

Learning together*

Ms. Katsue Maruyama (born 1936) became a Livelihood Improvement Extension (LIP) Worker in September 1957, and worked in Nishihara Hamlet, Matsukawa Village in Nagano Prefecture. 30 families, who had waited for the war to end in Uchihara Training Camp for Manchuria and Mongolia Settlement Youth Volunteer Army, lived in this hamlet. In an era where there were only hoes and sickles, the men and women worked the field desperately.

The repayment (refund) of settlement funds provided by the government that the people of Nishihara Hamlet had used began in 1959. However, if they repaid the entire settlement fund, they would not be able to survive. If they used the money to cover their living expenses, they would not be able to repay the fund. The hamlet's people were under the pressure of necessity called household accounting management.

About a year after becoming a LIP worker, Ms. Maruyama was singled out as a household accounting instructor for the repayment. However, Ms. Maruyama was in no position to instruct on household accounting as she had never even opened a cashbook. It was a heavy responsibility to bear. Should she fail, the livelihood of the people in this settlement would be ruined. Ms. Maruyama wanted to run away from this duty. She could get away with saying, "I don't know." But thinking that to die burdened with the fact that she ran was bitter, she faced the hamlet people, and did their best together.

The household accounting class (the class) was conducted during the day and night. Ms. Maruyama worked until

almost 10 at night, and returned to her lodging on a scooter through the cemetery and woods. The hamlet people were worried about a young 22-year-old woman working until late at night, but Ms. Maruyama never felt scared or inconvenienced.

At first, the hamlet men were rather severe on women, who regarded to be precious labor, learning how to make household accounting and not doing farm work during the day. However, gradually they appreciated Ms. Maruyama's attitude in her honest efforts. The class was attended by women between the age of mid-20 to 40's, who looked for time between farm work and household chores, and carrying children on their backs. Getting the abacus beads destroyed by children after abacus calculation was a daily occurrence. But, the women managed to keep household accounts using pencils they found in the house that looked like had been sharpened using a knife. The women and their families did not have any other choice but to remain in Nishihara Hamlet as farmers. Later, the hamlet men said they managed to gain a 2-year postponement of their repayment from the government because they had the household accounts made by the women. The men were highly appreciative of the women's activities.

People who Supported Home Advisors

On being given a difficult challenge as a household accounting instructor in the settler's village, Ms. Maruyama recalls, "It was the efforts of an Agricultural Extension Worker, who was 10 years my senior that nurtured me." This man was a precious existence who understood the

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Supported by the people

Text by Yoko Fujikake

position of women and life in the historical background of that time. The hamlet men, under the guidance of the Agricultural Extension Worker paid Ms. Maruyama a visit. "The rice has its fertilizer plan, and pigs have its own feeding plan. I think humans also need something like this. I want you to teach the women something more sophisticated," he requested. This suggested that the honest efforts of Ms. Maruyama were highly appreciated in the hamlet, and that Ms. Maruyama's work was successful with support from various individuals.

Ms. Maruyama's household account class was a success, but the person who acted as a driving force behind this success was the wife of the hamlet leader who led the settlement. If it were not for this woman, her own activities would have surely failed. The more she strived to stand in the perspective of the people in the hamlet, she was smoked by her colleagues, but precisely because of her, standing and struggling in the community's eyes, and her

attitude of trying to learn from the field, that there were people who wanted to support Ms. Maruyama.

There are many things that we should learn from Ms. Maruyama's attitude in volunteering activities. Activities in developing countries will only be successful when you humbly accept the community's opinions and realities, and gain the community's understanding and cooperation.

*...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." (Organized by Toyota Foundation Research Grant, NPO Corporate Farming, and Research Institute for Rural Community and Life on January 24, 2009, in Nagano City.)

'Why? Why is it when we dance the rain dance, rain hardly ever falls, but when he dances, the rain always falls?' This is a riddle I was not able to solve in my childhood. The answer, 'Because he keep on dancing until the rain falls.'

I remembered this riddle after I met Mr. Tomoji Yokoishi, who is widely noticed as a 'social entrepreneur who changes the world.'^(*) Mr. Yokoishi had commercialised leaves such as autumn leaves and heavenly bamboo as garnishes that were used for high-class Japanese-style restaurant cuisines. He established 'Irodori (Inc.)' for this business. Kamikatsu town in Tokushima Prefecture is facing depopulation and aging problems. Now, he is the driving force behind 'Irodori (Inc.)' that boasts annual sales of 260 million yen.

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Keeping up with the neighbours

Text by Miho Ota

to him, the women got a chance to flourish.

Mr. Yokoishi was appointed as a farming advisor of Japan Agricultural (JA) Cooperatives to Kamikatsu in 1979. However, what he heard from members were just demands, 'No grants coming?' 'We pay your salary, how come you are not doing anything for us?' The dependency on government offices and JA Cooperatives was very strong, and yet conservativeness and wariness were further intense. They would quietly observe what other people do, but they would not initiate it. They would ridicule people who failed to try new things, but if it worked, they would silently follow.

Initially, the leaves business which started with four women in 1986, went through a series of failures. The residents taunted them, 'See, I told you so.' Still, Mr. Yokoishi never lost his faith in leading the business to success. With his literally countless efforts, gradually their repeatedly polished products started to sell. Not surprisingly, the people who were carefully watching from the sidelines began to take part, 'If the neighbours were doing it, then we would do it too'. Surprisingly, the herd mentality slowly changed into rivalry, 'I won't lose to my neighbours.' Fuelling the people's competitive spirit had been successful in breaking down the habitual custom of 'if we follow what other people do, it is safe and easy; we don't have to think'. With the aim of creating better products than their neighbours, for higher income, people would stop doing the same thing that other people did. The old women who were essentially competitive began to get lively.

The dependency on outsiders had replaced with rivalry among residents. Their combative spirit inspired them to polish their products, which brought them higher profits. When their income increases, it became more and more exciting so as the women worked even more diligently. The company income increased in consequence, the business expanded accordingly. A virtuous cycle was born.

Nevertheless, once the competition began, the emergence of

He is probably the one 'who kept on dancing until the rain fell'. He is the man who kept on trying the business of changing leaves into money until it succeeded, in a town said to be in an overwhelmingly disadvantaged area, where even the town people made fun of. 'Surely we are not foxes or raccoons that deceive people by turning leaves into notes', people derided.

The keys to Mr. Yokoishi's thriving business may have been as many as leaves in a tree. One of them was possibly because he had effectively tapped into the residents' herd instinct and competitive nature. He created jobs for old women who had nothing else to do except grumble on the porch day-in-day-out. He produced them as individual entrepreneurs, that grew their business through friendly rivalry among them. Owe

not only winners but also losers was inevitable. Here, encouragement to the losers, and consideration towards people who failed even to get into the same arena would be necessary. Failure to do so would open a gap between the residents and that could lead to community collapse.

Mr. Yokoishi advocates the importance of giving 'encouragement' to everyone. When you saw someone who was about to give up, you gave them a boost with, 'Why don't you give it a try a little while longer?' He says, you must think about their respective goals together, acknowledge each achievement, stand side by side, and keep encouraging them. No matter how busy you are, you must not ease up on being sensitive and considerate towards every individual. According to him, handwritten letters are most effective with the 'Irodori' producers whose age averaged at 70.

If you'd be alone dancing until the rain falls, all you need is your strong will. Amazingly, however, Mr. Yokoishi encouraged 200 residents to dance together with him.

'No matter where you look in this world, you wouldn't find a job this pleasurable,' are the words of gratitude to Mr. Yokoishi given by one of the 'Irodori' producer, whose been dancing together with him for 20 years.

* Chosen for '100 Social Entrepreneurs Who Changes the World' in 'Newsweek' Japanese edition in 2007.

Reference: Tomoji Yokoishi, author. 'Yes, Let's Sell Leaves. Depopulated Town, Reborn from its Abyss.' (SoftBank Creative, 2007)



Mr. Yokoishi with Ms. Fukue Nakano, who is 97 years old and is the oldest at 'Irodori.'

Photo by: Mr. Tomoji Yokoishi

Nothing had changed!? The hardships of field-work as a woman

This time, I would like to share the hardships the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers faced, and how they faced such hardships as women in an honest and frank way. So far, we have looked at how the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers had worked side by side with women, in particular young wives, in post-war rural Japan. I was impressed by these stories and set off to work in Cambodia, where I myself faced a series of problems. I am sure some of you have faced similar doubts.

In my case, I was assigned to Cambodia after getting married, and went through pregnancy and childbirth during my assignment. Everyday I headed to villages with the

sound of the baby crying ringing in my head. Going home to nurse a baby was also not easy for a working mother in the field. I thought of how Livelihood Improvement Extension workers balanced their lives as both women and fieldworkers long ago. Besides pregnancy and childbirth, women also face menstruation and toilet problems out in the field. There may have been a lot of women who faced the same problems, but they simply lacked the opportunity to discuss it openly.

Seasonal colour wrapping cloths and rice paddy toilet

Ms. Sumiko Inagaki (born 1928) was a former Livelihood Improvement Extension worker in Shiga Prefecture. She

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Life and livelihood improvement as a woman

Text by Kazuko Oguni

became an extension worker in 1950, at a time when rural areas were still seriously impoverished. It was very hard to go to the toilet, as there were no public toilets in the rural area, and there were no private places out in the paddy fields. She would tie a wrapping cloth to her bicycle, and that was her toilet. "I was nervous that the bicycle may fall over. I always brought along a wrapping cloth; green in spring, brown in autumn and white when it snowed." This may sound like a touching story, but that was the reality.

However, Ms. Inagaki didn't just worry quietly. She shared the inconvenience of going to the toilet behind her wrapping cloth with young wives in the area, and drew out the women's opinions. They created a simple 'rice paddy toilet' using bamboo and wrapping cloths, which the young wives then began to use too. In this way, they gained the strength to overcome the inconvenience.

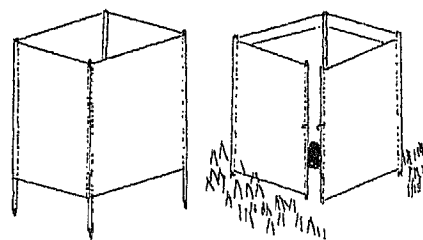
Representing balancing home and work as a frontier

Ms. Inagaki married in 1956, and continued her work while blessed with two children. In an age where it was normal to give up working after marriage, continuing to go on village rounds after giving birth was no ordinary feat. Ms. Inagaki sent a petition directly to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, laying out the concerns of women fieldworkers at the time. On the whole, it was a petition demanding more staff, but the reasons were compelling.

There was no replacement for those on maternity leave, so the workload on remaining staff was heavy, and those on leave did not feel at ease. People from rural areas visited Ms. Inagaki up until two days before she gave birth. Today, Ms. Inagaki laughs that "There was only me, I was the only woman among 10 staff in the office, so I went out to the field after preparing tea for everybody", but back

then, she must surely have gone through a tough time.

Today, life is more convenient, and in many countries, women still work after marriage. However, when we look around us, how many of us women are worried about our futures as we work on the frontline, as Ms. Inagaki did then? I do not think that separating public life from private life and immersing oneself in one's job, while taking everything that work throws at us, is necessarily a virtue. Isn't our role to create a society that functions with the initiatives that Ms. Inagaki and her colleagues struggled to give us? I would like you to make choices that allow you to talk about your own life to people, especially if you are working to improve other peoples' livelihoods.



Drawing of a completed rice paddy toilet.
From 'Rice Paddy Toilet' blueprint by Ms. Sumiko Inagaki

Chapter 3

Unprecedented practices are needed

Livelihood Improvement efforts can be done in various aspects in everyday life, from 'food, clothing and shelter' to 'child-care.' In this chapter, we will introduce a variety of improvement examples actually practiced by Livelihood Improvement Extension workers.

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Rural women's heavy labour

Although the LIP workers began their activities with 'Improving Livelihood' as their mission in rural Japan 50 years ago, they did not know where to start. In the first place, the rural women whom the LIP workers should help were overwhelmed by farm work and household chores and did not have the time to listen to female public officials whom they did not know.

When it came to the busy farming season, the rural women, especially the young wives, would get up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to begin their household chores. Drawing water needed for cooking and collecting firewood were women's work, and if they kept livestock, then gathering the feed was

often shouldered by women. It did not matter whether they were pregnant or somewhat anemic. The Japanese who lived in rural areas 50 years ago really woke up early. And it is exactly the same in today's developing countries. After eating breakfast, they would go to the field to work with men, and when they got back home, the household chores would be waiting for them again. Of course, they also did night work at the fiersidet. It was clear that these overworked conditions needed improvement, but it was difficult to reduce agricultural farm work because it was under their husbands' domain.

Low cost livelihood improvement

Instead, household chores were directly linked to women's

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Cooking stoves and livelihood improvement

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

lives, and there were many aspects to improve. The LIP workers saw that here was their entry point; specifically, they began their livelihood improvement starting with 'Kitchen Improvements'. Because the kitchens, where the cooking was done, were dark, small, smoky, unsanitary and inefficient.

Let's look at the picture. It shows the rice cooking on a 'cooking stove' (it had various folk names depending on the area) made of kneaded and hardened earth. In the foreground we can see a kettle hanging down on a versatile hook, so below it must be the hearth. The apron-clad woman in work pants is feeding firewood, and beyond is where the bush wood was stacked. We can't see it clearly, but on the wall hung woven bamboo baskets and sieves. It seemed that a mat (straw mat) had been laid where the woman is sitting, but the kitchen is basically a earthen floor. This was a common sight in rural Japan 50 years ago. Of course, it goes without saying there was no running water and gas. Even if there was electricity, only one bare light bulb would be available.

For the LIP workers, the problems that needed to be improved seemed to be piling up. However, even though they appealed to have the kitchen improved because of the 'poor young wife (=daughter-in-law),' the man or the mother-in-law with the authority to decide refused to hear about it. In Japan, the defeated nation and the starving country, everybody had to work toward increasing production, and they could not afford to spend money on kitchen improvements. Here, the strategies adopted by the LIP workers were 'scientific explanations' and 'low cost improvement ideas.'

First, they put forward the fact that firewood consumption would be reduced by improving the cooking stoves. For farmers, this was a 'good deal.' If a chimney was installed, then the thermal efficiency would increase and meals could be cooked quickly. There would be less smoke, so eye diseases

would also be reduced. By increasing the height of the cooking stove, women could work without bending over, reducing women's back pains and resulting in increased farm work efficiency. These would work in favour for men too.

The problem was money. If the cement was purchased communally and everybody laid bricks manually, then the stoves could be completed cheaply. The LIP workers had learned the cooking stove 'building' techniques from a plasterer, so there was no need for labour charges. Thus, at a relatively innovative household in the village, the LIP workers themselves rolled up their sleeves and established the brick-laying method for 'improved cooking stoves.' When the people around the village saw what was going on, they began to imitate it, and eventually the 'improved cooking stoves' boom took place in all over Japan.



Cooking stove around 1950

Source: Slide 'A day in the life of a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker'

Kitchen reformation for farm wives

The lives of rural housewives in the mid-1940s to 1950s revolved around working in the field as unpaid farm labourers, and in the kitchen, household chores were a wife's duty. Agricultural work was a male dominated area, so the LIP workers, who were women found it difficult to interfere in it. Therefore, should they aim to improve the livelihood of rural women and to improve the working conditions, it was a reasonable strategy to target the kitchen, which was central to household chores. And those kitchens were full of problems, from a modern perspective. In other words, it was smoky, dark, jumbled and difficult to work in.

To solve the 'smoke,' as introduced previously, the 'improved cooking stove' was diffused to rural areas across the country as a Livelihood Improvement entry point. To solve the 'dark,' the 'open the window movement' was launched and installing windows in the kitchen, and closets cum bedrooms in traditional farm-houses, was recommended. The first lyrics of the 'Livelihood Improvement Song,' (composed in 1962) sung by Livelihood Improvement Practice Groups all over Japan, began with 'Let's open the windows wide' and this was due to this movement.

The 'Jumbled' and 'difficult to work in' problems were blamed on the structure and arrangement inside the kitchen. When a time and motion survey on household chores was done, the arrangement for water jars

(there was no running water yet), the cooking stove, firewood storage, the cooking area (where the chopping board is), the sink (where dishes and food were washed), and miso barrels and rice containers was all over the place, and it was clear that the situation led to inefficient actions. In one study, the time required to prepare lunch was 55 minutes 30 seconds, and during that time, the housewife had walked 157 meters in total inside the kitchen (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 'Illustrated Guide book on Farmer's Livelihood Improvement,' 1954). In addition, most of the work involved in cooking was done in a position bent at the waist and knelt at a place close to the ground. So, a squatting motion was applied in addition to horizontal movement. This had become an extra heavy burden for a housewife who was already exhausted by agricultural work.

Tailored to fit

In such circumstances, laying simple water supplies or introducing work using water in the kitchen by pulling a trough from the well in the backyard were some of the 'improvements,' but due to this, the kitchen became damp and unsanitary instead. Placing proper sewage pipes to drain the water outdoors had to involve the improvement of kitchen facilities. As part of kitchen facilities improvement, 'sink improvement' was conducted, and incidentally, working posture improve-

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Designing a 'standing sink'

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

ment was also made. There would be less strain on the back if they could wash dishes while standing. So a 'standing sink' was suggested. The sink itself varied from wooden boxes lined with tin plates to cement cast in box-shaped moulds, but the point of the LIP workers activities here was 'a sink that fits the housewife's height'. In the picture, the LIP worker is showing the sink height that fits the height of the housewife in designing the standing sink.

Perhaps here is the big difference between Japan's Extension workers and the Extension workers in today's developing countries where tools and machines with unified standards are uniformly 'spread', and the Extension worker's evaluation is based on the number of those installed. Conversely, the LIP workers who were the development workers 50 years ago, gained a level of understanding and application ability that allowed them to design a 'standing sink' that fits the size of each individual for the actual objective of 'reducing household chores.'



An LIP worker measuring the height of the sink
Source: Slide 'A day in a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker's life.'

[Episode 45]

Home projects

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

High school home economics

There must be some Japanese people who have done a type of homework known as a 'Home project' for their high school home economics class. A home project is 'hands-on learning' where students can decide on the improvements they would make in the necessities of life at their own home, and carry out the improvements while discussing it with their parents and under their teacher's guidance. Home projects were introduced nationwide as a part of home economics curriculum between 1945 and 1955.

The kitchen improvements for farm houses in post-war Japan were spread primarily through LIP workers under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to rural housewives. However, there was another diffusion route, and that route was from high school home economics teachers to students.

There is a publicity film in English called 'For a Bright Home Life,' created by the GHQ (General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces) Department of Information and Education in 1950. (The US National Archives Collection and Professor Shizuko Shiba of the Faculty of Education; Hiroshima University has the video version.) At the beginning of the film, it describes Japan's 'democratisation' with scenes of a traffic policewoman controlling traffic and an assemblywoman addressing the National Assembly (both first appeared after World War II) in the background.

Next the scene moves to farm housewives who fetched and carried water from the well to water jars for cooking, carrying in firewood from firewood racks in the backyard, and how they moved back and forth between the earthen floor kitchen and the living room.

A study by two high school students

The scene shifts to a classroom where students are discussing problems in their own home life in a home economics class at Minami Tama High School in suburban Tokyo (this school was designated as a model school for home economics education), and choosing their own 'home project'. Among those who chose washing posture improvement, and improving closets, Mitsuko, who had pointed out that the kitchen structure was irrational, inefficient and unsanitary, had chosen kitchen improvement as her topic together with her friend Kimiko. The two students studied kitchen improvement examples at the library, going to 'Kitchen Improvement Consultations' at department stores (private companies also regarded kitchen improvements as business opportunities), and they also visited homes of Americans living in Japan to learn about 'rational' and 'modern' kitchens and to accumulate their knowledge. Then, they came up with various ideas while discussing it with

their families. They had achieved various improvements one after another, such as reducing the housewife's work flow by re-arranging the placement of water jars, the cooking stove, cooking area and firewood storage. Also by keeping things tidy and in order by storage container improvement such as hand-made dish racks (helped by her younger brother), and containers for miso, rice and soy sauce. Then, lighting and ventilation improvement by installing glass windows (at first, the father was reluctant to pay the glass bill), water carrying work was reduced by drawing water from the well in the backyard into the kitchen using a bamboo trough (made by the younger brother), and work posture improvement by improving the cooking stove and sink.

Finally, Mitsuko presented her project report in a 'presentation' aimed at parents, and what she stressed in her report was how much improvement she achieved at a 'low cost.'

The viewpoints common in the improvement activities

Actually, Miss Matsuyo Omori, who was the person responsible for creating the home economics curriculum under the Ministry of Education after the Second World War, had also served as the first Director of Livelihood Improvement division in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry since 1948. Thus, it was no coincidence that there was continuity in livelihood improvement and home economics education. However, we may note that although the 'kitchen improvement' was initiated by different ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Ministry of Education), and by different routes (LIP workers and home economics teachers), it still shared improvement methods and viewpoints (reducing work for housewives, reducing the work flow line, and low cost ideas).

When addressing the social development challenges in developing countries, the donors only see the government counterparts, but this home project had shown that collaboration with the education sector could sometimes have a huge impact.



The kitchen before the improvement (above) and after the improvement (below). Source: Slide 'Rural Livelihood Improvement Project (Exhibition)' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1956)

We received several inquiries from readers wanting to know specific examples of kitchen improvements. So, I had Ms. Miho Ota answer, as she is currently (2003) researching the Livelihood Improvement Movement in graduate school.

Let me introduce a page from the book, published in 1952, summarising field work tips for Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers) by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The drawing below shows the time and motion required to prepare lunch by a farm housewife and her workflow in a survey done with LIP workers. LIP workers would sketch the kitchen floor layout, noting down the housewife's footsteps while she reproduced her work procedure. LIP workers would also mark her standing up and squatting down movements. As the result, the survey showed concretely that the housewife walked a total of 157 meters, and took 55 minutes 30 seconds to prepare lunch.

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Q&A from readers

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi & Miho Ota

tion to unaware problems in order to fuel their desire for improvement (See the drawing below for specific improvement ideas.)

Finding clues for improvement from women's casual conversation and everyday grumbles is also an essential technique. 'I hit a pot and spill the stew since the kitchen was too dark to see. I felt so miserable.' 'I made miso soup in a pot without realising there was a pot scourer in it.' The LIP worker did not just laugh off these women's story. Is the kitchen bright enough? How do you store the pot and scourer? Obviously, the kitchen layout and placement of equipments in each household are different. However, finding a commonality in their daily troubles is a vital first step for improvement. If there is a commonality, the issue is worth tackling with peers. In this case, lightning up or tidying up the kitchen could be a common solution probably not only for the two women but also for others.

Aiming to facilitate improvement process, it is imperative for us to experience and understand the target peoples' work and behaviour in addition to share their problems and worries first-hand. Only after that, we, together with them, can think and discuss the improvement ideas. When you plan to conduct a time and motion survey of their household chores for instance, make it as an opportunity for them to take a rest from their busy daily work. With a cool head, one can reconsider life from a different perspective than usual. A series of thinking processes - reflecting, realising and polishing up solutions will strengthen the motivation and the ability to get things done by themselves. This process we need to facilitate.

Still, there were criticisms actually reported in various parts of Japan, such as a young wife's cry for help, 'Improving the kitchen had reduced the cooking work load, but instead the work load in farm work actually increased,' or criticism from a mother-in-law, 'Reducing firewood? Young people are always thinking about being lazy!'

In response to these criticisms, the subject-matter specialist who was the advisor for LIP workers asked, 'Do they really understand what the improvement is for?' 'Livelihood improvement is about changing living attitudes.' When a livelihood improvement is likely to end with a single shot at, for instance, cooking stove renovation, 'their life style wouldn't change at all' (Aomori Agriculture, September 1953 issue).

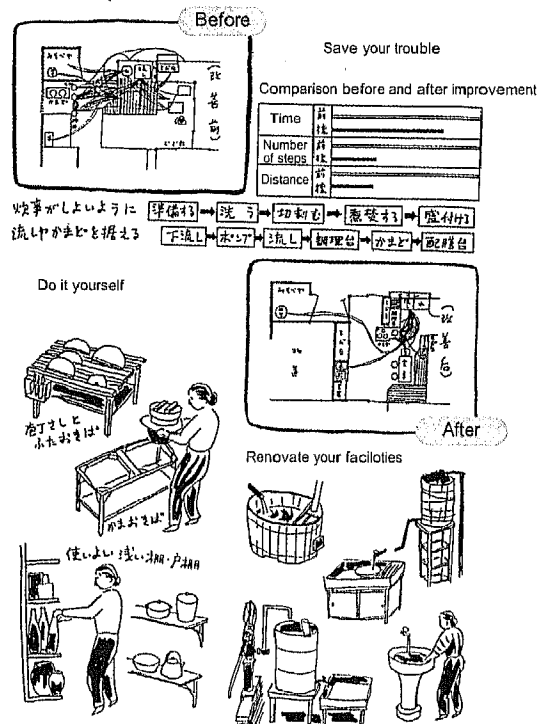
Kitchen improvement is not something that should be evaluated simply by the quantity of saved firewood or cooking time. The kitchen improvement is not the objective by itself. It is merely a means for

The survey also pointed out that the actual total movements may be more, with going up and down between the higher wooden floor and lower dirt floor.

There is a similar survey related to fetching water. It points out that a farm woman would have made 2 round trips from Wakkanai (the northern Hokkaido) to Kagoshima (the southern Kyushu) (920m per day, 70,074km in total) spending more than 3 years and 5 months (69minutes per day, 12,400hours in total) just fetching water in her lifetime. Surely, these tangible facts shocked women how much burden their domestic duties were for them. The women, for the first time, became aware of how much time and energy they had poured into household chores. In this way, the LIP workers made people recognise the irrationality and the inconvenience of the daily routine which they were 'somehow' doing so far. This is how LIP workers draw people's atten-

other challenges which follow, such as nutrition improvement or utilising the saved time for entrepreneurial activities. The true indicator that measures the success of kitchen improvements is 'How did the living attitude change by improving the kitchen?'

We might be easily dazzled by the impressive presentation of improvement results, such as a new kitchen arrangement, right in front of our eyes. Nevertheless, for those who facilitate changes in not only immediate profits but also people's living attitudes, require to have a calm and analytical far-sighted view. Keeping these in our mind could be difficult but important.



Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry "Illustrated Guidebook for Farmers' Livelihood Improvement" (1952)

Housewives in the busy farming season

It has become an almost obsolete word in today's Japan, but until the 1960s, in rice paddy areas, the 'busy farming season' was a harsh season. The mechanisation of agricultural work was still not progressing, so planting and harvesting depended mainly on 'manual labour.' Suitable days for planting were limited, so if all farmers in the area planted rice fields simultaneously, of course there would be labour shortages.

When everyone in the family spent their time from dawn to dusk farming, it still was not enough, and they hired 'help' from other areas, and in some cases they arranged 'labour exchange groups (Yui)' within the village and provided each

other with labour. In this case, preparing meals for helpers would be the farm housewives' job. In other words, during the busy farming season, housewives had to shoulder more than the usual cooking load, in addition to more than the usual farm work.

At this point, the LIP worker 'scientifically' proved that weight loss, in particular in farm housewives, was significant by measuring a farmer's weight during the busy farming season. This fact prompted 'awareness' of the problem (identifying problem) clarified the points to resolve (determined tasks), and as a result, 'communal cooking' emerged as the solution.

Several farm wives formed a group, the kitchen was rented at

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Attempting communal cooking

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

the village hall, a temple or a large farm house, women who were not farmers in the village or surrounding neighbourhood were asked to do cooking, and a communal cooking system was formed. All materials were contributed and brought to the kitchen every morning by participating farmers. When it was time for lunch and dinner, they would send someone, usually the children to come and pick up the portion of the meal prepared for their family. There were also many who adopted the system of preparing only side dishes in communal cooking, while the rice was cooked by each household.

Since the housewives were freed from cooking and could concentrate on farming, and family members could eat more elaborate meals than usual, communal cooking was quite popular (although, there were some elderly people who really could not eat 'modern' rice with curry at first).

A young LIP worker, tilting at windmills

LIP workers were busy in establishing this communal cooking system. They went around explaining the benefits, urging those who hesitated to participate, securing a kitchen, and if possible, getting support from the municipal offices and public health offices (including obtaining material costs and allowances for cooks), and then considered nutritious menus. The nutritionists from health offices or students from nearby girls' schools would rush to support the communal kitchen, and that was only possible because LIP workers had a network 'outside the village' that the villagers did not have.

Of course, the communal cooking was not the invention of LIP workers. There had been similar attempts before the Second World War (for example, the slide 'Communal Cooking Village' shows Ookuma Hamlet, Nobutoku Village, Nagano Prefecture). Its achievements were known to certain people. However, in the post-war Livelihood Improvement movement, communal cooking could effectively produce results by reducing work, dietary improvement, and cultivating cooperative spirits, largely due to the efforts of LIP workers making arrangements and

playing the role of facilitators who provided support in the background.

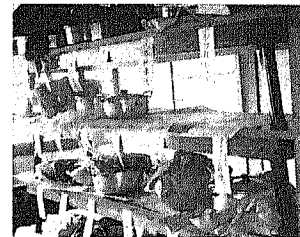
In executing communal cooking, LIP workers shouldered the parts that could not be carried out alone by the housewives, such as securing cooks, procuring the materials (to best use the materials at hand and to minimise the economic burden), and planning nutritious menus. However, if the initiatives taken by the LIP workers were too strong, it would not be a 'proactive' activity of the people, and it would also not lead to nurturing 'self-reliant farmers.'

On an island in Seto Inland Sea, a young LIP worker enthusiastically took up communal cooking; working from morning to night. Looking at the situation, a veteran LIP worker (Ms. Mieko Takaoka, from Ehime Prefecture, born in 1928) admonished, 'Aren't you tilting at windmills?' This episode suggests a profound warning for donor-led social developments in today's developing countries.



In front of a communal cooking kitchen, around 1954.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Sunao Makida, Hiroshima Prefecture



Meals for each family lined up the shelf, around 1960.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Yuriko Kondo, Ehime Prefecture

[Episode 48]

Handmade triangle underpants

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Underpants for hygiene

The post-war livelihood improvements covered all areas in the necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. However, there was not a ministry responsible for improving 'clothing' in Japan. Through Japanese history, the 'Ruler' consistently taught farmers to be simple and frugal, and during the Edo period, farmers were not allowed to wear clothes other than deep blue cotton. Under such regulations, the farmers would not even think of originality and creativity in clothing, much less improving underwear and work clothes. By breaking into the domain of 'clothing,' the LIP workers had introduced an innovation.

Right after the Second World War, clothing for the rural people was basically a traditional kimono, including clothes for going out. Adult males wore 'loin cloths', while women wore 'kimono underskirts', but children did not wear any underwear. In any case, 'underpants' did not exist in Japan. Therefore, wearing underpants was introduced as an improvement because the fact that children did not wear underwear was 'unsanitary.' In fact, fleas and lice were prevalent in Japan right after the defeat in the Second World War. (There is a famous picture of children with DDT(*) powder sprinkled from their head to rid them of fleas and lice.)

Wash frequently, stay clean

However, even if they wore underpants, but did not change them every day, it would simply promote being unsanitary. Hence, frequent washing of underpants and shirts, and always staying clean had become the LIP worker's slogan. In this sense, the underpants could be said to be a symbol of sanitary living and modernisation. But, since it was not easy to buy underpants in those days, a strategy to make them was born. Old clothing such as bleached cotton was cut and made into triangular underpants for the children to wear. This was the housewife's work (Housewives in Japan at that time were able to sew, as it was considered as an accomplishment). There was a story around this time that a teacher forgot to tell children that there was a physical examination at school next day, so they were not made to wear underpants to school, and went through a very embarrassing experience. Underpants were luxuries.

One hand-towel per person movement

In rural areas, they did not distinguish between work clothes, everyday wear and pyjamas. So, first they were encouraged to distinguish their clothing and change, and to make 'acceptable' working clothes out of old clothing, such as adjusting women's work pant lengths, devising new cuffs, and attempts at hat making for shades. All these 'low cost' work clothing improvements were also the entry points for livelihood improvement. The 'One hand-towel per person movement' was a part of environmental and health improvement. By using towels dedicated for each person in the family, the spread of infectious diseases (especially tuberculosis) within the family was prevented, and they were able to turn it into a weapon in encouraging frequent hand washing. Naturally, the towels were recycled old clothes.

Having every member display their improved working clothes they designed within the group led to mutual exchanges and the building of confidence among group members. Here, as teachers, not only Extension workers, but 'creative housewives' as well, went on to motivate each other's desire for improvement. The LIP workers did not just simply teach; they were also facilitators who motivated the housewives desire for improvement.

* Sanitary, agricultural pesticide



Women showing off their improvement results on work clothing.
Source: Slide 'A day in the life of a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker'
(Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)

Joy of water supply

In developing countries where there is no water supply, 'fetching water' is a woman's work, particularly young wives or young girls. Therefore, an accessible 'water supply' will greatly improve their physical and mental burden. It was the same in post-war Japan.

After the Second World War, when the villagers themselves voluntarily began restoration projects in their war-ravaged villages, the most joyful thing in the improvement projects per hamlet was the simple water supply(*) project. If you read women's diaries of that time, describing the joy that came from the sight of water coming out from the tap for the first time, it will superimpose over the sight of rural women in today's developing countries. If there is a water source on the hill behind the vil-

lage, then everybody will contribute the required materials and labour. A simple water supply can be completed as long as there is appropriate leadership and minimal technical input, but in these cases, it is not rare to see Agriculture Extension workers or LIP workers act as coordinators. When the desire for water supply welled up in the villagers (especially in youths gathered in the 4H Club), it was the duty of 'public servants,' and 'outsiders' to introduce examples from other villages, to get the technical support from the village office or prefectural office and small financial aid.

Dramatically increased water supply coverage

On the other hand, the GHQ (General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Occupied Japan), who recognised the poor

[Episode 49]

Simple water supply

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

sanitary conditions in Japan had strongly urged the implementation of public health education and measures against infectious diseases for the public in prefectures nationwide. From 1950, when post-war confusion had finally settled down, many prefectures had enacted a 'simple water supply enforcement ordinance,' and along with embarking on water quality control of handmade water supplies, had also encouraged laying new water supplies via residents' participation.

As a result, the national percentage served by water supply increased up to 80 per cent in 1970 from 26 per cent in 1950. Among this percentage, the impact of establishing a 'simple water supply subsidy' on the premise that the residents assume the burden was high, and showed that the population served by a simple water supply increased ten times from approximately 1 million people in 1952 to 10 million people in 1961 (Keiko Yamamoto, 'Simple Water Supply and Rural Livelihood Improvement Movement,' Proceedings of 2002 Japan Association for International Development Convention, Page 289 - 294). The reason why the simple water supply was popular through resident groups during this period of time was probably due to the fact that reducing fetching water labour was a top

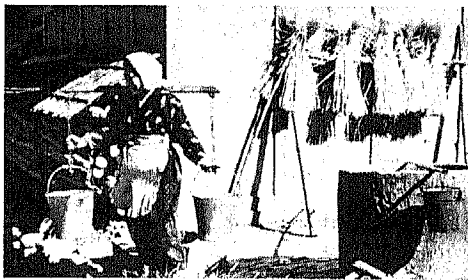
priority among the livelihood improvement demands that were came about during the Second World War, and also it conformed to the trend of rural democratisation called 'uplifting women's status'. For example, in Okanaru Hamlet in the southern part of Ehime, the 'Culture Promotion Club' that was established by five young men in 1947, had made a simple water supply using a bamboo trough. This had led to 'livelihood improvement' that involved all 43 families in the hamlet (Slide 'A Hamlet Nurtured by the Hands of Youths,' 1954). In this sense, laying a water supply was an entry point into livelihood improvement.

Residents voluntary contribution

By the way, the simple water supply system is a system that a country with limited financial resources (for better or worse, there was no international NGO helping rural Japan at the time) can use to increase the coverage under the water supply by having half the construction cost compensated by voluntary contributions from the population. Therefore, the population's willingness to pay is essential. The publicity film 'Life and Water', that the then Ministry of Health and Welfare made in 1952, was made with the intention of communicating in various aspects the sanitary, convenience and modernisation benefits of a 'water supply,' and to persuade the people that contributing their own money for all these is 'worthwhile'.

The water situation in all over Japan at the time was recorded in this film, and it is a very precious record. In it, there is a scene where a village meeting was held in the compound of the village's guardian shrine (Chinju-Sama), and discussions were held about providing labour and selling cedar trees from the village-owned woods in order to raise the villager's share of money. It is a vivid reminder of today's developing countries focus group discussions.

* A simple water supply referred to a water supply providing water to a population between 100 to 5000 people, and its facilities and water quality standards were slightly more modest than a normal water supply.



Fetching water on farmhouses in the 1950s. A housewife carrying water from the well to the water jugs. This well was located in the backyard of the house, so the distance was relatively short, and she was probably one of the luckier ones.

Source: Slide 'Farmer Livelihood Improvement Extension (Exhibition)' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1957)

Laundry is a heavy load

What are the women wearing a white cook apron and face-cloth around their heads looking at? They are looking at the hands of the LIP worker, who is explaining tips on laundry. This photo is a scene taken from an open air laundry class around 1950. In rural development projects all around the world, even though there are cooking classes, there are hardly any laundry classes. Why did Japan's development workers focus on laundry 50 years ago?

If you observe the lives of women in developing countries, you would immediately see that laundry can be a heavy load for women. It is not easy to secure water, and in places where there are no washing machines, they have to rely on their arms and legs to do the heavy work. However, how do you handle laundry in order to link it to livelihood improvement? Finding that path is not simple. But, if there is a problem, finding its solution is an LIP worker's duty.

'Laundry' is just one word, but there are many issues in dealing with laundry such as washing clothes without damaging the fabric (washing method), or a laundry table height that will not hurt your back (washing posture). The former leads to savings, while the latter leads to women's health improvement. Of course, the LIP workers did not bring in new machines or introduce funds from outside in their 'laundry classroom.' They improvised whatever was at hand, for example, putting a washing tub that was on the ground on a table so that washing could be done while standing up, and continuing the improvement step by step. They made use of their 'LIP approach' specialty.

Furthermore, the LIP workers also made use of group activi-

ties and increased the effect. The Hinode (sunrise) Group from Oda City in Tottori Prefecture, who received national award from the Ministry of Labour, had gathered the housewives and did communal laundry as a part of rationalising household chores. They saved money because they did not send their laundry to the cleaners, but could still wear clean clothing. Also, in Jiromaru district near Fukuoka City, the 4H Club did a communal purchase of a washing machine in 1958 and set it up in the Shinto shrine aimed at reducing the housewives' laundry work. Back then, there were many women who did their laundry by the river in this district (it was considered good manners for those who were washing diapers to do their laundry downstream).

Saving to buy a washing machine

Today, we can't imagine communally using a common washing machine. However, there was a picture of a woman carrying a washing machine on her back printed in 'Kodama,' the Chiba Prefecture's Livelihood Improvement Group's 25th anniversary publication. The women would take turns using the washing machine for three days, and then take the washing machine to the next person on the list after her turn was up.

Since 1960, when Japan was on a high growth track, each household was able to buy their own washing machine. The LIP approach was effective even in getting the money to buy washing machines. There was a story introduced in 'Kodama' about a woman who learned hair cutting techniques from her friend and saved on her children's hair cut cost. She took three years to save 14,000 yen to buy a washing machine.

[Episode 50]

A laundry class

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

'Now that I have a washing machine, I was able to nap for about 40 minutes'. Ms. Shigeko Sasaki (born 1927) was a Livelihood Improvement Practice Group member in the previously mentioned Jiromaru. When they bought the washing machine, she thought, 'Oh, I was relieved!' She happily talked about the time they bought the washing machine as if it happened yesterday. Once the farmers began using washing machines, next, the LIP workers began ironing classes for shirts that had been washed.

By choosing laundry as an entry point activity, the LIP workers had made use of their 'viewpoints'. Since laundry is considered a young wives' work, by working on improving the laundry, there was little resistance from the mother-in-law and the husband, and it was easy to start group activities. Once the group activities started, it would be an opportunity to learn efficient work posture, scientific laundry methods etc. through 'laundry classes.'

Although the laundry improvement never led to increased

income, it certainly contributed to reducing the housewives work, improving the lives of farmers and reducing poverty. This is at the heart of an LIP approach which seeks to understand the situation and discover problems on their own.

Collecting Data & Writing Collaboration: Miho Ota



Source: Slide: 'A day in a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker's life.' No. 19

[Episode 51]

Chicken and egg

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

'1-8-8 movement?'

To overcome chronic malnutrition, sometimes bold changes in eating habits may be needed. There are scientifically 'correct' nutrition improvement methods - what food and how it should be prepared - for people who are clearly malnourished. However, if they were unable to obtain those foods or cooking utensils physically or economically, or when there was psychological resistance that originated from cultural and religious beliefs that made it feel inappropriate, then no matter what plan you came up with; it would never lead to improvement.

The diet in post-war Japan rural areas was mainly 'bakkari shoku' (rice, miso soup and the same side dish everyday), and animal protein was critically insufficient. To improve those situation, nutritionists and LIP workers came up with slogans such as the '1-8-8 movement' which recommends eating 1 egg or drinking 1 milk product, eating 8 types of vegetables and sleeping 8 hours every day, and urged reformation in rural women's diet awareness. According to an article by a former Niigata LIP worker, Ms. Kinu Nakamura (born 1920), in 1950, edible oil consumption was 220g, and intake of eggs was a mere 65 eggs per capita per annum.

Red eggs for family consumption

Goats and chickens were actively promoted for nutrition improvement. Goats were for milk consumption, and the chickens were for their eggs. The Agricultural Improvement Extension Office in Hiroshima Prefecture had recommended that farmers raise the same number of Silkie hens as the number of people in the family, and one male Silkie. Silkie chicks can be bought from agricultural cooperatives, and they could be fed with leftover rice and chopped chickweed. They did not require a hen house and could be kept under the porch (but it would be necessary to put up nets to protect them from cats), so it did not cost very much. The LIP workers had hoped that the eggs would be consumed by the farmers to help their nutrition improvement, but in fact, although the eggs were used in children's lunch boxes, many never made it to the family dinner table, but were sold and the money saved. Using eggs in children's lunch boxes may have been aided by vanity while giving consideration toward nutrition.

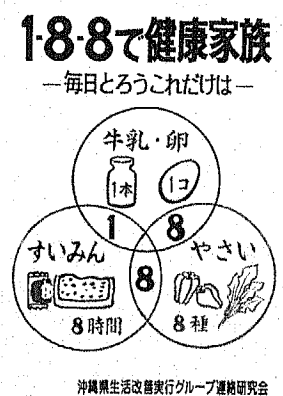
Therefore, around 1959, the members of 'Kayanomi' Livelihood Improvement Group in Fukuroi City, Shizuoka Prefecture, each bought a pair of chickens that laid red eggs. They agreed that the red eggs were for home consumption, and even if they sold them in the market, it would be found out immediately. This way, they encour-

aged each other toward home consumption. ('Five Decades of Extension Work - Testimonies of the Times', Page 57.)

Dissecting chickens

Meanwhile, dissecting techniques on chickens that could no longer produce eggs were actively spread from the mid 1940s through the 1950s to improvise providing animal protein. Since most housewives did not know how to pick the feathers and clean the chicken, the LIP workers put their efforts into spreading the techniques. Moto Makita (born 1917) was a first generation LIP worker (recruited in 1949) in Hiroshima Prefecture. She was the daughter of a Buddhist temple priest, and her first assignment was her local parish, so there was social trust and the activities were easy to carry out. However, killing is forbidden in Buddhist teachings, and instructing the 'chicken dissection' was actually killing. So, even though she thought she would surely be going to hell, she still taught the techniques 'for the farmer's nutrition improvement' while chanting Buddhist prayers silently. There were even people who asked for the chicken's blood while she taught. That was probably an indigenous strategy for nutrition intake.

The LIP workers who were development workers fifty years ago clearly knew that when attempting to improve diet it would not be enough to simply teach about nutritional knowledge and cooking methods.



沖縄県生活改善実行グループ連絡研究会

1-8-8 Movement Poster
(Source: Zakimi Livelihood Improvement Practice Group, Okinawa Prefecture)

Miso of 3 years vintage

Miso paste is the essence of miso soup which is indispensable for Japanese everyday meals. In rural Japan after the Second World War, miso paste was mainly homemade, and everyone thought their family's miso was the best. Miso is a fermented food, and the yeast cells lived in miso barrels and on pillars in attics in each house. So, even though the miso was made using the same ingredients, due to the properties of the yeast cells, a 'family miso' was handed down in every household.

In the late 1940s, Miso was stored in the form of 'miso balls' in most areas. Miso balls were made by adding rice yeast (yeast cells bred on steamed rice) or wheat yeast to

the raw material, which was boiled (sometimes steamed) and crushed soybeans. Then they were mixed and hardened. These miso balls were then hung down from cold and dark ceilings and left to ferment slowly. It could be consumed after about three years had passed. If the amount of rice yeast was increased, it would age sooner, but the yeast must be obtained from a yeast maker. They did not use cash, but a barter system. In Niigata, at that time, if you took a measure of rice to the yeast maker, you would get a 0.4 measure of rice yeast (40% exchange rate). In order to save precious rice, they reduced the amount of yeast, taking the time and also the help of bacteria in the air to ferment the miso.

[Episode 52]

The miso revolution

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Delicious but less time and efforts

The LIP workers, who were groping for an interaction with isolated rural women, realised that 'food' attracted women's attention the most, so they used 'modernised' miso making methods as their activity entry point. First, if they fermented their own yeast without depending on yeast makers, they would get two measures of rice yeast for one measure of rice (200% exchange rate). As a result, they could use the yeast lavishly; making miso age faster so that it could be eaten within one year.

Even though it took three days and three nights to let the yeast sleep by stretching it over steam when steaming rice, the yeast control was not done on a hunch, but by using a thermometer for accurate temperature control. The soybean, rice yeast and salt amounts used were not measured by sight, but measured accurately using scales. The miso made in this way was easier and more delicious than from the miso balls. This had a revolutionary impact. The fact that a simpler and more delicious miso could be made than the 'family miso' that used the old methods passed down by the mother-in-law, in a sense, was probably an event that made 'tradition' lose its prestige.

'Roadside station' miso-makers

Noriko Nishigata (born 1937) was assigned to a mountain region of Niigata as a newly assigned LIP worker in 1961. There, she diffused enriched miso with calcium and vitamins added into it, and established a Livelihood Improvement Practice Group with miso making activities as an entry activity. Because of the lack of transportation, she would stay for three days controlling the temperature of the yeast rice. At night, she would handle the awareness programme lectures, and the miso making techniques had taken hold in one winter. By the way, today,

most of the miso sold in 'Roadside Stations' (a kind of public drive-in) all over Japan is often made by former young wives from this time who learned the 'scientific miso making,' mentioned above.

Well, is there a lesson in this miso revolution story for developing countries? We cannot use miso in countries where miso is not consumed. That's true. However, livelihood improvement and diet improvement were systems from United States of America, where there is no miso, and were transplanted to Japan. In fact, at the beginning of the American extension system (late 19th Century), it was bottling surplus tomatoes that was the popular entry point. The 'bottled tomatoes' became a 'miso revolution.' This 'overwriting' process is probably the best lesson that Japan's experience can show to rural development in developing countries.



A drawing of miso making in 1961 (by Ms. Noriko Nishigata).

Gathering people using existing routes

In post-war rural Japan, cooking classes were among the many activities conducted by Livelihood Improvement Extension workers assigned to a new area.

The reason cooking classes were preferred as the initial activity was that, for rural women, cooking was a familiar activity, and they found it easy to take part. From this, the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers, who wanted hints as to how they could make various improvements to the necessities of life, could also learn a lot.

First, as many villagers as possible would be gathered together, without any particular concern for their relationship. Any existing access route could be used, whether via the village head, or even the Agricultural Cooperative Women's Association. As a newly assigned worker, these opportunities could be used to promote oneself. Cooking allowed something to be created out of raw ingredients, and, as an activity, was very unlikely to be considered risky, or inappropriate for the needs of the area. This would surely not be difficult for aid workers operating in rural areas, either.

Relaxed participative surveys

The Livelihood Improvement Extension workers would observe practical activities to discover potential leaders, or techniques the participants were good at, leading to the formation of groups. In addition, encouraging the housewives to take home the dishes they made helped them to gain the understanding of their husbands and mother-in-laws, thereby making it easier for them to attend subsequent activities. In other words, these activities provided the foundations for forming a socially recognised group.

Livelihood Improvement Extension workers who were assigned to a new rural area also conducted various surveys into traditional festivals and agricultural calendars, among other aspects. They sometimes used questionnaires, but the most interesting point is that participatory technical training such as cooking classes was also used to gain a deeper understanding of the village circumstances and promote mutual discussion. The cooking class was a gathering that was easy to understand and full of benefits, and therefore had the advantages of allowing extension workers to successfully elicit the women's true feelings in casual conversation, when a more formal survey may not have yielded such results, and also providing a forum in which the villagers were happy to participate.

Discovering the 'next step forward' alongside others

Cooking classes were not only conducted at the beginning of an assignment, but were carried out with a range of objectives, depending on the locality and the crops produced. Mayonnaise, rice with curry, Christmas cake, and other new foods were unusual in villages at that time. Tasting these things for the first time was thought to stimulate the rural women, who had led a conservative life, to an interest in new things, as well as to improve nutrition. It was also hoped that the provision of enjoyable group activities would assist the women in building family relationships that allowed them to consider livelihood improvement easier. Healthy miso and vegetable processing projects were designed in consideration of promoting a healthy and convenient life, managing household accounts and improving subsistence.

Cooking classes became the driving force behind participants

[Episode 53]

The potential of cooking classes

Text by Kazuko Oguni

moving into various 'next-step' activities, such as beginning to grow one's own vegetables, diversifying into different methods of cooking such as deep frying, and improving stoves for cooking. Many Livelihood Improvement Extension workers reported that they had implemented cooking classes as part of the process to introduce the aforementioned reforms to miso, nutritional improvements and communal cooking. In Fukuoka Prefecture, Livelihood Improvement Extension workers who were good at cooking were warned, "Do not merely become a cooking teacher." A veteran worker from Niigata Prefecture pointed out that simply repeating a single class to learn various techniques would be a worthless activity. These statements indicate the extent to which cooking classes were planned with various possibilities in mind. Methods varied depending on the area, with different women's groups engaging in communal cooking to reduce the burden of chores, nutritional improvements or improvements to the living environment, while some progressed into business activities such as fully-fledged com-

munal vegetable processing and marketing.

Those of us who have struggled to fully understand a region and the needs of its residents during the short period of time we are assigned to assist there should perhaps take note of this type of activity, which allows outsiders, who know little about the community, to spend time in an enjoyable way with local residents, while at the same time facilitating the discovery of the 'next step forward'.



Cooking class
Photo courtesy of Ms. Fumie Niino, Ehime Prefecture

[Episode 54]

Introducing new foods

Text by Miho Ota

Once, in rural Ghana, I entertained my friends with some Japanese dishes splurging on precious Japanese seasoning and ingredients. However, they did not even try it, no matter how much I urged them. After all the cooking I did for them, I was disappointed, and a little shocked at their obstinacy.

As those who have similar experience would understand, it is not easy to introduce new unfamiliar foods in rural areas. Looking back, it is understandable that anybody would hesitate to put something they had never seen before in their mouth. They might be protecting themselves from parasites, so that was why they did not eat raw vegetables. Nonetheless, from the viewpoint of health, nutrition and effective utilisation of surplus crops, there are cases where it is necessary to promote alternative foods.

The very first Livelihood Improvement Extension worker (LIP worker) to Kumamoto Prefecture, Ms. Taeko Kiyota (born 1923), was assigned to Kinokura Village in Kamimashi County in 1949. There, she began her work conducting a survey to understand the village general situation. The result showed that there were many gastrointestinal disorder cases during the busy farming seasons between May and September. She analysed that poor digestion was probably caused by overeating carbohydrates (mainly rice), which is unfavourable for digestion, and due to the slouching posture when farming. So she planned to introduce flour-based food (bread) that is better for digestion using local leftover wheat. At that time, from the total of 500 villagers, only 25 per cent of them had ever eaten bread. However, out of those 25 per cent, 93 per cent had answered they liked bread, and that became the ground for promoting this plan.

Gaining understanding and cooperation from related agencies, the village bore the cost for construction of the oven. She requested that two non-farmer housewives in the hamlet help with baking bread. During four days at the height of rice planting, they made bread as snacks to offer farmers to taste. The bread was a hit. It was easier to digest than the usual rice and bean cake. It took less time and effort to prepare. Moreover, it was surprisingly delicious. In fact, there were some who said they don't mind eating bread once every day. To spread flour-based food throughout the area, Ms. Kiyota, encouraged with this feedback, continued to organise bread baking classes ten times and instructed 259 women.

Ms. Kiyota's ability to translate ideas into practical action was amazing, as she managed to do that much in just one month after taking up a new post as a LIP worker. Despite being a novelty and drawing people's attention, extraordinary effort and ingenuity were required to introduce and establish a new food culture in rural areas. Ms. Kiyota gave the following 6 points as items to keep in mind when organising such work. (*)

1. Be certain of the techniques. (If the bread the farmers ate for the first time was bad, then the flour-based food itself will be rejected.)
2. Research and prepare thoroughly in advance. (How to choose and obtain yeast, the equipment for bread baking and so on.)
3. Conduct a careful investigation on the situation, and know your target. (Is there any resistance towards flour-based food? Is it possible to get wheat cheaper than rice?)
4. Choose a suitable timing for action. (No matter how good your kitchen improvement plan is, farmers would be too busy to pay attention during the high farming period. However, introducing bread was most effective during the busy farming period.)
5. Advertise widely. (Use newspapers, radio, word of mouth, circulars, etc.)
6. Measure the effects; do not leave the job without evaluation. (Later, ask the family if they enjoyed eating bread. Did they bake bread at home too? Did it turn out well? etc.)

These points are not limited to just food dissemination, but may also be applied to extension activities in other fields as well. Furthermore, Ms. Kiyota's attitude of bringing enthusiasm and confidence in the job ('if you have uncertain feelings and are unconfident, you should not move people'), along with prudence ('do not aim for a flashy temporary effect'), can also be a helpful guideline when working with people, regardless of country, community and era.

The reputation of Ms. Kiyota's bread eating instructions even reached the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In the 1950s, when the US-led policies for the encouragement of flour-based foods were introduced nationwide, Ms. Kiyota's experience was held up all over the country as a model project to learn from.

* From Department of Livelihood Improvement, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 'Extension Newsletter' Issue No. 18 (1949)



Source: Slide 'A day in the life of a Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1957)

'Improvement' is possible with a little ingenuity

Photo 1 is a piece of 16 mm film created in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. The film title was 'How to Stuff Straw to Make a Straw Mattress.' It explains the process of making mattress-shaped futons using paddy straw, and was a visual material that the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers) carried, together with a projector when on tour. Other films made during this period covered a wide range of topics about the necessities of everyday life, including 'Improving Working Clothes', 'Communal Cooking', 'Smoky Cooking Stoves and Good Cooking Stoves' and 'The Future Housing of Farmers'.

Now, why a 'straw mattress?' The LIP workers had worked

on 'rationalising' all aspects of rural livelihood. However, a farmer's bedroom between 1945 and 1955 in particular, was considered full of problems, only second to the kitchen. While the bedroom was the place where they spent one third to one fourth of their day, it was often a room like a closet, which sunlight was unlikely to reach. The bedroom for most young couples was a small, dark room without lighting, with only thin beddings spread on the floor (the ones with beddings are the luckier ones). Therefore, in order to rest a body exhausted from farm work and household chores that included collecting firewood and fetching water from morning to night, and to regain the strength for the following day, sleeping environment improvement was considered to be urgent.

[Episode 55]

Straw mattress and quilt cover

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

So, the LIP workers taught 'improvements' that could be made with very little ingenuity. For example, firstly, airing the mattress under the sunshine (bedding did not have to be new, just sanitary), and secondly, moving the bedroom to a room with windows. Farmers at that time did not have the money for bedding and bedroom improvements that cost money. As the next phase, LIP workers recommended making straw mattresses by making use of paddy straw that was produced in large volume during the harvest (prior to mechanisation, paddy straw was inevitably produced through the reaping and threshing process). These straw mattresses were sanitary (it could be replaced once a year), and comfortable (it may not have been cotton, but it had a certain degree of elasticity). Since the raw materials were at hand, it was also a 'low cost improvement'.

Handmade mattress covers

At the time, an LIP worker in Kagoshima, Ms. Masako Kodama (born 1925), was perplexed when a group protested they could not carry out the things she taught them such as airing bedding. When she asked why, the answer was, 'There is a main road and the bus passes through our village. But, our mattresses are patched, and it would be shameful for our village to allow such mattresses to be seen.' It was a plausible story. So, Ms. Kodama suggested making mattress covers, so that they would not be ashamed should people see the mattresses. Subsequently, with the support of Aunt Harue, a lady who was taking care of the village, group member income from part-time jobs carrying firewood, and mutual financing associations, they bought fabric for making mattress covers. They managed to make the new mattress covers by receiving sewing guidance and working together (photo 2).

In fact, all the women in this group were war widows. Although the Livelihood Improvement movement mainly targeted ordinary housewives who were equipped with the main foundations for livelihood (of course they were also troubled with their mother-in-laws and the remnants of feudalism), this movement did not exclude women in extreme poverty.

As shown above, even war widows who were in especially vulnerable circumstances could participate in livelihood improvement by forming an LIP group. In fact, this group even grew until they were able to go to Tokyo to attend a national workshop for good practices in 1950. What made this possible was the presence of the LIP worker in the background, who urged voluntary group formation with 'friends who they get along with'. When forming groups it is easier to maintain the economic and social homogeneity of group members this way, and to propose improvements according to the women's actual circumstances, in contrast with standard improvement projects. Don't you think that this exercise can also be applied to rural development in today's developing countries?

* Mutual help organisation using a rotating saving and credit association (ROSCA) mechanism



Holding their new mattress cover
Photo courtesy of Ms. Fumie Matsuda, born in 1914



A piece of 16 mm film made in the late 1940s, 'How to Stuff Straw in a Straw Mattress'.

Easy campaign naming

It is not uncommon in restaurants in developing countries, to see flies come in groups until the plate is covered black with them. Rural Japan after the Second World War was also in this condition. However, Japan was successful in thoroughly eradicating 'harmful pests,' through environmental improvement within ten years or so after the Second World War. The eradication covered all the harmful pests and insects including mosquitoes that were factors for malaria and Japanese encephalitis, flies that caused dysentery and typhoid fever, and fleas, lice and rats that brought typhus (which killed 3,351 in an outbreak in 1946).

In improving the public health standards in post-war Japan, we could not ignore the effects of US leverage, which gave the most serious consideration to health management (including preventing sexually transmitted diseases) of their soldiers stationed in Japan. GHQ had instructed the then Ministry of Health and Welfare to allocate 38 per cent of its budget to pest eradication. They even introduced an ambitious system to assign one Environmental Health Inspector for every 60,000 people, and to establish one squad of 6 hygiene officers for every 13,000 people (The hygiene squad also acted as an unemployment measure for returning soldiers, etc.). However, no matter what system you made, or how much budget or manpower you put in, as long as the community did not work together and consider the issue as their own problem, a sustainable environmental improvement would prove difficult.

In Japan, there were many social programmes and campaigns with fascinating names that anybody could understand without having an explanation, that were having an impact. The 'Movement to eradicate flies and mosquitoes' was one of the examples. The Ministry of Health and Welfare officials believed that when Chinese characters with many strokes were used in posters, the public would not read them. In addition, for the public at that time, 'a life without flies and mosquitoes' was like 'a life

with refrigerators and cars;' it was a dream that symbolised 'modern living.' Under this slogan, Public Health Offices set model hamlets throughout the country, and deployed sanitary and environmental improvement projects by maximising and mobilising the residents' collective power.

Synergistic relationship between people and government

In 1953, Mineshita Hamlet (33 households at the time) of Takae Village in Izumi-county, Kagoshima Prefecture was a designated model hamlet. Centring around the residents' association and women's associations, all the villagers would clean all at once, clearing the drain, spraying insecticide (pest control agents and machines were rented by the Public Health Office), cut the bamboo groves where the mosquito breeding took place, and even worked on improving toilets.

The once a month cleaning was volunteer work (unpaid labour), but they even sprayed insecticide in houses whose owner did not join the work. They were also thorough in enforcing an agreement to not leave flowers in the cemetery after visiting graves (the water in flower vases was a breeding ground for mosquitoes). They even cleaned the cattle pen until not one straw was out of place. As for landowners who stubbornly refused to clear away their bamboo groves despite instruction from the Public Health Office, a few young people asked them to make straw sandals, and as they were concentrating on the work, a youth group cut the bamboo groves.

Thanks to such activities, Mineshita hamlet won award after award, including Prefectural Governor Award (Economic Independence Movement), and Mainichi Shinbun Award (Eradicating rats and harmful pest projects). In 1955, their leader, Mr. Hitoshi Yoshimatsu (born 1915), even went to Tokyo to attend New Lifestyle Movement presentations, at which time, according to him, 'I was in trouble because I didn't have decent clothes.'

[Episode 56]

Eradicating flies and mosquitoes!

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

At that time, they had toilets, but these were simply built by using a large jar buried in the floor with two pieces of planks to step on. It would be wasteful to use newspapers as toilet paper, so they used a bamboo spatula instead. So, all 33 households changed to improved toilets with three tanks(*) (Since they



Insecticide spraying by a public health worker. Source: 'People Who Created the Future.' From Kagoshima Prefecture Publicity Film (1957)

became a model hamlet, there was assistance for each household from the Prefectural Health Department, but they devised a way to make it cheaper by communal work and reducing the amount of cement used as much as possible.) Even after the model designation was

ended, livelihood improvements such as cooking stoves and kitchen improvement by women's associations, and further activities toward building a community centre were deployed one after another.

Behind this success, naturally there was the 'mutual cooperation' among the residents in the form of a residents' association and a women's association, but we should not overlook the roles of the 'synergistic relationship with the administrative apparatus of the government,' such as enthusiastic guidance from the Public Health officials, and by creating tax unions in the hamlet and receiving subsidies from the village in exchange for reducing delinquent tax payers, and acquiring the money from the village mayor for the party for the commemoration award. The fact that the Japanese bureaucrats had known instinctively how important 'people's organisation' was for the activities is noteworthy.

* Pit latrine with three tanks linked together underground. As the raw sewage was transferred from the first tank directly beneath the toilet seat to the second tank chamber, and to the third tank chamber over time, the bacteria and smell would be reduced through bacterial action. In this way, flies and odour could be reduced.

One bath tub for over 40 people

It is said the Japanese are a bath-loving people. However, for peasants in post-war Japan the bath was somewhat a luxury. In stark contrast to today's one push-and everything will be ready baths, preparing to bathe was a huge job. When they wanted to bathe, the water had to be carried from the nearest well and then heated by burning firewood. The role of preparing the bath was the domain of women and housewives. This included carrying the water, collecting firewood and stimulating the fire using a blowpipe, and also adding more firewood when the bath became lukewarm. These roles would have been passed on to children when their mothers were too busy with farm work. As you can imagine, preparing a bath involved a great deal of work, but unlike in the towns and cities where population density allowed commercial baths to become a feasible proposition from the 17th century onwards, in the rural villages people had to find other ways to have a soak. Out of necessity the custom of 'bath-sharing' became popular in these areas.

In these rural areas whenever a household prepared a bath, people from neighbouring households would arrive to have a soak that day. In this way, the water and fuel required to make the bath would be utilised to the full, rather than for just one family. On another day there would be other households sharing their baths so the custom became a means of sharing the burden associated with their preparation. This custom remained in various regions of Japan up until the 1960s as a system that combined mutual cooperation with energy saving, and often also a means of allowing access to bathing facilities to poorer folk who did not own baths themselves

Bathtubs were usually made of metal and heated from beneath with a floating board to sit on, large enough for one person to enter at a time, and in newly reclaimed settlements, metal barrel baths were the norm. Since there was no such

place as a bathroom on the farm, baths were placed in a pit for people to enter in full view of everyone. In addition, since there were no wash-basins and people had to cleanse their bodies in the bathtub, the water would become progressively dirtier as each person (sometimes over 40 people at a time) entered to scrub the mud off him/herself after a day's farm work. As a result, those who entered further down the chain, namely the young wives of each family, would have to wash themselves in what had become a very dirty and cold bath. Young wives especially would have liked to relax in a warm bath to reinvigorate themselves for the tasks ahead on the following day. This was an issue that the LIP workers could not leave unchecked.

Solar water heaters

From this situation arose bathroom improvement and the solar water heater. As shown in the picture, this was a tank that was placed on top of a south-facing roof to heat the water using the sunshine. At sundown, the water would be drawn down through a pipe to fill the bath with hot water. During summer the water would become so hot that cold water would need to be added and during winter a small amount of firewood was required to make the water warmer. This meant that houses that had solar water heaters were able to heavily reduce their consumption of firewood.

This was an epoch-making idea, but it raises the question as to why the solar water heater was not used until the late 1950s. The reason for this is due to a lack of invention and technology. Even if it had occurred to them to put a tank on the roof for heated water, it would have been too difficult for them to transfer the water to the tank. In addition, the tank would not have fulfilled its intended aim without black plastic material to prevent leaks and absorb the sun's heat easily. Furthermore, had the LIP worker not been there to inform the villagers of the idea of a solar water heater, they would not have known about it. In other

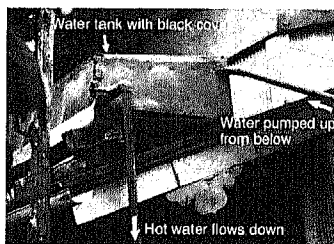
[Episode 57]

The search for more comfortable baths

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

words, this represented the activities of the second stage of the livelihood improvement movement, something which would have been impossible without both the technological basis of water pipes and electric pumps in place as well as the materialisation of certain people who had grasped an understanding of the spirit of 'KAIZEN' (improvement) through inventions such as the improved cooking stove.

However, when carried out uniformly across all regions, this activity ended in stalemate. In



Slide from: 'Improvement of Farm Houses'

Kumamoto prefecture in the late 1950s, the prefectural authority had extension offices report results in respect of the quotas they had been set for installation of solar water heaters.

However, needs differed dependant on region even within the same prefecture. One LIP worker working in Amakusa, Hatsuno Yazumi (born 1930), worked extremely hard to diffuse improvement in the Ushibuka district, and found that, since in the mountain forests there was a plentiful supply of brushwood, the farmers there were loath to part with the 2 or 3 thousand Yen it would have cost them to purchase a solar water heater. As a result, it was reported that out of a population of 50,000, only 5 sets were installed. However, when she transferred to Matsubase district, a flatter area by the sea where there were only rice-fields, Ms. Yazumi reported, 'even if I keep my mouth shut, solar water heater gathers momentum'. For folk in that area, the purchase of a solar water heater was cheaper when set against the savings they would make through using less firewood.

Ms Yazumi explained to me, 'If ideas have practical usefulness, people come on-board'. If we look at it from the opposite perspective, the lesson to be learnt is that however great the diffusion and facilitation methods of the LIP worker, it will not succeed unless suitable needs are first understood.

The 3 pillars: 'money', 'health' and 'children'

However much outsiders want to ask the opinions of rural people, at the beginning, the women are so shy and restrained in their circumstances that they are unable to express themselves effectively. This is what development workers in developing countries face, and it was the same in Japan 50 years ago. Yoko Yamada, a JICA expert who worked for Livelihood Improvement in the Philippines for 2 years after working as a LIP worker in Shizuoka Prefecture for 30 years, uses the following rule of thumb when faced with this situation: 'Mothers react to three things: 'Money', 'Health' and 'Children'.'

There is no such thing as a mother who does not want their child to be healthy. However, in the rural villages of post-war

Japan, mothers were so busy during the peak farming season that they had no time to tend to their children. During the rice planting and harvesting seasons especially, care for babies and infants tended to be neglected. This is because the whole family was usually out working from before dawn until after dusk, including elderly family members along with young boys or girls who were usually entrusted with the role of looking after the babies and infants.

In the northern part of Japan, the Tohoku region, out of fear of the baby falling into the sunken hearth and burning itself or perhaps catching a cold, came the idea of the 'Ejiko', a basket in which the baby was placed either within the house or by the rice-field (picture on the right). In newly reclaimed settlements

[Episode 58]

The blessing of 'communal nurseries'

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

where there were only younger couples, it was said that babies were usually placed in a wheelbarrow and set beside the field (source: interview in Sankaibara, a settlement in Higashiurabara-county, Niigata prefecture).

'Communal nurseries'

'If there was someone to look after the children, I would be able to get on with my agricultural work with peace of mind...' If everyone is of this opinion, they will try to make it a reality. In this way, between 1945 and 1965 communal nurseries active during the busy farming season started to spring up all in all areas of Japan. Temples and schools (in rural areas, primary schools were closed during the busy farming seasons) were used as the location. LIP workers themselves took nursing licences or procured nurses in the form of either sickly girls who were unable to carry out farm-work or volunteers from the local girls' 4H(*) club.

On the whole, the driving forces for these activities were not women's associations (made up of senior women, mothers in law), but Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) groups, mostly made up of young wives (because the young wives had more urgent childcare needs). The Communal Nursery was an example of a KAIZEN (improvement) strategy initiated by people uniting in expression of their inconvenience and insecurity in daily life, and applying their know-how and existing resources (space, manpower) towards finding a solution, therefore huge amounts of money and infrastructure were not needed.

However, 'preparations' were necessary. It was the LIP worker who managed to fulfil the functions of advising how to put the Communal Nurseries into practice and negotiating with the village offices to subsidise them. This is a good example of how application of information from other regions coupled with the influential voice of outsiders can produce a catalyst effect.

Communal Nurseries were a blessing for mothers. Nurseries

might have even saved the lives of young children, as the following example shows: One of the children being cared for at a nursery became weakened, so was taken to the doctor who diagnosed dysentery - the mother expressed her gratitude, 'Had he not have been at the nursery I don't think I would have realised. I am so glad he was being cared for there.' (source: interview in Idemizu-county, Kagoshima prefecture). On the other hand, I have heard men (who are now near 50 years old) speak fondly of their experiences during their time at the communal nurseries in the 1950s, when it was rare for any children to attend kindergarten. These nurseries allowed poor village children their only opportunity to experience the atmosphere of a kindergarten. In addition, we cannot ignore the contribution of spontaneous communal nurseries to their successors, the village/town-run nurseries.

In respect of the Ejiko, development workers of today should learn the lesson to guard against superficial criticism: Although it became a 'symbol of ignorance and poor hygiene', the Ejiko contains the accumulated knowledge of areas such as breast feeding and nappy-rash prevention and it represented a way for parents to protect their children from accident and illness. (Ryou Omura's 'The Silent Peasants', Iwanami Shoten, 1958, P. 124).

* An acronym for 'head', 'hand', 'heart', 'health'. It was a youth group aimed at improving living standards in the regions



A Communal Nursery
From slide "Rural Life Improvement Extension Programme" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1956)



The 'Ejiko', where children were kept
(from slide, "The Days of the Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers" [1957])

'Well... 'Livelihood improvement' requires lots of money!' The Livelihood Improvement Movement that began with the great boom in reforming cooking stoves, developed into a full-scale remodelling of houses with windows installed into the walls of kitchens as well as toilets and bathrooms built indoors, among other renovations.

Gradually, in rural areas 'livelihood improvement' came to be seen as a showing off competition over the modernisation and material wealth between neighbours. As 'livelihood improvement' became more fashionable and mere name, it lost its true nature. Households which did not have the resources or the cooperation from their families began to be left behind. Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (commonly known as LIP workers) patiently explained to these households the

ideas behind the movement. 'Livelihood improvement does not necessarily require expenses. Besides, there are also activities which allow you to make money, or cost nothing at all.'

One activity introduced by the LIP workers to generate money without capital was the idea of giving up buying something in order to save up the equivalent amount of money (known as 'Tsumori-chokin'). The success of this saving only depends on the strength of their will-power. Another activity was encouraging group mutual financing* (known as 'Tanomoshiko') which provides credit to the members who doesn't have access to a formal financing system. A similar system is widely used in Africa, called 'Susu' in Ghana and 'Merry-go-round' in Kenya, for instance. Or, by launching 'a group purchasing system', people collectively buy commodities

[Episode 59]

Livelihood improvement costing nothing

Text by Miho Ota

in bulk for the whole community and pay lower price than retail so as to pocket the amount they save.

One example of Tsumori-chokin' found in Okanaru hamlet in Ehime prefecture. With the purpose of building a community centre, the people gave up one annual village dance festival to utilise its budget for the construction instead. Some of the residents opposed to cancellation of the festival though, once constructed, everybody were indebted to joy of get-togethers, recreation and communal cooking at the community centre (see slide, 'A Hamlet Nurtured by the Hands of Youths,' 1954).

Some of those who are working in developing countries may become frustrated by so-called 'local time'; a locally established sense of time which tends to be leisurely. Although Japanese are famous for their punctuality, to your surprise, enforcing punctuality was also something difficult to achieve in Japan half a century ago. Here is a piece of evidence. One of the aims for the first year of the 3-year livelihood improvement plan initiated in the Awa area in Tokushima prefecture in the 1950s was the 'abolition of 'Awa' time' (from Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's 'Record of Extension Activities', 1958).

In the Akaishi hamlet on post-war reclaimed land in Ishigaki town in Okinawa prefecture, each summer the residents would be busy engaging in 'roof support' (repairing roofs communally) because typhoons quite often blew off the roofs of 4-5 houses. The victims of typhoons, likely to be the relatively poorer households in the hamlet, were very grateful for the voluntary

repairs by the neighbours. In reality, however, the wives would worry about being obliged to give something in return (usually a special meal and alcohol) to show their appreciation. To counter this burden, the Livelihood Improvement Practice Group set up the rule that appreciation for this job would be shown by giving one cake of tofu (bean

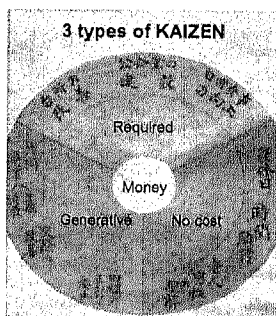
curd), rather than having to bother making a costly large meal each time by each family. The rule obviously was criticised by the men who were looking forward to a nice meal and drinks after their day's hard labour. Nevertheless, it was firmly supported by the women who were released from hosting them. Furthermore, the families which could not afford a banquet were delighted since serving tofu was somehow manageable even for them. In the same way, it was also decided that tempura (a Japanese-style fritter) should not be served at weddings and funerals etc. in order to reduce needless expenditure for the sake of being ostentatious while also reducing the burden on the poor (source: Aki Inoue, born 1922).

The preceding examples show how improvements can be made in day-to-day life without any material input from outside the community. In other words, there are still various types of improvements that development workers with no material or monetary resources can assist by producing innovative ideas. A good start would be investigation of resources they have and assessment of the wasteful usage or unnecessary expenditure. One of the advantages of development workers as outsiders of the community is that we are able to identify 'waste' more rationally than the locals because we have different background which enable us to see things from alternative view points. However, we must first carefully judge what the 'waste' is, through an understanding and respect of their culture and customs. What is the meaning behind their 'waste'? Once reduced, who will profit and who will lose? These issues must be discussed with the locals before attempting any initiatives.

LIP workers initiated such activities that cost no money in the purpose of enabling people to start something by their own. Besides the fund, self-reliance is foundation for the more long-term livelihood improvement plans.

This is an alternative approach to poverty reduction. No matter how poor one is, you could find some material, physical, financial, social or human capitals in him/her. Saving and reducing the wasteful usage of what little resources they have would contribute building their capacity in many ways.

* A method of 'people's finance' where people pool their money in order to make savings



Slide: "The growing livelihood improvement practice groups". Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

[Episode 60]

Putting socio-cultural research into improvement practice

Text by Kazuko Oguni

Forging a link between data and livelihood improvement activities

When first arriving in a foreign country to begin an assignment, it is usual to collect local historical records, and carry out questionnaires and interviews in order to gain a general overview of the situation. In trying to get to grips with how society operates, and subsequently compiling a colossal list of topics for investigation, many experience friction from interviewees who have become weary of the extent to which the process takes up their time.

The Livelihood Improvement Extension workers active in rural Japan during the post-war era also uncovered lots of historical records, and carried out interviews and questionnaires so as to deepen their understanding of their respective regions. In Ehime prefecture, resources for the compilation of data on the local populace were created and taught to the other extension workers in that prefecture, based on a lecture by the head of the museum of history and folklore. Since this task was approached by asking the question, 'What is culture?', headings and even methods contained in this resource for researching local culture were recorded to the last detail. The unique characteristic of this resource is that it does not stop at simply relaying an explanation of the methods of research, but goes as far as explaining how these tie in to livelihood improvement guidance.

For example, under the heading 'Straw Sandals' is an explanation of how to view the sandals' relationship to crops/rice paddies, the process of making them, and the people who make them, thus emphasising the crucial factor of understanding what is at the core of the community.

Beneficial surveys / encouraging awakening

In her regional investigation, Mieko Takaoka (born 1928) of Ehime prefecture observed, "People become bored if the process only involves investigation. Nothing is achieved." In response, she came up with many ideas to make the process more worthwhile, such as showing villagers how to use bleach to whiten sheets made from waste material and how to slaughter a chicken, as well as other novel and eye-catching activities, usually while the subjects were undertaking a task which involved periods of waiting. In Niigata prefecture, after demonstrating how to make entries in household accounts for close to a year, the data collected during this activity was then researched to become a catalyst for further improvement methods such as a better diet, and heightened self-sufficiency levels through the teaching of vegetable cultivation. In Kagoshima prefecture, workers

engaged on time-consuming surveys tried to make visits together with the agricultural extension workers. In this way the visit could be beneficial to interviewees, since while one worker was conducting interviews, another would be observe their kitchen garden and the field outside the house, and could give technical consultations regarding farming.

When asking questions regarding a family's activities, the traditional barriers of family privacy are crossed, and there is a danger of people backing away. However, when broaching personal issues, Ms Takaoka noticed that often the interviewees suddenly came to their senses in regard to problems they had, thereby leading to further improvement. Of course the timing of these interviews was planned meticulously (after visiting and observing numerous times) to ensure an informal atmosphere conducive to openness, usually coinciding with the subject undertaking a separate task that involves periods of waiting.

Ms Takaoka adds, "If you're conducting general research for one year, then you're doing it wrong." One must approach the process of learning about a region and investigating suitable improvement measures by constantly thinking about solutions rather than simply vaguely interpreting history. Unless this positive approach is followed, it will be difficult to learn how to put the research into practice.

A grasp of the general situation in the subject region is taken as a given among the international cooperation community, but it seems that the results of investigation into social and cultural situations are not given as much emphasis. It seems that the realistic and practical processes undertaken by Livelihood Improvement Extension workers is still applicable today to the way we begin our process of investigation.



Livelihood Improvement Extension Worker making door-to-door visits checking the accuracy of questionnaire results (Courtesy of Terumi Morimoto, Fukui prefecture)

[Episode 61]

Lobbying for acquiring a budget

Text by Miho Ota

'Welcome to Ghana! For the next 2 years of your assignment, we will be depending on you. You are free to do as you wish in order to develop these poor farming villages. Make this country rich and then you can go home.'

'Erm, what is my budget for this?'

'Your budget? There isn't one. We are poor. Won't the government of Japan or JICA provide for you? Beg your embassy to give you some.'

This was the conversation I had with my boss, a director of a local NGO, on my first day on the job.

I presume similar conversation repeats itself even today in various places all over the world. As I look back now I should have known they would have expected volunteers from a rich country like Japan to be bringing lots of money and should have laughed it away. Instead, to tell the truth, I was just shocked and disappointed by being recognised merely as a supplier of funds, which I could never be.

Anyway, my job started with gaining an understanding from my boss. Yet, however much I tried, he was only interested in how much funding I would bring along. He was unwilling to allocate the budget within the organisation for me. For lack of an alternative, I set about exploring the targeted villages to plan for actions, a task which does not cost anything. However, when it came to putting the action plan into practice, I once again came across the same obstacle (obtaining a budget) with my reluctant boss.

I wonder how the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers) of Japan managed to overcome the issue of not having funds when carrying out their activities to improve the lives of women in farming villages.

In order for the LIP workers, who were civil servants of prefectures, to have a budget distributed to them, they had to convince the prefectural higher authorities. Evidently, it was not an easy task. In fact, increasing food production was the main priority of the agriculture and forestry sector in the late 1940s. The newly established livelihood improvement programme had low priority since it seemingly had no direct impact on production increase. In their first 2 years from inception, countless appeals for budget allocation were made by LIP workers to the authorities. These efforts are evidenced in 1951 records* of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Most of the examples involve encouraging participation from the people in power (governor, vice-governor, director and staff of agriculture and forestry, personnel and general affairs divisions, politicians from the towns and villages, experts etc.) and their wives (at that time most key positions were held by men). The LIP workers would firstly install a new cooking stove in the houses of the authorities to give them a taste of the potential benefits, and secondly they would teach the wives the knowledge and techniques in order to win their understanding and support (a case of Chiba prefecture). The LIP workers would

then invite them as a couple to take part in the livelihood improvement exhibitions or presentations (a case of Wakayama and Hyogo).

Without doubt, the backing from these wives would have been a great help to the LIP workers even though politics was being run by men. Furthermore, even though the target of these activities were the wives, the LIP workers had to show the whole family members the benefits. The easiest way of doing this was by having them experience it for themselves in their own homes.

In Wakayama, the LIP workers organised a 'livelihood improvement supporters' club' among the members of the prefectural council along with making the club's own badges and song. The money required for the livelihood improvement exhibitions was covered by donations from the council members. This was not just about fund raising, but also a way of enlightening the council members whilst winning their support by making them feel a part of the programme.

On the other hand, it is also essential to cooperate with related departments and bodies. For example, in Wakayama, LIP workers hold monthly meetings with school and social education boards and health authorities, so as to make an appeal about the insufficiencies in the livelihood improvement budget. In Hokkaido, LIP workers clearly demarcate budgets to departments in charge and allied them to publicise activities. In Kanagawa, LIP workers attended all the concerned meetings with the intention of preventing friction among the cooperative departments.

The public relations of livelihood improvement activities made good use of all kinds of media, for example, providing articles to newspapers 20 days each month and broadcasting on the radio once a week (Fukushima) and circulating a 'Report from a farming village woman' every other month (Yamagata).

In order to maintain the progress of activities, it is necessary to have cooperation from the higher echelons of both inside and outside all the agencies concerned. This is because only after winning the support of those in authority, a budget could be acquired. When I was working as an NGO member, I put all my efforts into raising awareness and attaining understanding of the target women groups directly, but neither of my own boss nor the authorities who were the important decision makers of the project financial plan. Hence, now I see the cause of my defeat in acquiring a budget; I failed to raise the fund allocators' ownership for the projects. In my attempts to obtain financial support, I regret not elaborating a lobbying approach as strategic as the LIP workers.

* 'Second Livelihood Improvement Specialist Research Council and record of Livelihood Improvement Administrator council meetings' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Farming Improvement Office Livelihood Improvement Section)

First realisation leading to diversified activity

Please see the picture below. It shows a man concentrating intensely on making repeated lateral jumps during a physical test being carried out in a village in Fukui prefecture. According to a former Livelihood Improvement Extension worker, Terumi Morimoto (born 1949), this was carried out in a temple with the help of Agricultural Extension workers.

It was often heard in interviews from other prefectures that Livelihood Improvement Extension workers who were involved with livelihood improvement in rural areas of post-war Japan were able to work together with nurses to carry out health checks. According to a former Livelihood Improvement Extension worker from Ehime prefecture called Mieko Takaoka (born, 1928), tests such as urine tests, where results can be seen immediately, were done in front of villagers. Seeing the colour of the litmus paper changing would make farm workers involved in heavy labour realise for themselves that they were unhealthy. This awakening to the fact they were working too hard was a trigger to set rural public holidays, to arrange communal cooking during the busy farming season and to start activities such as improving nutrition. Furthermore, the arrangement of rural public holidays led to the planning of cooking classes and other group activities such as study sessions. Eventually these activities became in themselves a factual grounding for ensuring that rural women took rests. Awakening to the importance of health became a realisation that contributed to the improvement of livelihoods as a whole.

[Episode 62]

Awareness of a healthy body and livelihood improvement

Text by Kazuko Oguni

ated between 1955-65 made preserved food to promote health, and received awards, providing them with encouragement to continue in their activities. Another example is the formation of a group during the period of rapid economic growth with the aim of promoting spiritually rich women, to cope with the demands of a lifestyle that was constantly changing.

In terms of support given to developing countries at the moment, economic poverty is often given as a reason for inferior hygiene. Income generation is stated as one factor in tackling this poverty. However, there are many lessons to be learnt from the wisdom of the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers who raised the issue of "a healthy life" on a wider social scale, and tied this awareness to various different activities.

As Japan is no longer underdeveloped, we must revise our view of livelihood - and remind ourselves that the

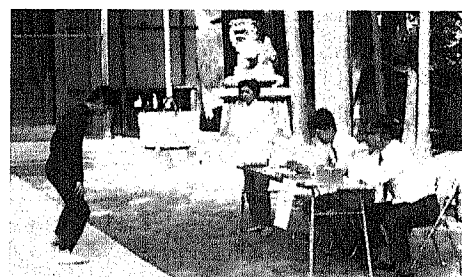
In addition, according to Ms Morimoto, carrying out physical tests involving playing games alongside health checks that may have negative results (such as urine tests) made the process less formal, allowing the examiners to remark, "Your physical health is very good!" in order to cheer the people up.

When people are free to choose their lifestyle, the need for improved awareness becomes more important than ever

In Japan between 1955-65 there was a proliferation of instant and convenience foods. The wives of farmers led extremely busy lives, so they naturally chose novel and easy options over more nutritionally balanced options, leading to a poor diet. This was a different situation to the lack of nutrition, caused by poverty, which was found in Japan immediately after the war, and was not something that could be improved simply through increasing economic wealth. Despite the state of nutrition improving by 1967, health checks carried out in Ehime prefecture still showed an abundance of people suffering from anaemia.

Physical tests and health checks do not immediately seem to have any relationship to livelihood improvement activities. But for farmers, poor health impacts on their long-term livelihood planning. During the period of rapid economic growth, because people had the freedom to choose their lifestyles, it became more important than ever for Livelihood Improvement Extension workers to encourage healthy living.

In an example in Fukui prefecture, women's groups cre-



A man performing repeated lateral jumps during a physical test in Fukui prefecture
photo courtesy of Terumi Morimoto

The 'mum in bed by 9pm' movement

'Mum in bed by 9pm' is the nickname given to the campaign led in rural areas throughout Japan around 1950 with the aim of enabling mothers to go to sleep at 9pm.

Well into the 1950s, it was typical for farm wives (particularly young wives) to continue to work after the other family member had gone to sleep, and to wake up prior to anyone to fetch water, do cooking and start washing. They worked every day without a holiday without even being allowed enough sleep. Farm wives were perceived as 'a cow without horns'. The LIP workers carefully looked at the situation of these young women who were in distress from overwork due to their burden of looking after children, doing household chores and also farm labour. The relief of their burden was seen as an important facet of the livelihood improvement activities. But on the other hand, it was still clear that mothers did not have the 'status' to be able to say, 'It's 9pm, so I'm off to bed', however tired they were.

In this atmosphere, however much the LIP worker would preach 'You need 8 hours sleep to be healthy', or would plead door-to-door, 'Put your wife down to sleep at 9pm', they could not make any progress (the reason for the figure of '8 hours' and the time of '9pm' being specified was because it was seen as the norm to wake up at 5am). So in order to secure enough sleep for housewives, the LIP workers started a campaign nicknamed, 'Mum in bed by 9pm', and sought to shape public opinion with a large-scale campaign across villages, counties, and the whole prefecture. The tactic behind this campaign and its eventual permeation was to acquire its objective (getting more sleep for women)

through the indirect support of family members who were slowly encouraged to pay more attention to their wives and mothers and to start saying, 'Mum, it's 9pm - time for bed!'

Using peer pressure in a traditional villages

In the same way, efforts were made to change the social environment with a campaign named 'mothers finish work one hour earlier'. Wives would go out into the field to work together with their husbands and return to the house together. They would then console their children (who were hungry by this stage), go out to fetch water, and on their return, would prepare supper. Until supper was ready the men could smoke tobacco and take a break, whereas the women did not have a moment's rest. In respect of this, the LIP workers suggested that women leave the fields one hour earlier to enable them time to prepare supper. Naturally the real aim of this campaign was to relieve the work burden on women and encourage them to rest, but interwoven in the merits of fulfilling that aim was another merit, the fact that men were able to have a hot meal on the table immediately on their return from the fields. In homes where this was incorporated, it was said that the husbands and children enjoyed the fact that they could sit and relax as a family for longer periods.

The important point here is that the women themselves were not made to insist upon their right to a reduction in their hours of labour. Had they have been made to do so, it is clear this would have been met by resistance from their husband and mother-in-law. Instead of this strategy, the LIP worker used the peer pressure in traditional rural villages (where the maxim 'if other people do it, then we will do it' had

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Fill in the moat first

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

much credence) to their advantage. If, in spite of this campaign, a wife was left in the field to work, people would begin to talk, saying such things as 'what an ignorant husband' or 'what a mean mother-in-law', thereby exerting more social pressure on the family to change. This is how the LIP worker set about improving the lot of women in rural areas.

The campaigns to have 'mum in bed by 9pm' and for 'mothers to finish work one hour earlier', are examples of methods which suited the situation at that time, while improving livelihoods peacefully and without the need for money. If viewed from the perspective of 'female empowerment' projects currently being run in developing countries, they may seem like 'half-measures'. However, as the LIP worker often used to say, 'Making enemies in a region will scupper our activities in it'. The long-term aims of livelihood improvement and democratisation of rural areas cannot be achieved if idealism or principles are put before practicalities. Instead of attacking the inner citadel directly, fill in the surrounding moat first.

That was the strategy of LIP workers, and it is surely a lesson that contemporary rural development workers can learn from Japanese experiences.

Material/writing assistance provided by Miho Ota



Co-operative cultivation of vegetables (around 1958, photo courtesy of Fumiko Shinnai, Ehime prefecture)

Activities made possible by dint of the fact they are done in a group

Everyone struggling out there in the field, are you well? Reading the emails I occasionally receive from young volunteers, it seems that although they may have settled down with a new language and lifestyle, they feel impatient with the progress of their activities.

For those aiming to help organise rural people and improve their livelihoods, it seems a major concern is that of how to motivate people to do things. However, improving livelihoods is not necessarily a question of simply making more money, or working that bit harder.

A very interesting facet to the work of the Livelihood

Improvement Extension workers in post-war rural Japanese communities was the attachment of great importance to 'Rest' with the creation of rural public holidays.

For example, a Livelihood Improvement group in Ohzu city in Ehime prefecture planned a meeting for cooking classes once a month. This was not done just to improve the efficiency of their work by teaching new skills, but also because significant importance was attached to organised rest, so that the farmers would know that on a specific day they would allow themselves time off work. Furthermore, in respect of those farmers who worked through Sundays without taking a break, the group worked towards holding study sessions on national holidays, to give them a taste of

[Episode 64]

The significance of rest activities

Text by Kazuko Oguni

relaxation with everyone else. In particular, for young wives, who were busy with household chores and farm work and had nowhere to go to relax, the sessions offered an opportunity to openly take a break using learning as the pretext.

As opposed to production activities, which are easy to understand from a personal as well as a neighbourhood point of view, activities that involve relaxation do not stand up unless they are performed in a group and receive support from outside.

Organising "rest" is more difficult than organising "work"

Furthermore, from the position of someone working to support the local community, the formulation of appropriate rest activities is, in fact, harder than planning the various production activities. This is because one cannot make suggestions without experiencing lives in the community, and understanding when, how much and who is taking the strain of livelihood burdens. More particularly, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that, since there is surplus labour capacity in the female population, economic activity should be promoted, ignoring the extent of the strain women are already under, and rather thinking about how to make them work harder.

To be able to understand how much time they actually have and whether they can be considered as extra labour capacity, it is necessary to experience women's everyday lives at first hand. Exactly what is the intensity of labour involved in doing laundry by hand? Exactly how much of a woman's time is taken up by going shopping and waiting hours for a bus when she is uncertain what time it will arrive? By experiencing at first hand the jobs a woman has to face both inside and outside the house, the questions, "What do I have time to start?" and "At what point can I

rest?" come to the fore as urgent issues to be tackled.

At the seaside village of Nishiwa in Ehime prefecture, where many farmers raised cows, the women were able to begin the regular custom of enjoying the evening breeze with the cows, which offered relaxation alongside the hope of economic benefits (see picture).

Before complaining that villagers in developing countries seem to be idle due to the tropical weather, we should always be patient and consider to what extent they are already working in such heat, and on that basis, what activities they may be able to start or reduce to improve their livelihood. In doing so, we will find the key to livelihood improvement from the perspective of the people.



Women lying down enjoying the evening breeze with cows on the beach (from the ex-Ehime prefecture extension workers edited "Livelihood Improvement in Ehime", 2004)

The details of activities and good practices of the 'Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) groups' were shared with the region's population at agricultural fairs or good practice workshops hosted by local agricultural extension centres (usually in the autumn after the rice harvest). Some of the good practices were submitted to a prefectural level workshop where they were compared with examples from other extension centres in the prefecture, and the group with the best practices received awards from the prefectural governor and was presented on a full page spread in the local newspaper to become widely known throughout the prefecture. Furthermore, best practices of the prefectures were submitted to a national workshop of good practices held in March every year and shared between

other LIP groups throughout the country. The top groups received prizes from the prime minister or minister of Agriculture and Forestry and presented in national newspapers.

The first national workshop of best practices was held in 1952, where one of the presenters was a group from Hiroshima prefecture. There is a book containing this group's report documents over a 12 year period named, 'Walking with sisters - A collection of practices from the activities of a Livelihood Improvement Practice group' (published by the Agricultural Improvement Section of Hiroshima prefecture, 13th January 1964). At the time the book was published, the manpower for livelihood improvement in Hiroshima prefecture was as follows: 50 LIP workers; 173,000 farm houses, 625 LIP groups, and

[Episode 65]

Workshops of good practices

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

12,357 LIP group members.

The following is a summary of the report data contained in the book:

* 1953: Improved working clothes (hand-made working clothes created for comfortable agricultural work);

* 1954: Bread-baking cooking stove (learning from repatriates from Manila how to make the cooking stove and succeeding in improving nutrition);

* 1955: Communal bread-processing (a response measure to the lack of rice in a fishing village in poverty where an all-female group built a bread-processing facility. A number of women had to drop out halfway through due to commitments at home.);

* 1956: Introduction of lunch plates (succeeded in reducing housework and improving nutrition by introducing eating from one dish. Funds procured from group's poultry-raising);

* 1957: Wool processing group (introduction of sheep-raising and utilisation of old weave machines to create neck-ties in response to a clothing shortage in a mountain village struck by poverty. Concerns about sales route.);

* 1958: Collective purchasing (in a mountain village where only itinerant merchants passed through. Group members maintained their collective purchasing, entrusting responsibility for specific food items equally. Savings made go towards livelihood improvement funds);

* 1959: Simple water supply (in order to reduce the labour involved in fetching water, the group procured funds through paid work and chicken eggs and laid pipes in order of priority with the most inconvenienced (furthest away from the well) houses coming first);

* 1960: Communal dairy farming (communal dairy farm started via foundation of communal cooking, vegetable gardening and seedling raising.);

* 1961: Household accounting (it became clear from household accounts that too much was being spent on purchasing vegetables in rice farming villages - succeeded in improving self-sufficiency through households growing their own vegetables in kitchen gardens.);

* 1962: Household accounting (improving ability to manage family budget and grasp dietary problems through household accounting);

* 1963: Health & Fitness (with the increase of husbands taking payed jobs outside agriculture, wives suffered from overwork in paddy field. Through mechanisation and communal working, farm-labour time was shortened so that the wives could spend more time doing household chores or child-rearing.);

* 1964: Child-rearing (although taking pride in increasing rice yield, they realised it was not good for child development. In order to acquire more time for child-rearing, a mutual funding group was set up to purchase machines to facilitate household chores.)

The transition in the activities themselves show the unfolding of post-war Japan's livelihood improvement history but it is also interesting to see how each group overcame the problems facing them under the guidance of the LIP workers. At any rate, through mutual encouragement and learning from each other during group activities, the young wives matured to become excellent farm housewives and many went on to become leading figures for revitalising the community in the region today.

Incidentally this national workshop was called the 'Koshien of Farmwives'. Koshien is a national high school baseball tournament (see Episode 15). The decision makers in Tokyo (Executives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) had direct exposure to the good practices of LIP groups, and from that were able to incorporate the lessons they learnt into the extension plans for the following year. In this way, the process of working hard towards reaching the Koshien became a source of treasure for everyone.



A side act (the "Nabekama" chorus") to a workshop of good practices at Chubu extension office in Okinawa prefecture, 1955-65, courtesy of Keiko Matsuda