up using only the ingredients the group members brought. They decided to purchase soybeans and rice from senior citizens and others in the area. By doing so, the people in the area worked diligently trying to increase their yield in order to sell more products for the group. As a result, the whole area productivity and income improved, and there were even people who began to find their calling in agriculture.

What we can learn from this example is probably that group activities can be lively when people who needed a common 'means' that increase income worked together, regardless of their individually different 'objectives.' It is not strange if the motivations to start the activity are self-interested reasons such as 'I want pocket money', or 'I want a refrigerator'. Those reasons are, if anything, a matter of course once you think about their individual lives and interests.

Once people make clear what they want money for, they would exert themselves and even came up with ingenious solutions. Through that process, people hone their techniques and acquire needed knowledge. Once they know that cooperating with other people would be more profitable than working alone, groups would be formed naturally. The group grows if intrinsic motivation overcomes individual interests. Contributing to the community may also come as a result. If income generation activities in groups failed, wouldn't that be due to the objective being mistaken for the means?

In other words, it is all right if the motivation is self-interest or individualism. However, for group activities to grow and sustain, perhaps the key would be the long-term involvement of an outsider who has a high level of awareness and perseverance, like Ms. Shimizu, who can advise on effective practical use of profits gained, and can promote a natural influence toward organisation and contribution to the community.

Ms. Kazuko Harada, who bought a refrigerator. At the 'Mother's Best Item under Heaven Fair' in Gunma Prefecture, February 2007.
Photo courtesy of Ms. Chizuru Shimizu

【Episode 30】

Gender equality and women's organizations

Text by Yoko Fujikake

Organizations of groups and its continuity is one of important topics in social development project or program. When considering women's organizations in post-war Japan, we would need to consider the society at that time, and how the status of women had changed.

Under the Meiji Civil Code in pre-war Japan, wives were prescribed as incompetent persons. However, after the war, the Japanese Constitution (enacted in 1947) stipulated "equal under the law" in Article 14, and "gender equality" in Article 24. Furthermore, in the Japanese Education Act (enacted in 1947), stipulated "equal opportunity for education" in Article 3, and "coeducation" in Article 5.

The establishment of Tokiwa-kai and activities continued by women

Tokiwa-kai in Jiromaru, Fukuoka is one of the 4H Clubs aimed for livelihood improvement. It was in the limelight nationwide because it was successful in publishing cookbooks and selling reduced chemical vegetables to cooperatives. It was established in 1967. The trigger was obtaining driving licenses by six of its eight women members.

At that time, not many women wanted to be married to a farmer. So, to find their brides, through trial and error, single farmers came up with ways such as "getting a driving license." It was the period when cars were just beginning to get popular, and the members' husbands all owned a car.

One of the 4H Clubs members at that time was working in a company, and was planning to get her own driving license. However, in the marriage proposal, she was encouraged by the partner to get her license after the marriage, so that was what she did.

At that time, role division between men and women remained deeply rooted in farming. It would involve plowing the farm using cattle, which was a man's job, and rice planting (hand planting) was a woman's job. Also women had responsible for housework; it meant that it was not easy to go out of the house. However, encouraged by their husbands to form something (groups) since they all had their driving license, the women established Tokiwa-kai and were stared actively. Their husbands were primary members of the 4H Club, established from Youth Groups, but they were busy with farming and their activities were reduced.

"Since Tokiwa-kai was formed, it was as if it snatched away men's group stock," say its members. Going out once a month to gatherings and such was something they looked forward to, and their husbands were supportive in such activities.

The group was a gathering of members of the "same status." In other words, married at around the same period, and brides (or daughters) of land owners who hired about ten workers for harvesting during rice harvesting time. In addition, they were close in age (born between 1931 to 1936).

Viewpoints for Organization

Tokiwa-kai was established with support from the men. As the result of activities focusing on "the generation of women who began studying together with the men," it created a climate where opinions were freely exchanged. Women have the opportunity to go out and study, and the members' husbands said strong opinions to their parents. Furthermore, "As the society moved toward democratization, there was an atmosphere where men who opposed the activities in their heart were not able to oppose openly." This was probably due to the idea of gender equality gradually penetrating the consciousness of the people after the Japanese Constitution was enacted and through work and learning opportunities.

However, the wives of tenant farmers, the wives and daughters of those with jobs other than farming or women who were busy looking after children and the elderly, and didn't get the support from their families, failed to become members.

When organizing is being considered it should be taken into account: the generation and class of people that can join the group; can it be organized; what class of people will be left out of the organization from the historical, structural, social norms, etc, perspective

【Episode 31】

The joy of being addressed by name

Text by Yoko Fujikake

Division of labor by gender roles in villages in the 1950's

Tokiwa-kai in Jiromaru, Fukuoka is one of the 4H (Livelihood Improvement) Clubs established in 1967, aimed at livelihood improvement. The club was managed by a dozen of women who were born between 1927 and 1938.

According to the members, in the 1950's, rice planting (hand planting) was women's work, and they were very exhausted during the rice planting season because they would work stooped over from morning until night. While preparing the rice field using cattle would be men's work. One of the members said, "Both were exhausting work, but I think rice planting was more exhausting." She once asked her husband, "Can you walk on all fours backwards (hand planting style) to the next town (roughly 5 kilometers)?" and her husband answered, "No, I can't."

During the harvest period, most farmers would hire more than ten people to harvest the rice field. During harvest, as a farmer's wife, the women would stay up until late at night and wake up at two in the morning to prepare rice balls, bean cakes(Japanese cake which called Ohagi) and other foods and snacks to eat at the rice fields for the family and the hired hands.

It was in the 1950's that the agricultural land reform was over. It was also the time when the agricultural policy urged for increased production of food, and yet, the mechanization to increase the agricultural productivity did not progress sufficiently. The women would come up with ways to shoulder both work in and out of the house such as "taking the children along to the rice fields with Futon(bedding),as a 'famer'" and during Obon festival and New Year, as a "wife," they would prepare the food for the events. It was a hectic life.

The reason why the women were proactive in livelihood improvement initiatives

Back then, the bath was heated using firewood. Collecting firewood was men's work and heating up the bath would be women's work. However, the men who had post-war education had cooperated in reducing the women's work load, such as installing a bath heated using fuel so that their wives no longer needed to heat the bath using firewood. Furthermore, as a part of livelihood improvement, in 1958, washing machines were placed at the shrine so that the village women could use it.

At that time, washing diapers and clothes were done at the river. While talking with other women while doing laundry was fun, laundry is still heavy work, and in cold winters, the chaps would get worse. Once one household bought a washing machine, everybody else would want one too, and by 1960, there was a washing machine in every household. And then, rice cookers followed suit. The women were slowly released from the kitchen drudgery.

After the Tokiwa-kai was formed, they invited Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers (Home Advisors) after discussing it among members. They made ketchup, and even improved cooking stoves. The women even started their own vegetable gardens, and whatever they couldn't sell in the market, they would load in carts and sold it in the neighboring towns. The money they got from these sales was money these women could use freely, and they used it for "children's clothes" or "school expenses."

For the village women, Tokiwa-kai activities were something that got them out of the house, and a room for them to meet each other and have fun learning various things. The best thing about it was being called by names, and not the wife of someone.

In terms of time spent on women's domestic work such as rearing children, cooking, cleaning and washing, it may have been reduced, but there were no essential changes in the division of labor by gender roles. In addition, women's work loads in agriculture increased since the men began to work outside in the modernization, so the activities in the community to further improve the livelihood increased.

Even then, the women were able to be proactively involved in the livelihood improvement efforts because they were called by their names. In other words, they were happy being recognized in society as independent individuals.

'We held technical training in order to improve the life of the people in need; however, the trainees would keep the learning to themselves and would not transfer it to the community,' confessed a volunteer who was working in Africa. Her indignation reminded me of my own during my own work in Africa. Actually, I, too, used to get worked up all on my own questioning why the trainees wouldn't share these useful techniques with their neighbours. How come they kept them to themselves? How selfish they are! That's why the country is not developing!

Thinking back to those days with a cool head, now I understand the living condition of the people was so harsh that their struggle for survival was intense. Those who were able to participate in trainings were the 'chosen few'. It was a participants' privilege to gain knowledge and techniques through training. Moreover, if the information led to enhanced business and earnings, it would be logical for them to not want to tell their rivals. Hence, as long as people regarded the knowledge and techniques gained as useful and profitable, ironically, it is unlikely to be shared.

I would like to propose three measures in handling this problem. One, making farmer-to-farmer workshops, which are to share and teach others what they learned, a condition of participating in the training. The point is to make it a public commitment of the selected trainees sets (the village or group they represent), and not with the training organisers (e.g. funding organisations). By doing so, the trainees will have to organise work-

【Episode 32】

When techniques are not disseminated

Text by Miho Ota

shops after the training so as to act up to their promise with the villagers or other group members. For people who continue to live in that community, the pressure from their neighbours and their peers is more effective than engagement with the outsiders. To make it more effective, the selection process must be above board and should not choose the same person all the time.

Another way is to conduct the training in the front yard of the target population. In the first place, why training is regarded as a privilege of the 'chosen few'? It is because of the closed system of the training; training is held behind closed doors for a closed membership (only selected people can participate). Instead, why don't we make training open to public? There should be no such hiding away or selection. Let's teach an unlimited number of people in a place where public can easily get together? Curious onlookers are most welcome. The larger the number of participants, the grater the influence. To give a chance equally to the public is the key. The information should be disseminated widely and evenly. It will be up to them to pick it up and use it. The information might set spurs to the people for mutual diligent application. The PRODEFI model(*) in Senegal has had excellent results using this method.

Nonetheless, there are difficulties when the target groups are limited to just adults. There are societies where it is hard to build mutual trust among grownups after a conflict for example, or where people are so wary to accept outsider's influence. In such cases, perhaps it would be effective to involve children and youths, who are relatively elastic and have low stakes than adults, in developing a cooperative spirit. Targeting youth, in addition, have long term impacts on their capacity building as well as their community development.

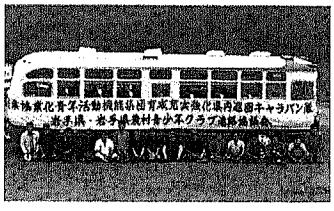
Despite the rapid modernisation in post-war Japan, adults tend to stick to conventional living and were sceptical of the techniques introduced by the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers). Then, the LIP workers would gather youths on weekends, forming 4H Clubs*, and taught them the technologies in agriculture and daily life. There are many examples of these youths, who grew up accustomed to being introduced to new technologies and group practices from an early age, carried out major roles in innovating technologies and building communities afterwards.

For instance, Ms. Kimii Nakamura (born 1945) was one of active members of 4H Club in Iwate Prefecture. Her 4H Club's research on 'Steamed and Grilled Chicken' won the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Award in 1965. After her marriage, Ms. Nakamura joined the Livelihood Improvement Practice Group, learning together with fellows, and later, was appointed to several important positions including the prefectural director of the Livelihood Improvement Practical Group Council. In 2003, she became a member of Sawauchi Village Council, and even now, she is still active as a member of Nishiwaga Town Council in 'providing a voice for my fellows, who are working hard for society.'

A former LIP worker, Ms. Keiko Kowata (born 1936) who knows Ms. Nakamura very well, emphasised the importance of 'building fellow feeling' among young people who are shouldering the community, rather than nurturing one charismatic leader. That will be the cornerstone in building the next generation of society.

Back then, before I got frustrated - that is why this community is not developing! - wouldn't it have been better to discuss thinking ahead how this community should be for the next generation? The long term vision with patience is crucial. There is not much we can do within a few year period of a development project.

* Rural Youth Practical Club. Introduced in Japan after the war by GHQ as one of the steps toward democratisation



Youth Club's caravan team, who toured Iwate Prefecture and contributed in community building (Around 1955)
Photo courtesy of Iwate Prefecture

One rainy day, Mrs. Hamae Ogino (born 1905) was making straw sandals in a store room. She finally took the plunge and said to her husband, 'Dear, would you buy me an improved cooking stove?' And immediately, her husband scolded her, 'What stove? We don't have any money. Who do you think you are?'

'Well then, give me my share for carrying extra firewood (a bundle of firewood costs 1-4 yen).'

'Even if I gave you that money, you still won't be able to afford a 10,000 yen cooking stove. That will be like a snail climbing up Mount Fuji!' her husband laughed.

'We'll see.' Mrs. Ogino rose to the challenge. From the next morning, she woke up earlier than usual, went out and carried twice the amount of firewood than her husband.

Nanasato Isshiki Village (present day Shinshiro city) in Aichi Prefecture had the disadvantages of both natural and geographical environment with no convenient access. It was in an area in the mountains remote enough to be said that it was 'being forgotten by modernisation in the Meiji era.' They built terraces on the face of the mountain for farming and they also cultivated paddy fields in the valley, but for all their hard labour, their yield was about 1/3 compared to the yield in the plain regions. The forest lands were not affected by the post-war agricultural land reform, and they belonged to the forest land owners. The people living in the mountain villages were not even able to freely gather firewood there, and they had to buy firewood using their hard-earned money making charcoal and carrying firewood.

When an accessible road was completed by the end of the war in 1945, in the middle of the night, 'ghost' pickups would come and the forest owners would illegally sell the charcoal and firewood at high black market prices. Even branches previously given for free to the poor became a commodity, so that the lives of the villagers were tightened. Therefore, the need to improve the heat efficiency of cooking stoves and save on firewood was increasing among the women.

In 1951, the cooking stove improvement was discussed in the women's association, but the landowner derided them, 'You want to fix cooking stoves in this godforsaken place?', and they were criticised by the elders, 'Ever since women formed an association, women turned high and mighty; they are impudent,' 'If you have time to join the association, why don't you make a pair of straw sandals?' 'Women always think of ways not to work.' The women even tried awareness raising for objectors through workshops and flyers, only to realise that if it was not 'by women's own hands, by women's own power,' the improvement would not begin. Thus they decided to cooperate among the women's association members, 'being imaginative and creative according to each household circumstance. Let's help each other, encourage each other, and be united so that no one will be left behind.'

The improvement design plans drawn up by the prefectural engineers became the women's specific goal, which made them increasingly motivated. To quickly realise their dream, they steadily accumulated their 'rabbit savings' (each house reared about 15 rabbits, nurtured the babies and sold them jointly to save the profit). They kept down the spending by joint purchases of household commodities. Mrs. Ogino's savings reached 8000 yen in a year. 'When I said to my husband, 'the snail is almost to the top of Mount Fuji at last!' My husband, with an embarrassed face said, 'Well done. I will renovate our bath for you.'

【Episode 33】

The snail climbed Mount Fuji at last!

Text by Miho Ota

This was the village revolution. Seeing that the cooking stoves were completed by the women's steady effort, the husbands who had derided, 'What can women do?' changed their attitude. 'Nothing can be done without money' used to be a common excuse of men taking no initiative. They, finally, became cooperative in putting in windows in the kitchen or making kitchen tables. The children too began to help out their mothers. The elderly people said that if they had known it would be this convenient, they would have made the improvement earlier. The husbands even began planning to raise chicken or pig farming to save money to rebuild the houses in the future.

From the women's cooking stove came self-confidence in place of a passive attitude of giving up and being miserable because they were poor. Now, they had reached their target, experienced the joy of working and found life worth living. In Mrs. Ogino's home, the kitchen became more rational and saved her a lot of work and time. She made her family happy by serving them the dishes she had learned, in addition, after dinner, she managed to have some time to enjoy reading the newspapers. Right then, 'I thought life is so magnificent.' Going to their night social class together, on the mountain's steep road, 'My husband held my hand during the climb back. I was surprised. We have been married for 20 years, and that was the first time.' One can even imagine Mrs. Ogino's shy smile.

* Reference: Yutaka Yoshida 'Keizaikaihatsu to seikatsukaizen: shiawase no naka ni ikiru (Economic Development and Livelihood Improvement: Living in Happiness)' (Tsukuba Shobo, 1992)

Isshiki women carrying out firewood on their backs
Source: Slide 'Life in Isshiki Hamlet' (Flat Glass Manufacturers, 1954)

An age that queries the necessity for livelihood improvement

We have been considering various efforts towards improving rural livelihoods in post-war Japan. This time, we have something to ask those of you who are working on behalf of others around the world. The extension activities managed by LIP workers have been losing their importance in Japan's developing economy, and in 2002, the words 'Livelihood Improvement Extension' disappeared entirely from the system. For example, in Fukui Prefecture, no extension workers in charge of the livelihood section have been recruited since 2002.

Today we live in an era with a variety of communication methods, and farmers can get their hands on the latest information by themselves. Nowadays it is possible for rural women to create a nationwide network and launch it themselves. What's more, today, phenomena such as poor hygiene, malnutrition and children absent from school due to lack of income are no longer seen in rural Japan. The current, last generation of extension workers are fighting against the implication that extension is no longer necessary, and are focusing on introducing farm produce processing technology, which is directly linked to increased income. The original objective of Livelihood Improvement was to "nurture self-reliant farmers". Despite boosting the achievement of economic growth, has the objective itself changed, without anyone noticing, into that of producing economic results?

The meaning of the livelihood improvement process

At the same time, Japan today is facing a serious problem. Amidst worsening depopulation in rural farms and an increasingly ageing society, cover-ups in manufacturing and chemical contamination of food are becoming a nationwide problem. The revitalisation of farming, as the bedrock of food, should be a pressing issue for Japan from now on. This involves fundamentally questioning the foundations of a better life in a way that cannot be achieved by putting too much importance on the economy.

Ms. Chizuru Enomoto (born 1966) is an extension worker in Fukui Prefecture. She reports that when she entered the programme, she was told that Livelihood Improvement Extension workers ought to remain "behind the scenes". According to her colleague, Ms. Yuko Mitani (born 1965), "This 'staying behind the scenes' has gone on for too long. We kept being told that 'no-one sees what we are doing,' and our achievements passed unrecognised. [Given this situation] it became necessary to implement visible, easy-to-understand activities such as support for starting businesses". This dilemma was born out of the long-term, gradual, but 'behind-the-scenes' activities implemented by Livelihood Improvement Extension workers, but it appears to be shared by volunteers involved in the trials and errors arising from believing that 'citizens should play the leading role'.

Ms. Enomoto and her colleagues added, "even now, the underlying thing is self-realisation," and "this is why we still do things that do not make money. Even with activities that do generate profit, our primary motivation is to see the consumer's happy face. So the basics are the same." In other words, it is not that the practitioner's perspective has changed, but rather that appreciation of what he or she does has become limited.

[Episode 34]

Shining the light on people behind the scenes (answers from the field)

Text by Kazuko Oguni

Setting up goals to allow appreciation of those behind the scenes

Those of you currently active in countries all over the world are probably battling with the poverty right in front of you.

For this reason, we would like you to keep in mind that Livelihood Improvement cultivates momentum in the never-ending process of trying to live better and that we are on a journey to find comrades who can make this possible. We would like all of you to communicate your understanding of the meaning of Livelihood Improvement in the field, as gained from your practice throughout the world. Through this, we hope to find the keys to considering a better future together, without losing sight of our own situation here in Japan.

Women attend a preparatory study meeting before departing on a visit overseas, which they planned themselves in order to broaden their own horizons.
Photo by: Ms. Chizuru Enomoto, Fukui Prefecture

[Episode 35]

Analyzing the livelihood improvement by gender perspective

Text by Yoko Fujikake

The reason for becoming home advisors*

Ms. Reiko Ikeda, who became a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker (/Home Advisor) in 1959, and played an active role in Nagano Prefecture, was raised by her parents, who were teachers. She still remembers clearly when MacArthur landed in Atsugi Base when she was in the first grade. She thought that the events at that time heralded the beginning of a good era, but recollects that nothing had changed in terms of improving the position of farm women. Japan had become a democratic and equal rights society, but still, Ms. Ikeda had seen how vulnerable her mother's position was in her parent's relationship even though her father was adopted into the family. She concluded that rural problems of the women in farming families became her own problems.

In the 1950's, division of labor by gender role and patriarchal ideology are firmly rooted in farming communities. However, there were many women who applied to become Home Advisors in order to improve the situation of women in farming families.

Signs of gender norm resconstracting

In an age when people were taught not to talk about private matters in public, Ms. Baba "talked honestly with women from farming families in order for women to be independent, and in order for them to be able to voice their opinions properly." And upon receiving guidance from Ms. Ikeda, mentioned previously, Ms. Baba had these women from farming families wrote down their own thoughts and dreams. As a result, she understood that these women wanted the value of their work to be properly appreciated.

Ms. Baba became the Chief of Farmwives Livelihood, Agricultural Technology Department of Nagano since 1990, and is responsible for establishing and extending the Second Rural Women Plan. She prepared her plan using raw expressions to describe the reality of women in farming communities, but was told that, "Now, the difference between men and women are only in toilets and baths." She was even told that to bring up the issue related to gender equality was a conceited thing to do. In the process of getting the plan approved by her superior, the raw expressions were removed and changed into ambiguous worded text.

However, in 1995, circumstances were in favor of Home Advisors who were struggling to create "self-reliant 'women' farmers." It was four years before Ms. Ikeda's retirement. The 4th World Conference on Women was held in Beijin , while in Japan, family farmer arrangement and women farmer's annuity was focused on. There were some bashings toward gender equality claims, but because Ms. Ikeda and Ms. Baba themselves were faced with women's unique problems with wage earnings, care giving and inheritance, they dealt with these problems with all their energy.

To show women's strength, they organized a concert on a scale of 500 people, and proceeded with their preparations for decision making positions. Through the Home Advisors' effort in creating "self-reliant 'women' farmers" and interaction between women in farming families, the signs of reconstructing in the existing gender norm were showing itself.

The activities of women having roots in the Livelihood were also one of the means in achieving the high objective called improving the position of women in farming families. There existed proactive movements toward social reformation of women in farming families that was linked to the Home Advisors. The fact that these movements were brought forth through the Livelihood Improvement activities was very interesting. The movements of Home Advisors and women in farming families that pushed apart the small crack in the gender norm that seemed to have been immobilized, and created a new society were burning issues that should have been brought to light in terms of historical backdrop and social context, and carefully analyzed.

Ms. Baba, who became a Home Advisor in 1963, was raised in a large farming family, where her own mother failed to hold any authority under a strong grandmother. The reason why she, who was in sixth grade at that time, was sent to accompany her sister to her starting school ceremony was because her mother said, "Grandmother didn't tell me to go." Knowing how vulnerable the position of a daughter-in-law in a farmer's household was, she applied to become a Home Advisor, thinking that she must do something. After becoming a Home Advisor for four years, Ms. Baba herself became a daughter-in-law in a farmer's household, and the women must be in a worse situation, and thinking she should know about the situation, she became a Home Advisor.

* ...From interviews by the writer and lectures at "Rural Community and Life Symposium: The Things to Convey to the Next Generation after Looking at Half a Century of Rural Life." (Supported by Toyota Foundation Research Grant, NPO Corporate Farming, and Research Institute for Rural Community and Life on January 24, 2009, in Nagano City)

【Episode 36】

The north wind and the sun

Text by Miho Ota

Do you have someone you can tell your secrets to?
Can you keep somebody's secrets confidential?
In approaches such as participatory development and empowerment, they not only keep track of the number of workshop participants but also the number of times the participants speak up. The higher the count, the stronger the degree is considered. For that reason, those who had less opportunities to participate or voice their opinion before, for instance socially disadvantaged people and women, are particularly encouraged to participate and speak up by workshop organisers. If this approach is considered a North Wind approach, then on the other side, the Sun approach also exists.

There is a famous book titled 'Monoiwanu Nomin (The Silent Farmers).*' What made the farmers silent in the first place? Ms. Tomoe Yamashiro, author of 'Niguruma no Uta (Song of a Cart),**', analysed that it is because farmers do not have a world they can trust. People who are oppressed and have less to depend on fear being misunderstood, loss of respectability and reprisals, thus they would clam up. They were not 'unable to speak,' but 'would not speak.'

Ms. Yamashiro, who is the fourth daughter of a farming family in Bingo in Hiroshima prefecture (born 1912), grew up in Tokyo and had intentions of going into fine arts. After the Second World War, she returned to her family home, and spent all her time farming to help her mother. After experiencing various humiliations, for the first time, 'I was able to understand the feelings of poor farmers, who were unable to speak the truth or what they thought,' she wrote. Ms. Yamashiro noticed that every human being had something to say, but could not say it because they could not trust other people. In the heart of every human being, there were secrets they wanted to confide in someone they could trust. For that reason, she realised that if one wish to create an atmosphere where farmwives; i.e. the most oppressed, could speak the truth, first you must be someone who could keep other people's secret.

In other words, how much people speak is not important. Instead, how sincerely we listen to what they say, and keeping what they said to ourselves is vital. The Sun approach is to reassure people that we can keep their secrets, and wait for them to start talking.

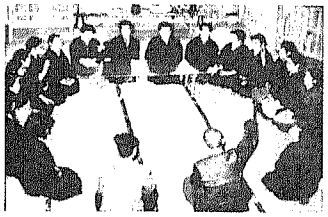
If the person is independent enough to raise her voice, and can change her surroundings by herself, then let her be. However, people who live in a bottom of the society can be squashed by someone stronger if they speak up alone. Japanese society is unappreciative of those who stand out. For the weak to become stronger, there must be solidarity among them. But in reality, it is a society that takes pleasure over a neighbour's misfortune that holds back each other from achieving success.

Ms. Yamashiro introduced an episode where a young bride, who became aware of the spirit of friendship in such a situation, refused to leak out her friend's predicament when she was pressed with questions by the elders. . Ms. Yamashiro applauded this silence, as it was actually a step of the weak in protecting the fellow. Moreover, it was positive proof of her growth in nurturing 'independent and self-reliant friendship.' Ms. Yamashiro, who is a believer in the Sun approach, did not measure the person's growth based on what was being said, but by what was not being said.

The Sun approach urges us to change, whereas the North Wind approach insists on changing the target people. Be someone who people can confide their secrets in. Keep the secrets confidential under any circumstances. Our own trustworthiness may be measured by how many secrets people confide in us.

The North Wind and the Sun. Which approach will encourage people to speak up more? I think that what Ms. Yamashiro can teach us is that it is more important to reflect ourselves about how we listen to people's confessions than to count how many times people speak up.

* Reference: Ryo Omura 'Monoiwanu Nomin (The Silent Farmers)'(Iwanami shinsyo 1958)
** Tomoe Yamashiro 'Niguruma no Uta (Song of a Cart)' (Chikuma syobo 1956)



Who is speaking up? A hamlet meeting.
Slide 'A day in the life of a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker'
(Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1957)

【Episode 37】

Group power & group barriers

Text by Kazuko Oguni

Group cohesive power and exclusivity

When working within a community, cultivating groups among residents is a major step. In this article, however, I would like to take a look at the people who were 'crowded out' of a group.

The Livelihood Improvement Group has a strong sense of camaraderie, which arises from sharing a desire to change the status quo. The mutual learning effect is also strong within the group. In rural areas, however, it can also foster a degree of exclusivity if people who are not of the same status - in other words, people who cannot spare the same amount of time or cannot share the same financial burden - find themselves hesitant to join.

For example, in a village in Fukui Prefecture, while there are women who still continue to make the miso* they learned to make as a part of Livelihood Improvement, there are women of the same generation in the same village who have never been invited to the group, even though they live only a few minutes' walk away. In this sense, a group that was created for a common purpose seems to have faced the challenge of how to involve individuals who could not afford time and money, whilst at the same time supporting activities that were based on people being homogenous.

Ms. Kazuko Koozuka (born 1931), a former Livelihood Improvement Extension worker from Kagoshima Prefecture, commented that an extension worker's tasks are both reforming and supporting those who have been left out. For example, while many people understood the need for improved cooking stoves (since smoke from the old stove left them red-eyed), they did not have money to purchase a new stove. In such cases, Ms. Koozuka said, she would work on finding even minor ways to begin improving these women's current state, for example by encouraging them to have a balanced diet by making miso soup with dried anchovies in it, and naming the activity 'making good miso soup'.

Foster groups, nurture individuals

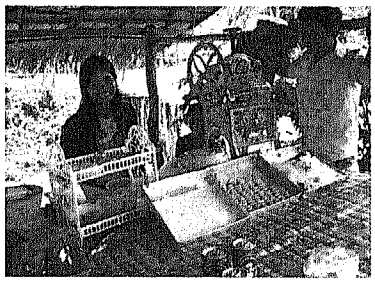
There is another pattern that can be seen among those who were 'crowded out' of groups. This was in environments where individual growth would exceed that of the groups. The photo below shows a stall owned by one of the participants in an activity aimed at fostering groups of rural women in north-western Cambodia. Later, she and her family opened the stall in front of their house to sell sweets. At the time, those who gave support believed that accumulating shared funds and selling as a group was the actual accomplishment, and there were some who voiced doubts over the increasing number of individuals who accomplished results away from the group, like the woman in the photo.

Even now, there is no clear answer to these questions. However, from my perspective as an aide, I believe we must not lose sight of differing personal circumstances when seeking equal results. The woman in the photo had a house by the road, relatively far from the neighbourhood, in a village that was not particularly cohesive, and included people returning from refugee camps. It was possible for her to leave the house if it was for a once a month activity, and she desired to learn new techniques and experience the fun of meeting friends, However, for group efforts that required regular processes and sales, she would need to leave her house everyday. Most of the women were taking care of children and livestock, so it was natural for women who had someone else in their family who could take over these duties to become the core participants of activities.

In addition to the above, there are also cases where activities have started with dozens of people, and subsequently become separate activities involving two to three people. There are also examples of activities that were transformed so that they could be carried out even without getting together everyday, by taking advantage of the village network formed as a result of the activities.

It is important that equal opportunities are provided, too, for outsiders who may only be able to get involved for a short period of time. However, the group that makes up the core of the learning activities does not necessarily work as a routine cooperative group. The results will not necessarily be the same as for a group performing the same activities on a regular basis, and not always on the same scale. What is important for us is to be keenly aware of the difference between individuals who had grown to be independent, as opposed to individuals who had been isolated from society, whilst monitoring how people utilise group activity opportunities.

* fermented soybeans used as a seasoning for cooking.



A woman who individually opened a candy stall using food processing techniques attained through group activities.
Cambodia, 2005. Photo by the writer.

【Episode 38】

Proposals from the meddlesome

Text by Yuko Fujikake

Childhood culture shock

Former Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker (Home Advisor), Ms. Sumiko Imamura was born in 1936, in Kakekawa City, Shizuoka Prefecture. Due to her parent's work, she spent her elementary school years in a small hamlet in the mountains of Kakekawa.

There, what Ms. Imamura saw were farmer women cooking in dark kitchens, and the sight of housewives who could only rest in front of rice cooking stoves (also a place for women to cry). The bath was outside, and the women would take their bath without any enclosure. In households where they could keep silkworms, these silkworms were more valued than expectant and nursing mothers.

In such a hamlet, Ms. Imamura, who was in elementary school, had thought of many improvements in her own way. She thought, "Isn't there a job that can take care of this kind of life?" Since the Home Advisor system was established when Ms. Imamura was in the 6th grade, she took the Home Advisor exam after she graduated from junior college, and she had been working in this area for 40 years until her retirement.

Observations by an "outsider"

Ms. Imamura's first job was to deal with ruralnutrition improvement. The realities of everyday diet at the time mostly consisted of the staple wheat rice with miso soup and pickles for breakfast, eating breakfast leftovers for lunch, and stew or grilled fish for dinner, where the materials used in these dishes were taken from their farm. So, in order to prevent these diets from becoming "bakkari shoku" (unbalanced, starch-filled diet), she recommended improvising the menu to include nutritional dishes, and called for a planting plan to cultivate many varieties of vegetables on their farm.

A young wife wrote in her memoir, "Even though I kept chicken as a source of protein, I never got to taste it, so I wrote down the name of the family members in turn on the newly-laid eggs." It showed that under Ms. Imamura's guidance, the women of farming families began to think by themselves and voluntarily perform livelihood improvements. Ms. Imamura and her colleagues had devoted themselves in coming up with various ways to enable women in farming families to become independent. For example, she came up with an urgent matter during the second cooking class, and left the class to the village women to manage. Later, she would praise, "You can do it even by yourself," and encouraged them to be confident.

Ms. Imamura demonstrated her inherent "spirit of the meddlesome" and proposed novel ideas one after another. As the adaptation of tea harvesting machine progressed, the clothings worn by farming women (salon aprons) fluttered and was easy to get trapped in the machine. So, emphasizing on the neccessity of safe farming clothes, she organized a fashion show in the area. She also discovered dirty and black acrylic blankets, that were popular back then as gifts for important family ceremonies, left in the barn when she conducted a survey on farming families. So, she made a large laundry area in the area where the blankets could be washed.

As time moved into a high economic growth period, women who shouldered the agricultural work began to work outside, and their lifestyle began to change to a "modern" lifestyle where they would buy instant foods on their way home. Ms. Imamura remembered an old saying in farming communities, "Food produced locally are most suited to the body," reflected on her activities that had promoted the "modern" and "scientific" lifestyle.

In 1975, the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to establish "Rural Livelihood Core Laboratories and Facilities Project" in Toyooka Village (now Iwata City), where Ms. Iwamura was in charge. Examining what kind of facilities should be built in a changing rural area, she renovated the rice mould room that had become obsolete. She established a facility for producing miso and processing agricultural products that deviated from the standard. It was also intended as a place where the village women and "newly marriage wife who came from especially out of the community" as well could meet.

A Home Advisor's role was to find illogical parts in the lifestyle, and to create activities directing toward improving those illogical parts. However, Ms. Imamura reviewed the good practices in farming families, developed specialty products that the next generation could carry on, and created a space for women. When you are considering sustainable development, there are a lot you can learn from Ms. Imamura's activities.

Making money and affluent living

The debate regarding how to make use of the experiences of post-war rural Japan has been going on for a long time. These columns have been introducing various attempts to improve livelihood. Today, however, the activities that are easy to understand for development practitioners tend to be profit generating activities. Livelihood improvement does not necessarily require money; it is basically using whatever is at hand, in whatever condition, and starting with what is possible. However, when implementing an aid project, it is of course true that activities leading to improved subsistence such as vegetable cultivation, livestock breeding and selling processed products can be easier to visualise and are more accessible.

As we have noted before, when looking at various livelihood improvement activities from an economic perspective, we can also categorise them into activities that save money, activities that generate money, and activities that require money in order to work. Organising them in this way makes it possible to offer people something they can do now, regardless of their circumstances.

However, it is initially difficult to convey the fact that categorisation based on financial necessity alone captures only certain aspects of life. How is it possible to understand, explain and practice an overall image for living?

Philosophy within living - nurturing life in our own way

People with whom we are working in the field may not understand if we say, "Let's have a practical philosophy for living." Ms. Yamamoto, who worked as first manager of Livelihood Improvement Division at the former Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, comments that monetary achievement is "a means to do something." In other words, it is a secondary objective. She suggests that we "Philosophise about how our daily life should be."(*) According to Ms. Yamamoto, when considering the quality of life, we should review life values, beginning with the well-being of the mind and body, self-respect and respect for others, harmony and peace among people, and the importance of setting life values and goals.

How would this opinion look when considered from the standpoint of supporting people in improving their livelihoods? Ms. Mieko Takaoka (born 1928) from Ehime Prefecture was the first woman to serve as a director of an agricultural extension office. She wrote confidently in printed materials used as a pamphlet for field extension workers, entitled "Philosophy in Governmental Programmes", "Technology will lead when making efforts in a programme, but no results will be gained without a philosophy."

"No results without philosophy." What a spirited and graceful message. Ms. Takaoka explains further, "The

【Episode 39】

The overall image of philosophy of life within living

Text by Kazuko Oguni

leader's ideas are important in promoting a good environment for improving the community". For that reason, she adds, "When appealing to people in a rural community, slogans are important". Philosophy sounds impressive, but the point was to create an awareness among people of how they want their lives to be. Perhaps it is important to be more aware of such words.

At the time, Livelihood Improvement Extension workers learned diffusion methods as tools for promoting livelihood improvement. However, the foundation was the belief in actually having a philosophy of life. Each diffusion method is a tool to implement that idea. In other words, ideas come first.

So, what kinds of practical philosophy can you talk about?

* 'The Logic of Life - The Road to Building a Livelihood.' (Matsuyo Yamamoto, author, Domesu Publishers, 1975)