

## Summary of Evaluation Study Results

### Training Program in Japan for Laos

#### Contents

1. Outline of Evaluation Study .....	2
1-1 Objective of Evaluation Study .....	2
1-2 Members of Evaluation Study Team .....	2
1-3 period of Evaluation Study .....	2
2. Methods of Evaluation.....	3
2-1 Evaluated Training Programs .....	3
2-2 Framework of Evaluation .....	3
2-3 Methods of Evaluation Study .....	3
3. Results of Evaluation.....	5
3-1 Suitability of the selected courses .....	5
3-2 Appropriateness of the selected trainees .....	5
3-3 Efficiency of the coordination among agencies related.....	6
3-4 Effectiveness of the training .....	6
3-6 Visibility of the JICA training program.....	7
4. Factors Promoting/Inhibiting Effects of the Program.....	8
4-1 Promoting Factors .....	8
4-2 Inhibiting Factors .....	8
5. Recommendations .....	10
5-1 Recommendations for Lao PDR .....	10
5-2 Recommendation for JICA.....	10
6. Lessons Learned .....	12

## 1. Outline of Evaluation Study

### 1-1 Objective of Evaluation Study

Agriculture in Laos represents 53 percent of the GDP, and is one of the most important industries of the country. JICA has accepted 79 training participants from Laos in the agricultural field from 1998 to 2000 and has made efforts in training and contributing to the transfer of new knowledge and techniques in this field. Under these circumstances, making use of the past experience of the training program in the field of agriculture hereafter is essential. Thus, the Evaluation has been prepared.

The purpose of the Evaluation is not only to confirm the effect of the training course but also to analyze the promoting and inhibiting factors of the cooperation effect, and consider the improvement of the operation of the training course in the agricultural field and the direction of agricultural in Laos.

### 1-2 Members of Evaluation Study Team

Consigned to Overseas Consultant Bureau d'Etudes Lao.

### 1-3 period of Evaluation Study

5 January 2002- 28 February 2002

## 2. Methods of Evaluation

### 2-1 Evaluated Training Programs

The following group training, country-focused group training, counterpart training in the agricultural field that took place in Japan from 1998 to 2000 are targeted for Evaluation.

Year	1998	1999	2000	Total
Number of Training Courses	20	20	26	66
Number of participants	27	23	29	79

### 2-2 Framework of Evaluation

- (1) The suitability of the training course: Whether the allocated training courses were consistent with the development program and training policy of the agriculture of Laos.
- (2) The appropriateness of the training participants: Whether the selected training participants are adequate in terms of their technical field, technical level, their proficiency in language, etc. Whether there were any other problems related to their qualification.
- (3) Whether the cooperation and coordination among related organizations were efficiently conducted: Whether the cooperation and coordination of the Committee for Planning and Cooperation (CPC, in direct contact with JICA) and the Department of International Cooperation (DIC, or DICI at the time of Evaluation), and those among DIC and each related division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were efficiently carried out.
- (4) Effectiveness of the training content: Whether the training content, lecturers, textbooks, training equipment, training organization, etc. were effective in achieving the training purpose.
- (5) The impact of the returned participants: Whether the returned participants gave impacts on their colleagues, senior and junior partners based on the knowledge and technique the training participants acquired.
- (6) The recognition of the JICA training program: Whether the training participants were aware of the JICA training programs and to what extent did the newspaper advertisements help promote the program.

### 2-3 Methods of Evaluation Study

In the Evaluation, the evaluation items were derived from above-mentioned framework, and the study has been conducted by the methods below.

- 1) The review of the existing data on the project and the report.
- 2) Interviews of experts, returned training participants, superiors of training participants.
- 3) Questionnaire Survey polling ex-participants.



### 3. Results of Evaluation

#### 3-1 Suitability of the selected courses

The training courses allocated in Laos were appropriate from the perspective of the Lao agricultural policy and its human resources development. The Laos government is satisfied with the line-up of the training courses. These training courses contributed to the following fields in Laos; 1) food production, 2) commercial crop production, 3) the abolishment of slash-and-burn agriculture, 4) development of irrigation, 5) rural development and poverty alleviation. According to the results of questionnaire survey to the training participants (sent to 72 participants), for the question of how much did the training meet the participants' expectation, 42 participants (58%) answered they were satisfied to a sufficient level, and 30 participants (4%) answered they were satisfied to some extent.

From the above, the following direction is implied for JICA's future action.

(1) JICA has already founded programs or initiatives such as "The Third Country Group Training" and "South-South Cooperation". JICA has set the following principle of selecting the training site, which should be enhanced for the future as well; if a training is considered to be more effective to be implemented in Japan, the training will be given in Japan; if it could be more effectively conducted in a third country, Third Country Group Training will be chosen.

(2) There were respondents who answered as follows. "Training in Japan should be concentrated on the things that can only be learned in Japan, and there is no need for it when training can be learned in neighboring countries." This could be a misunderstanding of the training participants. (For example, for "rice farming techniques," participants are likely to think that "Our country has enough history of rice farming, and there are chances of learning in Vietnam and Thailand, and there is no need to learn this in Japan." However, there remain many topics in rice farming which can not be learned from countries such as Vietnam, from JICA experts' point of view, such as rice seed propagation techniques, the distribution system of guaranteed seed, field management, water management, etc.) Although there is no need to directly apply all the Japanese techniques to Laos, techniques that match the current condition of Laos should be introduced.

#### 3-2 Appropriateness of the selected trainees

As for the selection of the training participants, the Laos government has made an adequate selection out of the limited number of personnel who can satisfy pre-set qualifications. However, in the questionnaire survey (sent to 72 participants), almost half of the participants answered that they could only understand 50 percent to 80 percent of the training course. It was indicated that the problem lies not only in technical ability but also in their command of English. Therefore, the improvement hereafter lies in the participants' improvement in their

command of English. The determinant of the understanding of the training of local officers lies in the lack of English proficiency. Efforts of individuals for the improvement of English capacity are needed.

### 3-3 Efficiency of the coordination among agencies related

(1) Efficient cooperation and adjustment between CPC and DIC are important in selecting the training courses from many courses offered from JICA. Between 1998 and 2000, the cooperation was insufficient and false information had been exchanged about the number of the courses which can be allocated to Laos for a certain year. However, the training course selection has been improved after 2001.

In the time of the training course selection, Laos only receives the catalog of the names of the training courses, and thus asks JICA experts for further information when in need. Therefore, it is useful for the course selection to be provided with more information about the training course.

(2) In selecting the training candidates, the cooperation of DIC and related divisions, prefectural agriculture department, and other related organizations is important. The number of DIC staff is limited, but has coordinated this selection process with a certain degree of efficiency. However, improvement is needed especially in the coordination between the Central and the Local Government. Due to the decentralization, special consideration has been given to encourage the local government staff participation in the training. However, it was difficult to find a person capable of taking the course with sufficient English ability. Much can be improved in the research of the Central and Local levels, such as the time consuming document delivery to the province.

### 3-4 Effectiveness of the training

(1) According to the result of questionnaire survey and interview with the ex-participants, the training in Japan was evaluated as satisfactory, the way the training was preceded, and text and others were also favorably evaluated. However, many ex-participants commented as follows. "As for the content of the training, it would be helpful if theory and practice were well balanced, or the contents should be more practical."

(2) 80 percent of the ex-participants answered, "The knowledge and technique acquired in the Training are sufficiently or to some extent useful in daily work." At the same time, for the question, "What did you gain from the training," many answered, "Knowledge and technique," "Promotion," and "Confidence in work." On the other hand, according to the managers of the

affiliation of the training participants, 9 out of 12 answered, “Very useful,” and two answered, “Useful to some extent,” about the techniques acquired through the training. Therefore, it can be said that the ex-participants have acquired knowledge and technique to some extent, while half of the participants have not necessary applied them due to the personnel rotation. Hence, proper personnel allocation is needed after their return from the training in Japan.

### 3-5 Impact to the concerned organizations

Almost all the training participants have disseminated the knowledge and technique acquired by submitting reports to their seniors and colleagues in their organization. The impact on the workplace is conveyed to the seniors and colleagues substantially through daily business and seminar workshops. However, the seminar and workshop of the specialized content of the JICA training program have not yet been planned and implemented, while there have been many cases that ex-participants are invited as a lecturer to the related organizations' similar workshop to introduce the acquired knowledge and technology. This is mainly because of the budget and the lack of adjustment of the government.

### 3-6 Visibility of the JICA training program

Most of the training participants obtain information about the JICA training program from their seniors, colleagues, and JICA experts. According to the survey, 62 out of 72 (93%) that answered knew the existence of the JICA training program before they participated in it. Therefore, it can be said that the people related to the Laos government, especially the Central Government's middle and high level officers, are familiar with the JICA training program.

#### 4. Factors Promoting/Inhibiting Effects of the Program

##### 4-1 Promoting Factors

(1) JICA has been offering training courses, which are thought to be adequate to the policy on the human resources development and the agricultural development of Laos. The training in Japan was adequate in terms of the level of the lecturer, the quality of the text, the content of the curriculum, and the period of training.

(2) The official point of contact for JICA and Laos is CPC. There is no official point of JICA in other ministries and government offices, but efficient coordination had been made between DIC and JICA experts. DIC and the related divisions have gained cooperation from the JICA experts and have selected the training courses that are in line with the development policy of Laos.

(3) Although the number of staff is limited, DIC has made effort in the cooperation and adjustment of related divisions in selecting the adequate training participant candidates. On the other hand, related divisions have made effort in making adequate selection of training participants from the human resources development point of view.

##### 4-2 Inhibiting Factors

(1) In order to select more adequate training courses, the data briefly explaining the content of the course is necessary. However, only the title of the training course is notified in practice.

(2) For more efficient training, many ideas of improvement have been identified by ex-participants as follows: 1) Training should place more emphasis on practice, 2) Interpretation during the training should be improved, and 3) Some of the textbooks should be translated into English.

(3) The workshops that are specialized for ex-participants have not yet been planned and implemented, and thus there are few chances to improve the recognition of the JICA training program, and the awareness of the targeted problems in the training, and the purpose of participation of the ex-participants.

(4) In selecting the training participants, DIC cannot start the coordination among the personnel bureau and other related divisions until DIC receives an official document from CPC. Therefore, there is a time loss of a couple of days (the longest being one month). In terms of the coordination among DIC and related divisions, the prefectural agricultural department has

done relatively well; however, (especially) there is a request from the prefectural agricultural department for more communication between them and DIC.

## 5. Recommendations

### 5-1 Recommendations for Lao PDR

(1) It is important to reinforce the cooperation between CPC and DIC in order to select a more adequate training course and training participant candidates. DIC should be able to get started in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry before the acceptance of the official document, in order to use time efficiently in selecting the training participant candidates.

(2) JICA conducts much training in the field of agriculture and forestry and has accepted requests from not only Laos but from other related countries. It is necessary to select adequate courses to achieve the objectives of Laos. Therefore, the database must be made so as to use it for the human resources development program of Laos in order for the information of the training program and participants to be reserved at the Laos Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Department Personnel Bureau.

(3) It is difficult to judge the participants' level of understanding of the training content from such questionnaire survey only. Therefore, specific monitoring items for the training result should be set, and make monitoring a duty for the divisions, and organize and practice monitoring with the cooperation of Laos Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry examining bureau and DIC.

### 5-2 Recommendation for JICA

(1) Not only the name of the training courses but also the outline of training content is required for the selection of the course, so such information should be offered.

(2) Presenting the acquired technique and knowledge in seminars and workshops is not only important in disseminating the effect of the training but also in improving recognition to JICA. However, it should be pointed out that there remain the lack of budget and the insufficiency in awareness of extension activities. Therefore, JICA should set up a venue for presenting the returned training participants' acquired knowledge and techniques every year.

(3) The necessary number of computers should be offered to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Personnel Bureau, Examination Bureau, and DIC in order to establish the training participants data base, and to monitor the effects of training, that were offered to Laos. The database should be made in simple form and in shape of continuity. It is necessary to provide them with the technical cooperation of the JICA's Long and Short-term Experts.



## 6. Lessons Learned

(1) English proficiency: There is a historical background that many officers now in their forties did not have opportunities of acquiring English because of the political and social system for the past 15 years or more. The government is encouraging the acquisition of an English ability. Particularly in rural areas, there have been almost no institutions of English education, which is more disadvantageous for these officers than the officers of the Central Government to study English. The situation should be improved so that they can learn English to increase training chances hereafter.

(2) The government is accelerating decentralization, and the progress of knowledge of the local government staff is an important issue. However, the difference between the capacity of the staffs of the Central and the Local Government is obvious, and in the local governments, the gap in terms of the capacity of the prefectures along the Mekong River and the Northern mountain prefectures is widening. Therefore, consideration for training programs that match the actual condition is necessary in the selection of the courses, selection of the training participant candidates, and setting of a special program for the human resources development in the local area.

(3) According to the result of the survey, about 50 percent of the 72 respondents have been transferred to another position within three years of the training. It cannot be affirmed that the transfer will have a negative impact on the ex-participants; however, cases were found where participants cannot make use of the acquired techniques and knowledge after the transfer. Taking these in consideration, reservations of acquired knowledge and techniques as office should be fixed and monitored.