

Chapter 4

Background philosophy of KAIZEN

What needs to be done in order to utilise the experiences from livelihood improvement in Japan towards developing countries today? Chapter 4 presents points to be remembered when carrying out livelihood improvement.

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This series of articles aims at drawing tips for current development workers from the activities carried out by the LIP workers and public health nurses in Japan 50 years ago. Concurrently, the author has been presenting 'the Wisdom of Japan as a Developing Country' on different occasions, and as part of such information sharing work, I was also given an opportunity to talk to prospective Japanese volunteers in March 2005. In response to some of the questions made by them and my readers, I have aimed to set out my answers in the following 2 parts.

Does wisdom from Japan in the past have significance?

Yes, it does still have significance. Admittedly it is not possible to simply transfer the experience of Japan to today's

developing countries due to differences in historical and cultural backgrounds. However the central tenet of improving livelihoods is still a central theme in all developmental work, and there is still a lot of wisdom forged and accumulated through the carrying out of these activities in Japan which traverses both cultural and time boundaries.

Isn't the level of education in the populations different?

It is true that the Japanese girls' primary school attendance rate was already close to 100% in 1945 and almost all housewives then knew how to read and write. However, it is also true that girls who married did not have any opportunity to write anything down after graduating from primary school, and they did not live in an environment that allowed them to

[Episode 66]

FQA on LIP (1)

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

absorb further knowledge from reading books. LIP workers were only able to get through to housewives by talking to them face-to-face and by constantly showing them how to do things in practice. That methodology offers plenty of hints which could be put into practice in today's developing countries.

Didn't the husbands and mother-in-laws oppose these measures?

Of course, it was obvious that men and older women would become jealous of and oppose measures which were focused solely on supporting young wives. The LIP workers made many attempts to facilitate the participation of young wives in activities, firstly by laying the groundwork with the village's leaders and heads of women's associations, but also by winning over the understanding of their families through sharing with them dishes prepared in cooking classes, and by giving their work an 'official' colour in order to facilitate that young wives obtain permission for going-out from their family through sending invitation postcards to group meetings and classes from the local authority or extension office.

Were LIP workers volunteers?

No, they were prefectural civil servants. However, despite no overtime allowances, they worked tirelessly for their residents, therefore there were elements of volunteerism in their work.

Was there no class difference between the LIP workers and the farming village women?

Since many LIP workers were born in the prefecture where they worked, they understood the local dialect and culture of the residents., However one of the required qualifica-

tions to become a Livelihood Improvement Extension worker was graduation from girls' school, and considering the fact that most of the then rural villagers had only a primary education, the LIP workers were slightly more elite than rural villagers. Bearing an elite sense of mission known as 'Lighting the fire of culture in rural villages', they also had a strong sense of service known as 'Even by getting one's own hands dirty, we will serve to help farming village women'.

Are all the examples success stories?

Though the LIP workers worked hard for creating and nurturing groups, there were examples of activities ending due to a Livelihood Improvement Extension worker's transfer to another post, or due to the dissolution of groups caused by discord between group leaders and other members. However, being able to hear such failure stories is surely another advantage for us to research experiences in Japan. They can provide us with valuable lessons for current rural development, perhaps even more so than success stories.

Incidentally, the March 2005 lecture was independently sponsored by volunteers who were undergoing training, so no remuneration was provided. I knew that before I accepted the invitation, but when I was about to leave the centre, I was given a contribution of 200 yen from each prospective volunteer. It was just enough to cover both the expenses of my overnight stay in Komagane city and the return bus journey between Tokyo and Komagane. The prospective volunteers did not decide that 'we cannot have the lecture since we cannot afford the remuneration to the lecturer', rather they thought, 'what can we do with what we have?' It is the fact that these prospective volunteers put this spirit of 'KAIZEN (improvement)' in practice, which pleased me most.

Continuing from part one, I endeavour to answer the frequently asked questions in relation to Japan's Livelihood Improvement Movement and its relevance to today's rural development and poverty alleviation work being carried out in developing countries.

What is the difference between the Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) groups and the women's associations?

There are women's associations in every village throughout Japan. It is an organisation covering every village (all households in the village are morally obliged to participate), whose members are usually composed of the wives of the head of family (mothers-in-law, from the perspective of young wives). In contrast to this, the LIP workers worked towards

encouraging ('come if you want to') young wives to form Livelihood Improvement Practice groups with specific purposes with only those who were willing to work for such purposes. In the beginning it was sometimes the case that the heads of women's associations (usually the wife of a person in authority in the village) claimed the formation of a new group would disrupt the solidarity of the village as a whole.

Were all village women receptive?

However much the LIP workers tried, there remained always many who could not get used to the group activities or who were not receptive, hence no active groups formed. In such cases, the LIP workers did not force individuals and groups to work on the issues, rather they applied a 'farmer to farmer' strategy to show results of other groups so that they

[Episode 67]

FQA on LIP (2)

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

themselves came to want to emulate others. In line with this, the LIP workers adopted the 'concentrated guidance' method. This involved nominating a positive group and community in the region as a model and giving it more guidance intensively. This method involved the LIP workers and health nurses spending 70% of their efforts in the 'concentrated guidance' villages/groups while spending the remaining 30% keeping an eye on other neighbouring villages. Then, once it became clear that a neighbouring village wished to follow suit, the LIP workers transferred their concentrated focus to such a village. It would seem that one of the important required skills of the LIP workers and health nurses was not to intervene in a place which did not meet the minimum condition (strong willingness), but also not to overlook an emergent opportunity. This 'concentrated guidance' method could be a prototype of the 'pilot method' which is frequently applied in Japan's technical cooperation projects.

How can I get the plans for the improved cooking stove?

This question often crops up from Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and NGO workers in the field. Of course, the improved cooking stoves were a big hit in the approach of the LIP workers. However, it was not a 'one size fits all' success. At that time, there were over 600 varieties of improved cooking stoves throughout Japan. Each of them was made by different people in accordance with each region's weather, cooking methods, and available building materials among other factors. Therefore, it may be more prudent for those volunteers and workers working in developing countries to take a similar approach, together with the local people, to try to improve on already existing stoves in consideration of the specific conditions of the places. Of

course, one must also acquire basic knowledge of 'thermal efficiency', 'convection' and 'cooking stove intensity'. Many different plans will be available from the JICA intranet but they must not be taken as the only 'one size fits all' solution.

Wasn't the job of nutrition improvement for the Ministry of Health and Welfare as opposed to being that of the LIP workers?

Under the government system, the job of nutrition improvement was part of the mandate attached to nutritionists qualified by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. In practice, the nutritionists assigned to health centres were providing nutrition and cooking classes to the residents of the coverage area. On the other hand, the LIP workers also tackled nutrition improvement 'with whatever ingredients they had at their fingertips'. However, whereas the nutritionists usually taught from a set place (such as health centres or public halls) or from kitchen cars (nutrition improvement guidance cars), the LIP workers went out into the villages to teach cooking. In this way, the work of the LIP workers cut across all areas of farm life, so it was often the case that their work encroached into areas that were covered by other ministries and agencies. Because of this, there were often cases of friction with other ministries and agencies, though on most occasions they were supported by a cooperative relationship with the civil servants working at the local level for the good of the beneficiaries.

Relationship between the livelihood improvement movement and improved cooking stoves

On 4th March, 2003, a JICA international seminar entitled 'Rural Development and the Livelihood Improvement Movement in Japan' was held in Tokyo, Japan. Slides and videos (4 titles) were used to show rural development in 1950s Japan, and a panel debate was held involving Professor Norman Uphoff of Cornell University.

As the keynote address, I reported on 'the Wisdom of Japan as a Developing Country'. The message was that though developing countries have a lot they could learn from the Japan experience, attempting to replicate it intrusively without considering the differences in climate and socio-cultural aspects would not just be a waste of time, but be positively harmful.

It would seem that the improved cooking stove, mentioned so frequently in this series of articles, is the exception. At the time when the Livelihood Improvement Extension (LIP) workers began to promote their activities, the stove became a 'hit product'. After all, it brought benefits, not just women, but also men could see with their own eyes such as savings on firewood, shortening of cooking time, improved ventilation in the kitchen and an improved work posture for women, so it is small wonder that it boomed throughout Japan in such a small space of time. Thanks to this, the profile of LIP workers rose, becoming the base for a stable and trusting relationship with the villagers. This success story has significance for developing countries today.

However, the Director of the Livelihood Improvement section in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry at that time, Matsuyo

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What happened in the background to the improved cooking stove?

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Omori, repeatedly insisted, even in the cooking stove boom, that 'the Livelihood Improvement Movement is not just about the improved cooking stove.' She warned that the cooking stove is no more than an 'entry point' to livelihood improvement in rural villages.

Focusing on events occurring in the background to improvement

Following on from this, the Livelihood Improvement Section posed the question to the rural population, 'Is it enough that you have made an (improved) cooking stove?' (See picture). She pointed out to them that if their reason for getting a new stove is simply to keep up appearances, then they will revert back to using the old stove and only use the new one when guests come round. Thinking in business terms of sales promotion, this phenomenon (of keeping up appearances) will reap success, but when thinking in terms of livelihood improvement, it represents a deviation from the true essence of the movement.

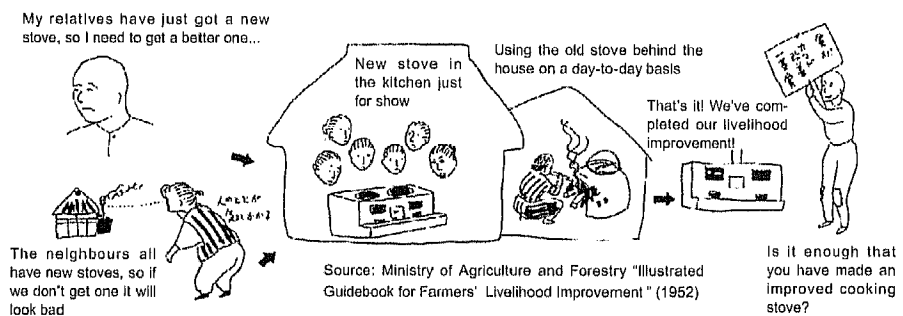
A former LIP worker from Yamagata, Aiko Kashiwagura (employed from 1948), reminisces that farmers' wives did not understand the meaning of the extension workers' pronouncements on building one's own cooking stove, thinking it was the LIP workers' job, and left her to do it as opposed to doing it by themselves. Because the farmers' wives could not understand the importance of making their own stoves, Ms Kashiwagura often went home with parched hands (from making cooking stoves all day). I am sure development workers often stumble across similar difficulties during their activities in developing countries.

ties in developing countries.

Being a physical improvement, with outside funds and technology, the cooking stove itself can easily produce visible 'results' to farmers. However, in the context of rural development, it is more important to note what has been happening in the background of the construction of improved cooking stoves. More precisely: What is the process behind people's decision to make the stove? How do they procure the necessary resources to make it? To what extent do they input their own knowledge and willingness into the work? What changes arise in their point of view on and attitude towards life through the chain of processes involved in its construction? How does the group activity and cooperation involved in this process tie into further livelihood improvement activities?

There are many western NGOs tackling the issue of improved cooking stoves in Africa, South Asia and Central America. However, the uniqueness of the improved cooking stove experience as a tool for rural development lies in the fact that the LIP workers were able to use it to the full as an entry point to various other livelihood improvement activities. In conclusion, the point to be remembered is to analyse and understand what happens during the process to improve cooking stoves.

Livelihood improvement carried out due to social pressures of vanity and imitation of neighbours.



[Episode 69]

Urgent resettlement

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

Settling with hope in their hearts...

A problem being faced across the African continent is that despite having a large unemployed labour force in rural areas, there is still a lack of food in whole countries. This problem also existed in Japan between 1945 and 1955. Immediately after the Second World War had ended, rural areas were faced with an excessive population influx of returning soldiers and repatriates from former colonies such as Manchuria, and cities impoverished due to war damage were not able to absorb such a population influx.

During the month of October 1945 when the Second World War ended, it was recorded that approximately 75 people among the gathering homeless people around Ueno station alone, and 69 people in Osaka died of starvation. Worsened by poor harvests in that year and the following year, in particular city folk were living side-by-side with the spectre of starving to death. In this atmosphere, in addition to requesting food aid from GHQ (General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for the Allied Force), under the 'Urgent Resettlement' programme, the government specified former military areas such as in Hokkaido and Tohoku as 'reclamation land', and called for voluntary settlers.

The advertisements calling for settlers were always rose-tinted. 'A large fertile piece of land can be yours.' 'Houses have been prepared in the settlement areas.' Faced with shortfalls of food and housing supply, those who were unable to become an heir to the family farmland, namely, boy children other than the first boy child of farmers, went out to settle with hope in their hearts. However, in reality, they were allotted land full of rocks or forests strewn with tree stumps, which required a huge amount of hard work to turn into farms. In addition, there were no houses for them. The young couples (being a healthy couple was a criterion for settlement) who settled in these places had to build shanty huts, bring the land under cultivation and rear their children all at the same time.

Further south in Okinawa, occupied islands by the United States, a similar situation existed. Under American control, large swathes of farm land on the main island of Okinawa were requisitioned for the U.S. military base. As a result of this, farmers from such villages as Ohgimi and Yomitan formed reclamation groups and settled in outer lying islands such as Miyako or Ishigaki.

Life in settlement land is always harsh. North in Hokkaido, with the damage from the winter cold and bear attacks south in Okinawa with the damage caused by continuous typhoons and malaria, there were countless people who withdrew from the settlement land without fulfilling their dreams.

Without resources, one must turn to wisdom

During the reclamation period, who was there to lend a helping hand, and what kind of support were given to the settlers? In areas such as Hokkaido, since the governments did not have enough capacity to provide institutional assistance, 'settlement nurses (see episode 21)' from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were assigned to give livelihood support to the settlers. On the other hand, in Okinawa, which was under the ordinance of the American military government, in addition to the stationing of public hygiene nurses and LIP workers, institutional support, including physical

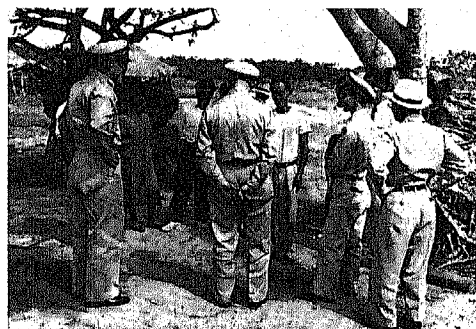
improvements such as schools and wells made using American military funds was provided to newly developed reclamation lands.

The picture below from 1953 shows a scene when the Civil Administrator, Colonel of the American army went out to the Ohsato settlement on Ishigaki island (settled by the villagers of Ohgimi on the main island of Okinawa) to monitor damage caused by a typhoon. The reclamation group leader, Mankichi Nosato, along with other villagers was extremely nervous to receive the military officers who had just driven up in a jeep, accompanied by an interpreter. Perhaps rural villagers in developing countries feel a similar emotion when first meeting an envoy group from a donor country.

It seems that when observation groups came to visit, they almost always brought with them GARIOA (Government Appropriation for Relief in Occupied Area) supplies. On the main island of Okinawa for a short time after the Second World War, school uniforms were made from the disposed HBT shirts (military clothes) of the American army. Likewise, notebooks were made by recycling the washed and dried paper bags used as packages for the American army rationed 'Meriken' powder (flour).

As mentioned above, the two different patterns of support to settlers were intermingled throughout Japan during this period. They were: 1. physical and institutional support carried out by outsiders (Americans) who had an abundance of funds and materials, as in the case of Okinawa; and, 2. only individual skilled support provided by the government which did not have enough funds and materials, through the attachment of settlement nurses in Hokkaido. There is little point in questioning which of these patterns is more beneficial. The important point we must take from this is the fact that in an atmosphere where the support system was inadequate, the Japanese Government still tried to support settlers in whichever way possible: 'if there's no money, send people'; or 'if there are no supplies, send knowledge'.

Incidentally, Mankichi Nosato's daughter, Setsuko (born in 1934), herself became a Livelihood Improvement Extension worker in Ishigaki island and worked for 39 years until her retirement in supporting the Livelihood Improvement Movement among settlers and the rural farmers on the main island.



In Ohsato Settlement on Ishigaki Island (settled by 35 households from Ohgimi village). Civil Administrator, Colonel Bromley visiting to view damage caused by a typhoon in September 1953. Meeting with representatives from the school.

The extension system in Japan, comprised of the two pillars of agricultural improvement and livelihood improvement) began after the Second World War, as a carbon copy of the system of its then occupier, the United States of America.

The picture below was taken in 1951, three years after the introduction of the extension system, to commemorate the visit of an American lady who had come to observe progress in the Livelihood Improvement Programme in Japan. Standing to the left of the tall lady is the then Director of the Livelihood Improvement Programme at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and standing by her side is most likely an LIP worker from Chiba prefecture. Others seem to have been group leaders of the visited areas, and to the right of the visitor is an interpreter with a jeep behind him. Pictures of similar composition are also taken in developing countries nowadays. Replace the American with a Japanese, and the surrounding Japanese with villagers from developing countries. The jeep would be replaced by a Toyota four-wheel drive.

In the post-war period, with the constitutional amendments and educational reforms among other reform programmes, institutions coloured by American ideals were positively brought into (or to some extent 'forced upon') Japan. As part of a series of reforms, democratisation of rural farming areas also took place. The strategy used in Japan to introduce developed world values such as democracy, gender equality, and decentralisation of power is the same strategy applied today to support developing countries.

In today's global society, it is not feasible to refuse anything foreign. The challenge for the recipient is how to adapt these

foreign elements. LIP workers were thoroughly trained in the principles behind the American structure of 'democratic education' but in regions under their control in each prefecture the 'undemocratic' structures and customs sewn into the fabric of the farming villages since the middle ages, stood squarely in their way.

While settling the matter of the villagers' consciousness, the LIP workers persevered in various practical livelihood improvement activities in order to reduce the labour of village women, improve their nutrition and stimulate their acquisition of knowledge. This led to concrete activities, such as: the improvement of cooking stoves, kitchens, toilets and work-clothes; the installation of simple waterworks; cookery classes for the improvement of nutrition; 'egg' or 'goat' savings; communal cooking and communal nurseries during the busy farming season.

The principles and institutions were copied from America, though the concrete examples of small improvements were not copies. Of course, in contrast to an American lifestyle boasting overwhelming wealth at the time, the Japanese villagers were still poor, hardly owning any durable consumer goods to support their lifestyles (such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, fridges, TVs etc.). There might be a vague longing for 'American-style' or 'Western' things, but this was not the cue for the westernisation of lifestyles overnight.

The LIP workers gradually overcame negativity in the form of resistance to anything new from the leaders of rural villages (village chiefs, elders, heads of women's associations etc.), and in the form of the lack of self-esteem in the young wives who were their subjects. The LIP workers continued

[Episode 70]

Adaptation of the 'American way'

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

transmitting the achievements and challenges on the ground to policy makers by forming Livelihood Improvement Practice (LIP) groups and presenting results of the groups' activities from the grassroots level to the prefectural and central governments. The secret to the adaptation of the American system lay in this mechanism of results presentation from the ground, as it actually worked as a system of bottom-up feedback from the grassroots in response to the top-down government policy. In the end, this led to the establishment of a style of livelihood improvement with a distinctly Japanese colour. This process took at least 10 years.

Development workers in developing countries today go about their activities with the aim of hopefully making the poor in those countries even if only a little bit richer and securing greater peace of mind in their lives. The experience of post-war Japan teaches us that social changes will only occur through the local population adapting the interventions

of outsiders in accordance with the unique characteristics of their own society by taking the necessary time. All development workers should bear this in mind when going about their work.



Image showing an observer to the livelihood improvement programme (1951)

Source: 20 years of agricultural improvement in Chiba prefecture magazine ("Kodama")

I would like to introduce you two books.

'Yamabiko School'(*) (first published in 1951) is a collection of essays of the 43 students who graduated in the year 1951 from Yamamoto Junior High School in Yamagata Prefecture. This received much attention as a good practice of 'the new education' system, was made into a film and has been translated into many different languages. Written in a style that discloses the bare facts of life, this book reveals the stark severity of the poverty in a mountain village in the Tohoku region seen through the eyes of junior high school students.

Aside from revealing a lack of resources and money unimaginable in present day Japan and shocking daily confrontations with diseases and deaths, the book surprised

many with its revelations of the extent to which peasants were exploited and how the hopelessness of their grief and resignation filtered through to the 15-year-old boys and girls (born around 1935). This only happened some two generations ago.

A story of a boy was presented in the postscript of the book by the book's editor and the teacher, Seikyo Muchaku. An excerpt from the tales of some of the parents such as, 'I sent my boy to school so that he would be able to take a job with a monthly salary. When my boy got such a job, I leased my fields to peasants, and ended up being taken away from these fields due to the farming land reform (1949). Because I gave my son an education, our family is now bankrupt.' The

[Episode 71]

Mountain villages and coal mines -

Text by Sato Kan Hiroshi

boy came to the conclusion, 'I knew it. All peasants are good for is rummaging around in the mud of rice fields.'

This seems one of the convincing but bitter lessons they learned from their reality. How close a resemblance this bears to the reaction of 'ignorant' farmers facing development workers out in the field promoting education in developing countries today!

'Nian-chan'(**) (first published in 1958) is the diary of an ethnic Korean girl living in Japan named Sueko Yamamoto (born 1943), charting her experiences between elementary school year 3 to year 5. Attending an elementary school in a mining town in Saga prefecture (southern Japan), Sueko, who was the youngest of 4, had lost both her parents, so her eldest brother had to take work as a 'temporary worker' in a coal mine. Being put up in the coal mining company's house, the meals were paltry so she became slightly malnourished, but she was an intelligent girl. The diary unfurls the daily life of a 10 year old girl worrying about poverty.

Unable to buy rice, she shared bentos (lunch boxes), mostly made up of barley and sweet-potatoes, with her second eldest brother (Nian-chan) who was two years older than she, and sometimes went to school without any bento at all (these children were referred to as 'undernourished children' in that era). When the miners union went on strike for increased pay, her eldest brother was not able to work and he could not bring home any pay, she stated, 'Strikes are my biggest enemy' (25th July, 1953).

In the autumn term, finally her brother became unemployed. He was unable to afford to pay for her textbooks, and she could not attend school. 'I want to go to school so much, and I am losing myself. Not having any money is too painful to bear.' (21st September, 1953). However, through arrangements made by the head teacher and her teacher, she was exempted from paying the textbook fee. 'As I'm now able to go to school from here on, I am so happy, I can't contain

myself.' (19th October, 1953). After that, her eldest brother left for neighbouring Nagasaki Prefecture to seek work and her elder sister also left home to take a job as a maid. She received a dress from the head teacher's wife (28th October, 1953), and was invited to a classmate's birthday party where she was startled by the number of rooms, dolls and food (28th February, 1954).

Evicted from the mining company's house, she lodged with her second eldest brother at an acquaintance's house, but was unable to ask for the money for her textbook fees (20th April, 1954). Due to the atmosphere souring, she left the new home and tried to live in a charcoal makers' hut (22nd July, 1954). 'I wonder if happiness will not come our way until the end.' (16th July, 1954). Set during the early 1950s when the coal mining industry was declining, this is the story of the lives of people struggling each day against bitter unhappiness, poverty and discrimination.

In spite of this, 'I believe the light of hope will surely fall upon the four of us.' (3rd September, 1954). Afterwards, Sueko attended Waseda University, married and found happiness, but there may have been many born in similar circumstances, who were not able to make it that far.

In order to understand the problems of poverty in developing countries, perhaps it is necessary to recap one's knowledge of events which were experienced in Japan only 50 years ago.

* 'Yamabiko School' (Seikyo, Muchaku, Iwanami Books, 1955)

** 'Nian-chan - diary of a 10 year old girl (Reprint)' (Sueko Yamamoto, Nishinippon Shimbunsha, 2003)

In your developmental work, you might have come across the grief and envy of people alienated from development assistance, saying such things as, development was possible 'because there are development workers in that village', 'because an NGO is working in that region,' or 'because that family is related to the governor'. Occasionally, even though a development worker arrives, dissatisfaction can still be heard stemming from the fact they brought no funds, machinery or materials. Is it really the case that 'development' is not possible without the good fortune of having outside support or connections?

People in developing countries are not the only ones who think the answer to this question is 'no, development is not possible'. Surely in Japan too, people had a disposition towards that way of thinking; a so-called dependency syndrome. If we look back,

for example to the spectacular results of the 'Movement for eliminating Mosquitoes and flies' which took place in a model community, presented on page 67, there were many murmurings of 'they could only do it because they were lucky enough to get the project with subsidies.' Apparently, it would not have been possible to renovate the toilets of all houses in the community without government subsidies.

In Japan after the Second World War, various projects trickled down into villages from the national and prefectural level. In 1958 in the prefecture of Yamagata, other than the 'Movement for eliminating Mosquitoes and flies' (by the Cleaning and Pollution Department), there were other projects such as the 'New Lifestyle Movement' and 'Community Centre Activities' (by the Social Education Department), 'Installation of simple

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Does livelihood improvement cost money? – pros and cons of model projects

Text by Miho Ota

waterworks' (by the Environmental Hygiene Department), 'Establishment of Children's Halls' (by the Children and Women Department), and 'Loans for Livelihood Improvement' (by the Agricultural Administration Department). The glue which allowed this top-down administration to fit into the villages where the projects were aimed, were the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers (LIP workers). As the field workers in closest contact with the villages, they transcended sectors through their work in guiding many model projects and experimental communities concerned with improving the lives of the people.

From their experiences in Yamagata prefecture, they found that the top-down approach of concentrating funds in a specific area; i.e. 'Model Communities', led to, 'giving the impression to neighbouring areas that livelihood improvement costs money, making it easy for the people there to lose the motivation to carry it out for themselves.' The reason for this was because the community had been publicly specified as a 'model' prior to the start of projects, so the people in charge would do whatever possible to make it into a successful 'model' by any means. On the other hand, the citizens themselves would fuss and fret over the outward appearance of the outcomes, making the whole process descend into the creation of 'improvements just for show'. Sometimes the standardised model would be misapplied to every household without considering each circumstance not mentioning the opinion of the individuals. As a consequence, a 'model' becomes mere name. Apart from failing to become a model for other villages, this system also risks promoting improvement through fashion and vanity. This approach has received scathing criticism, since the improvement process becomes unsustainable as the citizens come to depend on the outside contributions and people in charge.

To compare, 'Intensive Guidance Communities' were places where strong interest and desire for improvement was shown by the residents, and then the LIP workers would intensify their support in response. Their feature was that the fact that intensive guidance was received only became widely known naturally after the event, depending on whether the efforts were successful, without being publicly announced. Rather than

being just for show, the LIP workers and villagers were able to make steady improvements in the areas, which were tailored to their particular needs. That process produces results of improvements into which each household has put ingenuity, thought and consideration about its lifestyle. The needs of people were different person to person or place to place, thus there were no standard models for improvement. As a LIP worker noted, this kind of unique and tailor-made improvement initiative of each will continue to last.

Nominations for 'model communities' are frequently made by the authorities for places where they believe projects would be highly successful. In contrast, the 'Intensive Guidance Communities' emerge through the relationship between the LIP workers and residents, depending on the 'desire and attitude' of the people. The distinction between these two approaches expresses very clearly the difference in effects between the characteristics of the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach, which places importance on the initiatives of the people at the bottom in development work carried out nowadays.

Reference: 'Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers Materials: Livelihood Improvement Extension Activities Guidebook Part 1' (1958)

Ikedo Household Improvement Costs

池田家 改造費		
人件費	¥11,300.00	Wages:
大工	4,700.00	Carpentry/labour
上巻	1,600.00	Work:
工務	¥17,920.00	Stove/counter/ pipes/electric
石	8,340.00	
瓦	3,340.00	
金物	6,000.00	
漆	1,900.00	
高圧電線	¥3,300.00	Sub-total
材料費	¥36,140.00	
木	13,310.00	
ガラス	5,620.00	
金属	1,910.00	
セメント	1,000.00	
石	2,700.00	
Subtotal	116,260.00	
合計	¥168,760.00	Total

Model projects for show: Ohtaniguchi hamlet, Matsudo City, Chiba Prefecture. From slide "Records of a farm family" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1956)

Only 20 years ago there was not one modern day convenience of any note in the mountain villages of the Myagdi district of north western Nepal - just like the lyrics of a song, 'no electric, no gas, no bath, no toilet, no TV, no video, no nothing!' However, in the past 10 years there has been somewhat of a 'development rush'. This was due to the walking time it takes to reach the villages from the end of the road (unpaved, but passable by car) which runs north from the district capital of Beni, along the Kali Gandaki River which flows from the uncharted Mustang, being cut to one day.

With great pace between 1994 and 2000, one after another the district's villages were connected with electricity. Simple waterworks were laid in 2004, after which installation of showers and toilets began. Nepal's state-run electricity company and the Red Cross were the respective sponsors of each of these developments. The villagers undertook the burden of supplying the manpower required to transport the materials (electricity wires, poles, cement etc.) from the district capital to the villages some 1500-2000m above sea level as well as bearing the cost for wiring and piping within each property. On top of this, with income earned from working overseas, electrical devices and kitchen utensils were added, radically changing the kitchens of old in the blink of an eye (see picture).

You can see just by looking at the picture that it has been transformed into a fine kitchen, but this must not

be done inconsistently. The old firewood burning cooking stove has been exchanged for a gas hob and electric rice cooker and mustard oil lamps have been exchanged for light bulbs.

However, a group of cooking stoves were left outside or in a separate building still to be used day and night for alcohol production while the elderly warm themselves when it's their turn to light the fires. The LP gas cylinders (14.5kg) can only be filled up at the district capital so gas is used sparingly. With the increase in water during the rainy season come incessant black-outs, in effect making the refrigerator more of a decoration than an object of any use - there are still doubts as to whether the fridge is anything more than a status symbol.

Another concern is the fact that without a kitchen sink, they are still filling and keeping water in plastic containers. When the simple waterworks were laid, taps were fitted in each house but there are still no houses where the pipes go through to the kitchen. As a result it remains a doubt as to what extent the line of flow for cooking (track of movement within the kitchen) has been improved. This is evidence that the housewife's voice has not been heard during the kitchen improvement process.

Seen from the perspective of development, simply replacing each old element for a new one demonstrates an 'addition' effect, where the result is, at most, the sum of each part.

The kitchen improvement carried out during the livell-

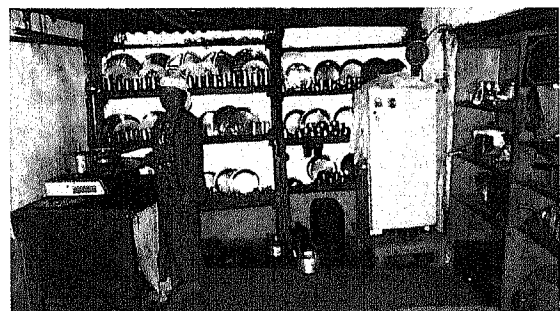
[Episode 73]

Inconsistent kitchen improvement - difference between 'addition' and 'multiplication'

Text by Masami Mizuno

hood improvement movement in post-war Japan was tackled by receiving support from facilitators known as Livelihood Improvement Extension workers, self-awareness of the improvement aims, investigation of the actual situation and the fixing of aims and methods based on the results of that investigation. This involved the materialisation of a 'multiplication' effect, where the result is the product of each element introduced through improvement.

What makes 'multiplication' development worthy of the name 'development' is the fact that it shares the pivotal notion of economic development, being the idea of pursuing an increase in productivity of all elements combined together rather than just the productivity of the individual elements themselves.



Kitchen replete with durable consumer goods such as gas hob, pressure cooker, fridge, electric rice cooker and wall clock.
(Myagdi District, Nepal, taken by the author in December 2004)

The trap of subject matter specialism and better living as a whole

For development practitioners, I am sure the question of whether one's techniques will be useful or not is of great interest. There is a school of thought that believes that because a technique is advanced, and has a high degree of completion, it will prove useful. However, in respect of the Livelihood Improvement of post-war rural Japan, we have shed light on various ideas (which could be thought of as simplistic), which we have referred to as examples of livelihood skills to be applied (in various ways, depending on the region) to areas such as food, clothing, shelter and household administration.

[Episode 74]

The search for livelihood techniques

Text by Kazuko Oguni

harvesting carrots, the 'skill' would be in thinking what can be done in respect of harvesting carrots."

Pointing out that each skill is simply a means, another former Livelihood Improvement Extension worker states, "Change is effected through a series of common skills such as improving cooking stoves. 'Livelihood skills' is a technique for looking at livelihood as a whole."

In other words, if the expertise given by outsiders does not fit in with the ever-changing natural and social environment, it cannot be considered a livelihood skill. Depending on the situation, generalised changes such as kitchen improvement or water supply improvement cannot be seen in their own right, but as the accumulated result of these small measures (ironing, arranging drawers etc), leading to increased confidence and abilities among women.

Facilitation and simulation of real-life experience

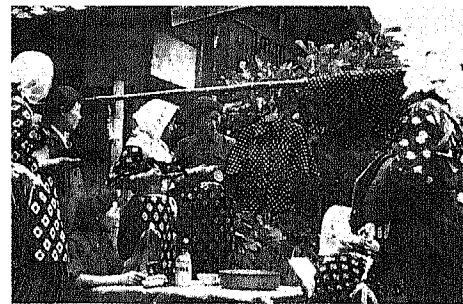
The people who put livelihood techniques into practice were rural village women themselves. The aforementioned former extension worker explains her role as follows: "In order to find livelihood techniques one must draw out the actual situation from casual or in-depth conversations and try various things. To do this, one must understand the problem from one's own perspective. As opposed to imposing one's expectations, one must draw people out through conversation."

Between 1955 and 1965 in many prefectures including Fukui prefecture, training centres known as 'Modernisation Centres for Rural Life' were built, where women could talk and practice learning new skills. At the centres, women could experience the livelihood modernisation methods being brought into their villages at that time at first hand. Replete with an improved kitchen, cooking utensils and processed tools, the centres

Livelihood skills came to be discovered through closely concentrating on daily life. Apart from ironing, as shown in the picture below, detailed methods for such tasks as arranging drawers and clothes washing (as shown previously) were demonstrated in full view of people. Former Fukui prefecture Livelihood Improvement Extension worker, Terumi Morimoto (born 1949) defined 'livelihood skills' as being borne out of ideas that strictly adhere to the realities of the locality, stating, "A skill for livelihood improvement is equivalent to an ability to respond to local needs. It is a stance from which to respect one's counterpart, as opposed to an individual expertise. For example, in a village in which the farmers are heavily involved in

enabled women who had lived a closed and conservative rural life to more clearly envisage the meaning of 'better living'.

Rather than hurrying to remove poverty and increase income within a short space of time, give careful consideration to fit in with the techniques we have brought along to change people's livelihoods. For those development workers around the world concerned about how developed their specialisms and techniques are, I suggest a change of perspective towards finding, and putting into practice, techniques that fit people's daily lives.



Women learning how to iron a blouse. From slide: "Rural livelihood improvement programme."

Picture/poster exhibit" Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1956

The origins of the 4C programme in Paraguay

Upon the intervention of the GHQ (General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for the Allied Force) a livelihood improvement programme named 4H* was spread over Japan. This 4H programme has since been developed in the south and central American countries of Bolivia, Mexico, and in Paraguay, where it was called the 4C programme.

I am going to look back to 1952 when the 4C programme started in Paraguay when its government signed a deal with the American government for technical cooperation.

The 4C programme involved hygiene & nutritional improvement, dressmaking, crochet, manufacturing and sales of processed foods and kitchen improvement. Providing the support for this programme from 1978, was a JOCV of over 60 Home Economics advisors, of which the author was one.

Successes and problems with the livelihood improvement programme

In rural Paraguay, machismo (male supremacy norm) remained deep-seated. There existed a social structure in which it was considered shameful for women to leave their houses and be seen hanging around in the local village. There were some women who said their everyday lives involved "only leaving the house to wash clothes in the river".

By participating in the 4C programme, these women were able to "negotiate with my husband to leave the

house to attend learning sessions", "sell vegetables and processed foods in the town", "carry out family planning, which had until that point been considered against the I god wil", thereby contributing towards female empowerment (according to a 1993-2004 study carried out by the author). This bears close resemblance to the positive changes brought about in respect of rural village women and society when the 4H programme was carried out in Japan.

For the rural village women of Paraguay, another dream they wanted to fulfil was kitchen improvement. The improvement from performing the cooking on the floor to using a cooking stove with oven (see picture) had many benefits, such as decreasing the stress on their lower backs, increasing their available cooking repertoire and looking attractive. However, this was kind of kitchen improvement was limited to the women who were able to successfully summon outside support, receive consent to spend money from the household income and purchase the bricks required for the building.

Similarly, it has been pointed out in Hideko Maruoka's (a researcher into the problems faced by women in rural villages) analysis of women and rural village life in Japan during the pre and post-war period, that the farms which were able to afford carrying out cooking stove improvements were limited ("Hideko Maruoka Collection of Critiques volume 5, Structure of the 'Middle-Class'", Miraisha, 1985). This also shows the similarity between the Paraguay and Japan experiences.

[Episode 75]

What we can learn from the livelihood improvement programmes in Paraguay and Japan

Text by Yoko Fujikake

The wisdom of Japan during the developing era can be put to use when setting about development work in developing countries, through an analytical and diversified grasp of the upsides and downsides brought about through livelihood improvement programmes.

* The four "H's" in "4H" stand for "Hand" (improving ones skills to develop agricultural and livelihood improvement), "Head" (training the brain to think about matters scientifically), "Heart" (a heart rich in friendship and sincerity), and "Health" (improving health to enjoy life and work with energy). In Paraguay they were translated into Spanish to make the 4C: "Capacidad" (ability), "Cabeza" (head), "Corazon" (heart), and "cooperacion" (cooperation).



Kitchen with an oven in rural area of Paraguay, Feb 1995, taken by author.

The improved cooking stove, featured on many occasions in this book, is a symbol of the early years of livelihood improvement movement during 1950s in Japan since it had epoch-making impacts across the country. Until today, various types of cooking stoves refuelling firewood, gas, electricity, solar power to name a few have been renovated and in practical use throughout the world. Hence, having an advanced stove in the kitchen has been a common longing for women, or people in charge of cooking, in both developed and developing areas. Through years, it became particularly a pressing demand to introduce thematically efficient models in scarce fuel areas in developing countries.

With the intension to withdraw lessons from the earlier Japanese cases, the negative effects, rather than positive ones, behind the improved cooking stove should be mentioned. Actually, there were countless women left weeping over the newly installed stoves in rural Japan.

Those left weeping were none other than the ones for whom the improved cooking stove was intended to benefit, young wives. The wives of the village of Hashikami (now Kesenuma city) in Miyagi prefecture, where one third of the households had remodelled cooking stoves, bemoaned, 'our life was much better before the cooking stoves were improved. One of the few moments we had to ourselves was while we were leisurely using the blowpipe to maintain the fire from the stove.'^(*) With the enhanced thermal efficiency of the new models, cooking time along with the time spent in collecting firewood from the forests was shortened. However, the time they saved was transferred to working longer in the fields, so, in fact, their physical burden increased. In Kagoshima prefecture it was

heard that, 'In front of the old cooking stove without a chimney was the only place I could shed my tears without anyone noticing, as I could pretend to be choking on the fumes.'

With the mechanisation of household work, similar distress was noted by women. 'An electric washing machine failed to ease the heavy duties of farmers' wives. The 50 minutes saved from the machine washing is now spent out in the field. The installation of water pipes in each house means me losing the time I used to enjoy doing the washing by the river with my friends.'^(**) Even though waterworks freed women from their daily grind of fetching water, they lost the precious opportunity of chatting by the well which had been their rare source of enjoyment.

In order to improve farm families' nutrition, while diversifying their source of income, many households began raising cows, goats (for their milk and meat) or Angora rabbits (for their fur). Since it was women indeed who took on the added responsibility of looking after the livestock, they were undertaking heavier labour than before, resulting, ironically, in an increase in women falling ill.

These cases prove that such livelihood improvements that overlook unfavourable working condition and imbalanced labour distribution for women do not contribute in enhancing their living standard. Rather, to make the matter worse, the change may add further pressure on them.

These are obviously negative outcomes from initiatives which supposed to bring positive effects..It is too simplistic, though, to judge that 'improvement had failed' or 'things were better before it started'. Instead, it could be seen as the solution of one problem highlighting another problem. Therefore, we must

[Episode 76]

Weeping over the improved cooking stove

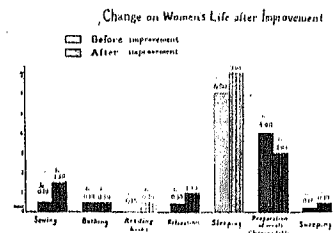
Text by Miho Ota

tackle the issue step by step. As the next stage, for instance, we need to investigate; 'why women had to pretend to choke while quietly crying in front of a stove, what was the reason behind their tears in the first place', and 'why it was only in front of an old stove or around a well that women could relax'. Time after time, it is essential to set about improving the very situation in which women found themselves. Thus improvement process never ceases. This is the reason why the livelihood improvement is said to be a lifelong work.

The chart below shows how the time saved through improvement was distributed to other areas. It is from a rare slide made originally in English in 1956 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Presumably it was made for presentation of the Japanese livelihood improvement outcomes for foreigners. According to the chart, the one hour, saved through reducing cooking time owe to a kitchen renovation,, was shifted to sewing, cleaning, reading, relaxing and sleeping. If we consider that farmers at that time involved in farm work when not car-

rying out these activities, it would seem that they would have been returning from the field two hours early. However, it was only 30 minutes, out of those two hours, were set aside for rest. Considering the recollections of women given above, even this small change represents no more than the state of the idealistic objectives for rural villages set by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, instead of representing the true harsh situation of village women.

* Asahi Shimbun morning issue (13th February 1954)
** Presentation by young girls of Fukui prefecture at the 3rd national youth training meeting from 1957



Change on Women's Life after Improvement.
Slide: "Exhibition: Home Economics Extension"
(Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 1956)

Groups which disappear, and the groups that replace them

I have presented success stories of women's groups that carried out livelihood improvement in rural areas of post-war Japan, but it would seem that these group activities, which condensed wisdom into development over the decades, are beginning to die out. The main reasons for this are the fact that the people who were involved are now becoming elderly, and also the fact that once-rural villages have now become cities. However, another reason is that the thinking behind what constitutes group activities is also changing.

According to former Fukui prefecture Livelihood Improvement Extension worker, Terumi Morimoto (born 1949), extension work being carried out today is not recog-

nised by authorities as group work unless the activities have numerical objectives. For example, when tackling factors that involve financial income such as direct sales and processing of agricultural produce, it is rare for the authorities to recognise a group unless its activities aim for a turnover of over JPY 3 million. There are 134 recognised groups in Fukui prefecture, but every one of them carries out direct sales and processing of agricultural produce with an annual turnover target above JPY 3 million.

Is the gathering the objective in itself, or is the group a method of working?

According to Ms Morimoto, in the past in rural villages it was in the remit of extension work for groups to simply meet regu-

[Episode 77]

Numerical conversion of objectives, and 'making the most of each day'

Text by Kazuko Oguni

larly to discuss trivial matters in daily life. Women used to look forward to the gatherings, picked leaders from among their own, solved problems and put the solutions into practice either individually or as a group.

The extension work at that time had an emphasis on being educational to develop people, as reflected in the slogan, 'Nurturing the awakening of self-reliant farmers'. In the movement to reinvigorate the rural economy there was a similar emphasis - 'Better economy for human development'. Because of this, it was possible for Livelihood Improvement Extension activities to exist with no financial objective, although economic growth was highly desirable at the same time.

Nowadays quantitative results are sought from group activities, so numerical objectives are set in order to be able to measure them for economic purposes. The basis of values for groups has changed from a time when the fact that people were brought together was itself seen as a success, to today's model, where the group's aim is to improve methods of making money.

Livelihood improvement to make the most of each day

A slide I have used in the past entitled 'Women's livelihood planning'(*) shows how women used gatherings to think about the life cycle and put their free time to use. With people participating in activities such as learning the tea ceremony or dressmaking, the keywords were 'being appreciated', 'enjoying oneself' and 'making the most of each day'.

Present day Japan is wealthy and abundant, and everyone has a choice of activities. For this reason it is difficult to gain any administrative leadership to support 'meeting up' for its own merits. However, let us look for a moment at the field of

international cooperation. By encouraging a quickening of pace in the removal of poverty through transferring skills to acquire a sideline business, or through the cultivation of cash crops, are we not leading people towards a system of values in which livelihood levels are judged by how much money is made? Many people are already stretched just earning enough money for their daily bread. However, because the management side of an aid project is restrained by numerical targets, I wonder if we are conveying something of a one-dimensional system of values.

The development of livelihood activities in rural villages in Japan fostered a spirit of love for group activity in a large number of women throughout all areas of the country. I wonder if we are successfully providing support in the field in such a way as to facilitate similar future enjoyment in making the most of each day.

* Project: All Japan Civic Education Alliance, produced by Nipponkogei Co. Ltd, 1970



Group members demonstrating their own 'Livelihood improvement song'.

(Source: Fukui prefecture, the association of livelihood improvement practice groups, "30 year anniversary of Livelihood improvement groups magazine - Foolsteps", published 1986)

Holding a remote seminar

At the end of March 2007 a 'remote' seminar using JICA-NET was held at Tsukuba International Centre between JICA HQ and the local field offices in Africa and Central/South America. The seminar was titled 'Community development according to the livelihood improvement approach', and this writer participated as a lecturer.

The following question was put forward by a development worker in Tanzania: 'Besides from agricultural extension, I have been involved in tackling such areas as nutrition but ... what is the best approach to take in respect of a farming populace which has gotten used to receiving support?'

Even Japan's Livelihood Improvement Extension workers

faced the issue of having to tackle the irrationality seen in the daily lives of the subjects of their activities. Put simply, when attempting to bring changes to a region, at what point do the people change their old method of doing things?

'Thinking about matters' as an 'active' process

A pioneer Livelihood Improvement Extension worker in Niigata prefecture, H-san, said the following when looking back over her experiences attempting to improve diets: 'As the farm women were pretty much unable to decide anything of their own free will, I began with having them change their method of cutting vegetables and putting all their ingenuity into cooking.' It was said that even a change as small as this

[Episode 78]

Livelihood improvement as an 'active' process

Text by Masami Mizuno

caused the farming population to try different styles of cooking. Starting from a measure which cost nothing led on to new activities coming in succession.

In a mountain region 2,000m above sea level in the Himalayas of North West Nepal where this writer was engaged in activities with his colleagues, in the past 20 years they have gradually become able to use vegetables and root vegetables (white radishes) in their daily lives. Now they can cultivate them within the household (see picture) and, while still modest, can serve them at the table. It was the Lumle Agricultural Centre, established with British assistance, which introduced this variety of vegetables. In each hamlet a farmer was nominated as an extension assistant whose brief was to teach the skill of vegetable garden cultivation to the other farmers, but it never really caught on. This was because there were insufficient programmes aimed at teaching the villagers how to make the vegetables, use them in cooking or eat them as a side dish.

'Active' investigations to promote activities

Whether carrying out livelihood improvement or rural village development, it is an established notion that the first thing on the menu is to travel to the field to survey the situation in order to grasp its requirements. We must understand that it is the survey of the situation itself which requires ingenuity.

Youth groups in the old Ota village area of Nagano prefecture held a summer agricultural training conference in 1954. Upon requesting the attendance of city experts to lecture at the conference, they received the reply, 'Undertaking an investigation of the situation in a village is not an expert's job. It is for the villages to do.' Having received this response the youth groups realised that they were the ones at the centre of the investigation and started the investigation off their own backs to accomplish the tasks by arranging a lecture upon investigation of the village issues and acting as mediators

between the villagers and the outside experts. It was learnt through this process that 'doing word' investigation (asking what kind of improvements are required to ameliorate the lives of village people, thereby leading to concrete activities) is required as opposed to the 'inactive' approach of simply assessing the situation to find the issues. Because this happened, the process of modernising the villages in the region had begun (*).

This writer believes that 'participatory development' insufficiently incorporates this point. 'To be worthy of being 'participation', we must encourage the participants to be active.

* 'Supplementary Volume of Modern Agriculture – April 2007 edition' (Rural Culture Association Japan) pages 57-61.



Green leaf vegetables which became able to be cultivated in mountain villages of Nepal.
Photo by: Nanase Iwasaki

Why is evaluation carried out?

Whenever activity is carried out using a budget, it is necessary to measure the extent of its effectiveness. With the broadening of the fields of engagement in international cooperation work, there has been a diversification in the guidelines for evaluation. Who is 'evaluation' for, and what is its aim?

The evaluation of the extension activities carried out by the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers in the rural villages of post-war Japan did not simply involve an appraisal of whether they were good or bad. Rather the evaluation itself was one link towards continuing activities. In a document used between 1955 and 1965 in Ehime prefecture it is noted that, as opposed to the measurement of effects, which involves assessing the effects in relation to pre-defined targets, evaluation has a wider meaning as a guide for rethinking activities that should be incorporated into the daily extension work.

Giving meaning to the question, 'how has it changed?'

The aforementioned document (from Ehime) gives various headings in respect of the aims and functions of evaluation. The writer of the document notes that improvement activities foster a "source of confidence" and bring to light "individual and group intelligence, comprehension, skill, attitude, desire and practice etc", thereby enabling us to move on towards further guidance.

According to former Fukui prefecture Livelihood Improvement Extension worker, Terumi Morimoto (born

1949), the extension workers would be flexible in re-writing guidance content "to apply to changes in the community, at the same time as performing activities based on the regularly compiled extension plans." Through this, methods of evaluation were also invented. For example, when activities were carried out to achieve a reduction in the number of farm-tool related accidents, not only the number of accidents, but also additional factors for change in consciousness and attitude such as starting to carry out spot checks on tools prior to work, or appreciating the importance of wearing safe work clothes were also considered. The careful recording of how people had changed then became grounds for reworking the activities. It could also be said that this has become a leading model for process evaluation, drawing attention from the international cooperation community.

The 'guides' and the 'guided' – rethinking both

Furthermore, not only the evaluation of the farmers (the 'guided'), but also the evaluation of the Extension workers (the 'guides') was fixed in line with their self-awareness. Under the next heading in the aforementioned document, it is written that at the same time as providing the participants with an opportunity to confirm areas of improvement in themselves, this kind of evaluation also provided the Livelihood Improvement Extension workers with an opportunity to praise and encourage the farmers. The relationships between the farmers and the extension workers, and the mutual relationships between the farmers themselves, led to a reappraisal of the changes occurring within the farmers.

Even in respect to the aforementioned example of activities

[Episode 79]

Promoting evaluation - in order for us to change

Text by Kazuko Oguni

carried out for the reduction of farm-tool accidents, a barometer for the evaluation of the 'guides' is clearly stated, including the following questions: 'Were you able to find and analyse work environments in which accidents often occurred?', 'Did you hold classes or have an opportunity to provide training for prevention?', and 'Did you produce materials which were easy for the farmers to understand?'

Tied to our position in providing support to rural people, are we constantly looking only at how the targeted people have changed? What really arises, in fact, because of the nature of our relationship with people? And how have we changed through our interaction in the field? Changes in both ourselves and others become intertwined and help us discover new methods for future activities. To enable us to achieve this type of constructive action, we must keep 'evaluation' by our side at all times.

* Referenced documents: 'Measurement of Effect' (printed document), 'Evaluation of Extension Activities' (Ehime Prefecture Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Department Agriculture and Forestry Skills Centre, publishing date unknown) (Both were provided by former director of an agricultural extension office in Ehime prefecture, Mieko Takaoka)



Improvement of farming clothes was carried out as part of a measure to counter various problems within farmers' lives.

Source: Fukui prefecture, the Association of livelihood improvement practice groups "30 year anniversary of Livelihood improvement groups magazine – Footsteps", published 1986)

[Episode 80]

Evaluating women's 'empowerment'

Text by Yoko Fujikake

Divergence of thoughts on livelihood improvement

The Livelihood Improvement Movement introduced in many regions of Japan empowered rural women, increasing their voice from the micro to the macro level, thereby changing regional society.

However, rural village women researcher, Hideko Maruoka (1903-1990) who was born and raised in Saku, Nagano prefecture, insists that it should not be thought that farm livelihood improvement came into being easily through the "makeshift" livelihood improvement extension service. Ms Maruoka's roots were her own mother and grandmother who laboured day and night, rested their tired bodies on hard cotton futons and whose only enjoyment in life was indulging in sleep. She pointed out the problems of livelihood improvement colored her own experiences.

Furthermore, in the foreword to the "Extension Letter" written during the second year of Mitsuko Yaguchi's (1923-94) term as the second section chief of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Agricultural Improvement Office Extension Department Livelihood Improvement Section, it states that livelihood improvement "is intended to deal with the standard of living in rural villages, not rural village women." Ms Yaguchi sought to extend livelihood improvement from a gender perspective, though "the position she took meant that the issue of raising awareness towards the problem of rural women's status and related indicator of evaluation had to take a back seat."

People in different positions had their own unique beliefs and viewed livelihood improvement accordingly. However, the rural village women who made up the development organization were able to achieve empowerment. How is it possible to visualise this?

Evaluation to visualise changes in consciousness and acculturation

I have worked supporting a livelihood improvement programme in Paraguay rural village group as a JICA volunteer. The farming village women who worked alongside me managed to bring about many changes in village culture and life by participating 4H program .

At that time (in 1993) the Livelihood Improvement Movement of village S started with courses on hygiene and nutrition and then led on to the construction of a jam processing factory and children's nursery. By 1999, the women were able to say about themselves, "I am no longer the 'old' me". In 2006, thanks to livelihood

improvement, the progress went as far as the construction of a high school.

The evaluation model prescribed for the changes in activities, behaviour and consciousness of the women of village S was extracted by the "Story Analysis" where things which have been built constitute empowerment. There are 12 indicators for empowerment in this analysis.

This model was utilised for the evaluation of the 'Encouragement of new small-scale businesses for regional women' project carried out in Honduras for 4 years in Honduras under the support of JICA. The farming village women of Paraguay and Honduras had similarities. In both instances, indicator showing 'large changes' included 'change in consciousness', 'being active', and 'making new objectives'. On the other hand, indicator which registered insufficient change included 'management and administration of funds' and 'negotiation skills'. These results contributed towards deciding the orientation of the project follow up.

Because originally the livelihood improvement movement sought mainly qualitative changes such as changes in consciousness and activity, it was thought difficult to compare results.

However, in order to transcend differences and move towards the 'same aim', it is necessary to have a tool (for measuring empowerment) to bring together people of different viewpoints to a common way of thinking. Through many different people able to visualise qualitative changes it becomes possible have a diversified and multi-dimensional discussion. I think this kind of framework is necessary for social development going forward.

* "Hideko Maruoka Collection of Critiques volume 3, Without Allowing Burial", Miraisha, 1978)

***"The Status of Farming Women in Post-War Japan - towards the creation of a culture of gender equality" (Hiroko Amano, Domesu Publishing, 2001)

Continuing livelihood improvement as a way of life

I received a book from former Niigata prefecture Livelihood Improvement Extension worker, Fuyuko Tanabe (born 1937), who stated that she 'would like more than ever for young people to have a read of it'. The book is entitled 'Design for a spiritually rich life' and is a collection of voices from Livelihood Improvement Extension workers and rural women giving their thoughts on finding their place within their families and regions.

However, this is not simply a collection of reminiscences. Rather its central theme is the question of how we go about living our lives into the future.

There is the example of Shimo Sakahara of Iyama city in

Nagano prefecture, who even as a young wife, restrained by farm work and housework, had a desire to "spread my wings and study". Ms Sakahara gained the opportunity to study through the local women's library, and now, in her sixties, is aiming to "harvest a fruitful life" by making a "youth pact" with her husband and becoming an Iyama city council member working towards developing the region.

Another example comes from Niigata prefecture, where the generation who built assembly halls and developed various economic and cultural activities is now working with young people to bridge the generation gap through the creation of a direct sales market for agricultural pro-

[Episode 81]

What comes after overcoming poverty?

Text by Kazuko Oguni

duce, which has the aims both of providing fulfilment and becoming a meeting place.

These efforts have in common the idea that the livelihood improvement movement is not simply about finding measures to eradicate economic poverty. Rather, it also incorporates a response to the epoch- and generation-transcending requirements for living and learning. The supervisor of the book, Osamu Nakamura, points out the number of Japanese who can assert that their lives have become richer is falling, and questions how we should view development and the concept of a 'rich life' today.

From 'consumer' wealth to 'creative' wealth

It is a fact that the farming villages of Japan have become economically wealthy, beyond comparison with the villages of yesteryear. There are some who bemoan the advance of individualism in place of cooperative working, but there are none who would decry the advent of an era in which children in rural communities are free to choose their paths themselves.

However, the continuing way of life of the people who appear in the aforementioned book shows us once more that the Livelihood Improvement Movement was not simply a means to an end; in other words, improving the economic situation. Whatever the situation, "if there is discontent, the first step towards a solution is in discovering our true aspirations, and in asking ourselves which direction we wish to head towards", implementing our aims one by one by discussing them within the family and throughout the community. Rather than being a process with a defined goal, it in itself is a way of life.

International cooperation activities on rural development today should aim to cope with overwhelming economic poverty. However, the principal reason why the women involved in livelihood improvement continue to think about

and engage in activities for the future as they grow older is the very fact that they themselves achieved a series of small improvements to their situation, through their own efforts, during the long period when poverty was a pressing issue.

We, as outsiders, must persist, together with the local people, in seeking an opportunity to think about a sense of values that allow people to go on living rich and fulfilling lives into old age, as opposed to rushing to attain quick results.

* (Supervisor) Osamu Nakamura, edited by 'Association for Connecting Villages and Cities', Shinnippon Publishing, 2007



Directing a gathering of women in a village labeled as being in 'poverty' taken by the writer in Cambodia

Out of the process of rapid economic development in Japan came an adverse legacy. The worst tragedy came in the form of pollution. Pollution is a man-made social disaster brought about through a policy which prioritises economic growth above all else. As the ones who inherited this adverse legacy, we Japanese must learn from it and undertake the responsibility of passing on its lessons to the next generation worldwide.

Take the example of Minamata disease, commonly seen as the origin of the Japanese pollution problem. Kumamoto Minamata disease is a disorder of the central nervous system caused by toxicity from the frequent and large intake of fish polluted by methyl mercury dumped in Minamata Bay by the company, Chisso. The first formally recorded case came in 1956. In

the same year, the then prime minister announced the post-war struggle have come to an end. The nation embraced the dawn of the period of rapid economic growth. Minamata disease is, in the truest sense of the word, very much a by-product of Japan's modernisation.

At the beginning, many of the victims were people from fishing villages who were involved in the fishing industry and who regularly ate the rich varieties of fish from Minamata Bay. Because of the large numbers of cases appearing in small hamlets, it was first suspected that an infectious disease of unknown origins was the cause. Due to groundless discrimination these people were isolated in the regions and faced untold distress in losing almost everything for their lives, even family members.

[Episode 82]

Minamata Syndrome

Text by Miho Ota

Even though Chisso pinpointed its liquid waste as the source of the pollution in 1959, the company did not announce it publicly and even obstructed attempts to discover the origins. As a driving force for economic growth, Chisso was quite literally supported by the economic world, political world and even the academic world, while the administration neglected to take any positive action towards victims and environment.

Moving forward to 1968, when drainage from the Chisso factory was finally acknowledged as the root cause of Minamata disease, discharge of methyl mercury was suspended at last. In the intervening period, the number of victims had grown with the number of officially acknowledged cases (at time of writing, in 2009) standing at 2,269 people (including 1,678 deaths) and the number of predicted latent cases said to be as many as 30,000. A law was enacted this July to finally resolve Minamata disease, but the road to settlement for many sufferers is still continuing.

After the four major pollution scandals(*), the Japanese government enacted the Act for Environmental Pollution Control (now the Environment Act) in 1967 so as to tackle the issues of pollution control and environmental protection. Minamata city preceded the world in proclaiming itself an 'Eco-city', and its work alongside the citizens in using the lessons of Minamata disease towards regeneration of the region became the source of study for visitors from around the world.

However, the book has not been closed on Minamata disease. Expounding Minamata disease as his lifework, Dr. Masazumi Harada raised the issues of 'overlooking the obvious' and 'the essence of pollution being the discriminatory outlook of not acknowledging people as people' calling the phenomenon, 'Minamata Syndrome'. Rather than appearing geographically at random, pollution often raises its head in the places of residence of society's weak, such as minorities or the destitute. In search of wealth for the greater number, one portion of the population is silently disposed of. Rather than the victims being discriminated against because the pollution has occurred, he emphasises, the

pollution occurs in the places already victim to discrimination.

Sadly, discrimination of this kind transcends regional and national borders. Pollution is being transferred to areas which seem a light touch in respect to regulation- from cities to the regions, or even from developed countries to developing countries. Despite being able to foresee that pollution will flare up, the lack of regulation and immaturity of the area government's ability to enforce the law is capitalised upon, and thus harm is allowed to materialise. During the 1980s in Japan where regulation was strengthened, there were reports of 'pollution exports' to South East Asia involving Japanese businesses.

In the areas you are currently stationed, I am afraid you might find tragedies continue to recur. Nowadays there are many people at the grassroots level entrusted with such roles tackling litter and recycling, and environmental education. Some of you may toil away on the ground, searching for litter or going about the clean-up work. Tackling problems which surround you so closely like this is to be respected. Yet, at the same time as taking an 'on the ground' perspective, I would also urge you to view the situation from above, taking a 'birds-eye view' and ask yourselves whether 'Minamata Syndrome' is lurking around you.

Behind the litter in front of your eyes, there might be a more sinister problem which cannot be solved by simply picking it up. There is a possibility the source of the pollution is not merely the litter itself, but the enforcement of a policy of economic growth at all costs, economic inequality, discrimination or the structure of society. The environmental countermeasure that we should learn from the adverse legacy of Minamata disease lies in grasping a comprehensive understanding of the form of the pollution and tackling it with a multi-layered approach, through viewing the situation from both on the ground and from above.

* Itai-itai disease (Fukuyama), Minamata disease (Kumamoto), 2nd outbreak of Minamata disease (Niigata), Yokkaichi asthma (Mie)
Reference: 'Wealth and those sacrificed – the beginnings of Minamata as a subject of study' (Masazumi Harada, Iwanami Shoten, 2007)

[Episode 83]

Women's independence through household accounting

Text by Yoko Fujikake

Myself as a livelihood improvement extension worker

As a JICA volunteer I was assigned in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Paraguay where I toured 37 farming villages as a Livelihood Improvement Extension worker from my base at the agricultural extension office in Caaguazú prefecture (1993-95). In each village I provided guidance on hygiene and nutrition and in two of the villages I supported projects for the expansion of vegetable consumption; projects for the establishment of 'Mitairoga' (children's space); and a jam processing project. Furthermore, since finishing my work I have continued my research and volunteer activities in the farming villages of Paraguay until today.

The investigations up to this point clearly show that, although there were twists and turns along the way, development was accomplished through the livelihood improvement projects in village S. The pre-existing gender-norm of the village society was changed with women taking part in activities such as cooperative activities, and leaving the village to sell jam and vegetables.

On the other hand, there was an issue which the village women were unable to overcome – the administration of household accounts. Because the village women were not sufficiently able to read, write or do arithmetic, it is difficult for them to accurately grasp household income. They almost unanimously stated, "I want to do the household accounts but can't do arithmetic so there's no way", or "The household income is ... I don't really know." (March 1997)

Whenever I visited village S, I would try to communicate methods of household accounting. Because there were not enough women who could do calculations using the 4 basic operations of arithmetic (addition, subtraction, division, multiplication), a seminar which merely touched the surface did not prove successful. The women said afterwards, "I kind of understand, but don't think I'd be able when it comes to doing it for myself." (March 2001)

Plans for the independence of farming village women in Japan

If we turn our attentions to Japan circa 1950, under the control of the head of the household or the mother-in-law, farmer housewives were treated as labour to be used towards agricultural production (Amano, 2001)*. The people in charge of administering the household were men and in some cases the real power lay with an elderly member (who had retired from the family business).

Moving on to the 1960s, household accounting books were issued to farms, thereby leading to improvement. Among the Livelihood Improvement Extension worker of the time, there

were many involved continuously with the promotion of household accounting to farmers' wives. According to Amano, the advantage of this lay in the household accounts book initiating a discussion within the household, whereby the financial situation became open, hence making clear exactly how much each individual was free to spend. This had the effect of making the housewife's attitude on life more positive. As a result, Amano points out, this led to cultivating "household democratisation".

However, the effects of household accounting entailed "more than just figures" (Amano, 2001). The very fact that farmers' housewives were taking care of household accounts led to them moving to the centre of the family's wishes, thereby improving their position within the household at that time.

There are many different methods of supporting the independence of farming village women. There is also the method of using research and development results from Western Europe as a technique, analyzing farming village society and supporting the independence of the women. However, it is also necessary for us to focus on providing them with the skill of household accounting to enable them to administer the household budget with their husbands in order for the women themselves to become independent members of society in their own right.

In the limited time we have, we worry about which method to prioritize, or which methods to combine. Each time I read through the materials written by LIP worker I start to understand in a much clearer light the issues which faced me during my time as a JICA volunteer. I also feel keenly the importance of learning from our predecessors. Absorbing and applying the knowledge from Western Europe also holds importance but it is also necessary at the same time to think about the lifestyles being led on the ground which you are standing. It is often said that the foundations of household budgeting are the same as that of business management. If I start doing my own household accounts, hopefully that would help me teach the farming village women of Paraguay how to do the same, but it would also help myself refocus on making my life better.

*Hiroko Amano, "The status of women farmers in post-war Japan – toward the creation of a culture of gender equality" (Domesu Publishing, 2001)

[Episode 84]

Doraemon's secret

Text by Masami Mizuno

Manga giant Japan

Manga (comic books) and animation is now one of the major industries from which Japan can take pride. Within Japan, manga and animation characters have filtered through to all areas of life. Children long to become manga artists and manga/animation has even become a subject of specialist study in universities. As a soft industry bringing in money from abroad, it has contributed to the national economy.

Overseas, translated manga books are in large supply (see picture), and Japanese animation movies attract a great number of viewers. It is just a question of time before manga becomes a universal language to create a new image of Japan.

The arrival of Doraemon

When thinking of post-war Japanese manga from this writer's generation, undoubtedly the first one that immediately springs to mind is 'Astro Boy'. As the embodiment of science and justice, Astro Boy held a cherished place in the hearts of children.

However, its place there was taken by 'Doraemon'. It is now impossible for a child in Japan to go through childhood without knowing the name, 'Doraemon'. The stories of a robot in the shape of a cat with human feelings with some elementary school students, despite being simple stories, are widely loved and familiar to everyone regardless of age or gender. Furthermore, transcending national borders, Doraemon is as an extremely popular manga in South East Asia too.

Deciphering through development theory

What happens when we attempt to decipher the characteristics of the characters appearing in Doraemon using development theory? If we take 'Gian' as the one who uses brawn to solve problems, the character who can use financial muscle is 'Suneo'. The former is no match for those stronger than him, while the latter is dependent on his parents and lacking his own resources. Then there is 'Dekisugi', the character who solves problems with knowledge.

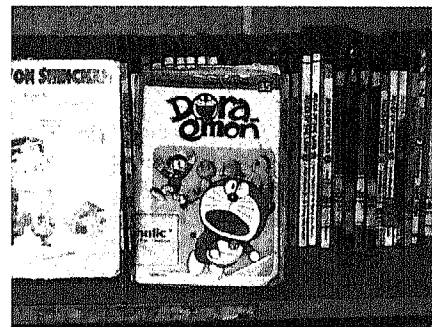
Following this train of thought one can understand how much these three characters correspond to our way of thinking in respect to development and of the types of individuals involved in that process. In other words it represents development when enforced under authority (colonies, developmental dictatorships), development when evaluated by the size of

the funds thrown at it (World rankings for ODA), and development seen as the transfer of skills (specialists, technicians, etc).

Social Capital

The character 'Nobita', as a coward with no special skill, seems to bring nothing to the table in respect to the conditions sought for in development. However, that is not the case. He maintains a relationship whereby whenever the chips are down, he asks Doraemon to borrow his super powers and makes full use of them to solve the problem without a hitch. Furthermore he also holds the special skill of being able to draw everyone together using the super powers received from Doraemon.

This corresponds with the development research phenomenon of 'Social Capital'. The effect of this phenomenon is the ability to mobilise resources through any social connections. With 'social capital', it is not important what you know, rather who you know. Furthermore, encouraging connections between people has the effect of increasing participation and the formation of groups. The skill of building social relationships in this fashion is a necessary element in promoting development.



Indonesian versions of Doraemon
(Makassar, picture taken by the author)

The 'development' approach

Usually development projects look to achieve the aims of either bringing in 'things lacking', or supplementing 'things in short supply' to the subject country (or region). Therefore, an investigation is carried out to find 'things lacking'. 'Things lacking' can be diverse, spanning funds, skills, manpower, markets, information, facilities, institutions and systems among others. In respect of the treatment of 'things lacking' we have to turn to the guidance of specialists. The development model initiated from an investigation of 'things lacking' inevitably centres on goods and money. As a result, if there are no money and goods, this spells the demise of the development. It follows that there is little chance the effects brought about by the development will be lasting.

Even if one of 'things lacking' is provided, it cannot be expected to make a significant difference. The requests of those receiving will become further bloated upon the additional provision of the first 'thing lacking' or even the introduction of another 'thing lacking'. Because the side providing the 'things lacking' will not have unlimited resources, it will seek to cut off the supply at a suitable stage. Once this occurs the receiving side will immediately give in and look to switch strategy, for example by transferring over to another provider. A gap develops in the expectations of both sides, gradually widening until they both slip into playing the blame game. The development project becomes somebody else's business whereby ownership becomes lost.

The 'improvement' approach

In contrast, the 'improvement' approach, based on the experience of the farming village Livelihood Improvement Movement in Japan, sets about the development process using the already existing 'things available' as its starting point. As long as people are existing, there will always be something that sets off improvement. It follows that the 'improvement' approach to development can be implemented 'by whoever, whenever, wherever and out of anything'.

The significance of development having a range of different entry points cannot be overstated. Of inherent importance to development projects using the 'improvement' approach is that they are predicated on looking at 'how' to advance activities as opposed to 'what' types of activities to carry out. With the latter, since the subject of the improvement is decided based on the relationship between the original situation within which the improvement itself is placed and the improvement objectives of the moment, it does not fit with what is pre-assigned as project work.

At the heart of the 'improvement' approach are the people who put into practice the improvements. Through the process of carrying it into practice, not only their lifestyles (in a broad sense including production), but also the people themselves undergo improvement. In this way, 'improvement' aims towards the development of people. Furthermore, as long as the people's lifestyles subsist, because there will be problems and aims for improvement, the 'improvement' approach

[Episode 85]

Development and improvement

Text by Masami Mizuno

to development has at its core the ability to sustain itself. Because development which designates the people as the main subject of improvement activities is carried into practice based on the principle of self-responsibility, project ownership is guaranteed.

In contrast with reform, remodelling and revolution, 'improvement' is seen as being lax, superficial and having elements of delaying treatment of the issues, but this does not fit its definition. 'Improvement', when carried into practice with continuity and succession, gives rise to changes which measure up to and are more advantageous than changes procured by such methods as reform. Moreover, it does not entail the cost which accompanies social adjustment through drastic change.

When the necessary 'things lacking' are added to a development approach based on 'improvement', the effect is astonishingly large. In this way, the two approaches to devel-

opment complement each other and a great synergistic effect can be expected.

2 Types of Development Projects

Heading	Introduction of 'things lacking' Approach	'Improvement' Approach
Starting point of plan	Looking for 'things lacking'	Looking for 'things available'
Entry point of work	funds, skills, manpower, markets, information, facilities, institutions and systems	whoever, whenever, whenever and out of anything
At the core of the work	money and goods	people
Continuity	sporadic	everlasting
Ownership	small, responsibility of others	large, self-responsibility

From administrative assistant to LIP worker

Ms Kieko Tsuchiya (born 1936) was born in Iida city in Nagano prefecture and worked as a livelihood improvement extension (LIP) worker in the Tohshin region from 1955 to 1997.

When Ms Tsuchiya graduated from an agricultural school in Nagano prefecture in 1957, as there were no LIP worker posts available, she took a job as an administrative assistant at the agricultural extension office in Shimoina. As she was young, she was asked to help out a 4H club* which was actively spreading in the region, at which point "paying no attention to the administrative work, she put her heart and soul into it, working day and night towards nurturing the 4H club".

The reason why Ms Tsuchiya put her heart and soul towards

the role of LIP worker is because she had a burning ambition to do something about the lowly position of farming women at that time. While still a junior high school student, she witnessed her mother (a farmer's wife) who was showing the production method of fig jam (something she had learned outside the house) to community women, be sent flying in public by her husband berating her and exclaiming, "as the wife of a busy farm, what do you think you're doing?" After witnessing this episode, she endeavoured from that day forward to do something about farming women's status as 'hornless cows'.

Ms Tsuchiya's work with the 4H club was highly praised, leading to a transfer to the Nagano prefecture management training farm. Prepared to work herself into an early grave, she

[Episode 86]

Starting point of the livelihood improvement program

Text by Yoko Fujikake

laboured late into the night preparing various activities. She thought she would go through life single, but in 1960 she met a man who understood the passion she had for the job, got married and in the same year formally became a LIP worker.

Facing up to challenges with passion

The method of learning how to solve problems at that time was to pick up on common themes and try to solve them together. However, Ms Tsuchiya thought this method was "like trying to scratch one's feet through one's shoes (i.e. pointless), since each person's problems are different". "The administration at that time did not attach great importance to individual people's needs and did not even concern itself with the passion of LIP worker". It was a time when the administration did not deal with anything other than the extension work which it espoused.

However, Ms Tsuchiya was different. She believed the most important thing was to face the farm women one by one and understand "what they want to change". She thought that if one can see the problems, 80% of them could be solved. The process of verbalising and visualising the problem is of great importance. Whenever she did not return to the office until very late, she was asked, "Where have you been doing?", to which she replied, "a farm woman started crying to me", at which point she was rebuked by her superior, stating, "You don't have enough time to spare to listen to the sobbings of some woman!" Because her job was as an administrator she was reprimanded by her office for going round the farming villages at night, but in response she snapped back at her superior, stating, "there are some farming women who only have the opportunity to meet up at night." Mr Tsuchiya stuck to her extension style of visiting the field regardless of day or night to listen to the voices of each woman individually.

Even more than the transfer of skills in such areas as cookery, her extension objective was the conversion of the lifestyle and sense of values of the farming village women. She echoed

in her heart the sentiment of the words of farming village women researcher, Hideko Maruoka: "Women of farming villages! The path you've trodden has been a painful one! Express your pain!"

Teaching cookery is perhaps not that difficult. However, changing people's consciousness is hard. This type of teaching is not extension work in its true sense. Extension work has at its heart the principle of encouraging awareness. Ms Tsuchiya carried out her activities with passion despite receiving criticism for lacking in efficiency.

Textbooks and manuals are sometimes important but they are not the 'be all and end all'. The starting point of all extension work lies in passionately facing up to encouraging a change in the consciousness of your subjects individually.

*The origins of the 4H clubs stretch back to the activities carried out in respect of farming village boys and girls in the American state of Iowa between the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. The four "H's" in "4H" stand for the motto: "Hands" (improving one's skills to develop agricultural and livelihood improvement), "Head" (training the brain to think about matters scientifically), "Heart" (a heart rich in friendship and sincerity), and "Health" (improving health to enjoy life and work with energy).

* From speeches and interviews conducted by the author at the "Conference for Rural Community and Life: Matters which must be communicated to the current new generation through a focus on the last century of farming village life" (Supported by Toyota Foundation Research Promotion, Hosted Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Research Institute for Rural Community and Life, 24th January 2009 in Nagano city)

I was undertaking livelihood improvement activities mainly helping the rural women with courses for agricultural processing, needlework and health in an autonomous area of the indigenous group, called Ngöbe-Buglé in West Panama. In the area, many of the men leave communities for out-migration while the women remain (taking care of family). Through talking with the women I found that since opportunities for them to earn an income were limited, they had to ask their husbands to purchase such articles as underwear and sanitary products but many of them found it too embarrassing to do so.

I suggested we made our own hand-made underwear and cloth sanitary pads and carried out classes to teach how to make them. When holding the classes just for women, the other villagers became curious and gathered to see what we were doing. One of the women jokingly explained, 'It's a women's secret!', and so the 'Women's Secret Project' was born.

Before leaving for Panama, I had the chance to talk with former livelihood improvement extension workers who had actively worked in the rural communities of Japan. I learnt the importance of listening to the local people's voice and applying oneself to each individual's needs from their experiences. This project was also borne out of a casual everyday conversation with the women of the community. Furthermore, using as a cue the catchphrases given to livelihood improvement activities such as 'Mum in bed by 9pm' and 'Small boxes of Love', I gave the project the name, 'Women's Secret'. By lending the project a name, it made my activities easier to follow and become more popular.

The ideal at the heart of the Japanese Livelihood Improvement Movement, to 'apply currently available resources to the fullest extent', also influenced my activities. In

Case study of JICA volunteer using KAIZEN

Here we introduce an example of JICA volunteer who has learnt from the Livelihood Improvement Movement in Japan and applied this knowledge with her own slant to activities in the field.

Women's Secret Project

Text by Sara Shinkai



Ms Shinkai with villagers holding cloth sanitary pads made during the 'Women's Secret Project'

the area known as the most poverty stricken in all Panama and which received a lot of outside donations, the idea provided the trigger for further ideas involving individuals using their own handiwork to reduce expenditure as opposed to thinking money and materials would be handed on a plate. Applying local women's dexterity trained through making traditional clothes, we were able to make underwear and cloth sanitary pads using leftover scraps of cloth.

The experiences of the Livelihood Improvement Movement activities in Japan always provided me with encouraging hints whenever I felt stuck with activities in the field. I learnt a lot from the approach of working towards involving the whole family and the whole community. For example, I was inspired to create such ideas as encouraging women who found it difficult to leave the house to attend seminars by sending out invitations, thereby making the activities a public occasion, and having them take home dishes prepared

in cooking classes to gain acknowledgement from their husbands and mothers-in-law.

More than anything else, it was what I learnt from the basic spirit of livelihood improvement as a way of tackling issues with positivity, and the passion which livelihood improvement extension workers showed towards their extension districts which led to the creation and realisation of the 'Women's Secret Project'.

Sara Shinkai: Took a course of community development at University of the Philippines while studying at Tsuda College. After graduating from the college, worked as a member of JOCV (Panama, Rural Community development extension worker, assigned 2005). Upon return to Japan, worked at the Secretariat of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers of JICA, after studying a postgraduate course (rural development) in the UK, worked at Hakuoh University.


JICA NET
multimedia Teaching
Materials
 [The Experience of the
 Livelihood Improvement
 Movement in Japan]
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This teaching material provides an overview of the livelihood improvement movement in post-war Japan and was created with the aim of becoming a reference for the support work being carried out by Japanese nationals working on assistance activities. It is structured using the following content(see right). If you would like further information on the livelihood improvement movement, please contact us.

Video Images "Livelihood Improvement-the teachings of livelihood improvement-": Video providing an overview of the livelihood improvement movement against the backdrop of Japan between 1940 and 1950

"What can be learnt from the livelihood improvement movement": Commentary on the significance of developmental assistance in the field through a Powerpoint presentation with narration.

Interview: Recordings of interview testimonies from former livelihood improvement extension workers and farmwives.

Q&A Common questions and answers in relation to 'livelihood improvement'.

Glossary: Explanation of academic and specialist terminology in respect of livelihood improvement activities

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