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TCP2 Newsletter

The Official Newsletter of the NIA-JICA IA Strengthening Support Project (TCP2)

JICA dispatches new TCP2 Chief Advisor



Mr. Nariaki Tamura, new TCP2 Chief Advisor

By Geralyn Rigor, PMO

After being vacant for almost eight months, JICA has assigned a new expert from the Japan Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) to serve as Chief Advisor for NIA-JICA TCP2. The post has been unoccupied since October 2008 when Mr. Kuniyoshi Ishizaka ended his two-year assignment for TCP1 and TCP2.

Mr. Nariaki Tamura, Director of the Land Improvement Engineering Office in the Hokuriku Regional Administration Office prior his assignment to the Philippines, arrived in Manila on May 25, 2009 and immediately assumed his post as he started working with the TCP2 PMO Staff at the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

TCP2 is actually Mr. Tamura's fourth JICA assignment outside of Japan and the second in the Philippines as well as with NIA. He was first dispatched to the country as JICA Expert for Dam Safety in a project with NIA in December 1984 to March 1987. "I am very surprised with how Manila landscape changed since I left," exclaimed Mr. Tamura.

A Professional Engineer in Irrigation and Drainage and in Comprehensive Technical Management, Mr. Tamura has been working with the MAFF for the past 33 years, right after finishing his college education from Obihiro University in Hokkaido, Japan. In his extensive working stint with MAFF, Mr. Tamura has planned, implemented and managed numerous agricultural and rural development projects in Japan and Asian countries.

Mr. Tamura is scheduled to visit the Project sites in the coming weeks, before the TCP2 Mid-Term Review begins.

Official Travels and Meetings

National Orientation and Planning Workshop for Operations	May 27-29
Mr. Hiromasa Suzuki and Mr. Takamitsu Matsuo, Barotac Viejo and Mambusao RISs, Region VI, organizational setting study	June 2-4
Mr. Nariaki Tamura, Mr. Suzuki, Mr. Matsuo, Mr. Bayani Ofrecio, and Ms. Heartie Navarro, Masalip and Amburayan RISs, Region I, organizational setting study and FFS	June 8-9
Mr. Tamura, Mr. Suzuki, Mr. Matsuo, Mr. Ofrecio, and Ms. Navarro, Nayom-Bayto and Bucao RISs, Region III, organizational setting study	June 10-11
Mr. Tamura, Mr. Suzuki, and Mr. Matsuo, Saug-Libuganon and Padada RISs, Region XI, organizational setting study	June 15-17
NIA 46th Anniversary Week Celebration	June 22-26
Mid-Term Review, Joint Evaluation Team (Japanese Side and Philippine Side) and PMO Staff	June 22-July 10

PMO administers Perception Survey; holds Open Discussion in 8 Project Sites

By Geralyn Rigor, PMO

In preparation for the forthcoming Mid-Term Review for TCP2, the PMO Staff, along with respective NISO Staff, conducted a structured Perception Survey and an Open Discussion among IA representatives in the eight Project sites on May 13-19, 2009.

The PMO Staff carried out the survey on May 13-15 for Region I and Region VI. Mr. Hiromasa Suzuki, Project Coordinator, Mr. Takamitsu Matsuo, Training and Monitoring Expert, Ms. Nenita Ramon and Ms. Geralyn Rigor, Project Research Assistants, headed to Region I for the Amburayan and Masalip RISs while Ms. Heartie Navarro and Ms. Elisa Jeciel, NIA-CO IDD Regional Monitors, went to Barotac Viejo and Mambusao RISs in Region VI.

On May 17-19, Ms. Ramon and Ms. Rigor proceeded to Region XI for the Saug-Libuganon Left and Padada RISs while Ms. Navarro and Ms. Jeciel proceeded to Bucao and Nayom-Bayto RISs in Region III on May 18-19.

NISO IDO Staff were the main facilitators of the survey while the other staff and PMO staff gave support and assistance to the IA representatives. An average of three IA representatives (composed of BoDs, officers, members) was present during the conduct of the survey and the open discussion. Most, if not all, of the IAs in each Project site attended the activity.

The survey was undertaken to gather necessary data to be included in the advance information to be sent to Tokyo, Japan for the JICA evaluators who will be here in the Philippines on June 22 to July 10, 2009. Moreover, the positive or negative comments and testimonies from the farmer-representatives during the open discussion served as additional source of insight and information for the PMO and NISO Staff on the project's impact as perceived by its beneficiaries.



IA representatives from Masalip (above) and Padada (below) RISs during the Perception Survey

TCP2 up for Mid-Term Review

By Nenita Ramon, PMO

TCP2 was launched on October 1, 2007 and will run till December 2010. As TCP2 approaches the end of the first half of its implementation, the changes and developments that happened need to be reviewed and evaluated in order to determine its effect among the beneficiaries and the necessary steps to be taken for its second half must be identified.

Since the project's implementation one and a half years ago, several IA strengthening activities have already been conducted. Minor rehabilitation works were completed; capability building programs such as trainings and workshops were held; and demonstration farms have been established in all pilot NISs. These activities, except for minor rehabilitation works, will continuously be pursued till the end of the Project.

According to the Records of Discussion, a mid-term review shall be jointly conducted by both JICA and NIA to review and evaluate the relative progress of the Project at this stage. Come June 22 to July 10, 2009, a Joint Mid-Term Review Team composed of JICA and NIA representatives will visit all the field offices and project sites. Four (4) representatives from JICA side will come from Japan and two (2) Philippine side representatives will come from non-TCP2 NIA regional offices.

Advance information through the Mid-Term Report, including the data gathered from the Perception Survey, has already been sent to Tokyo, Japan. The project is fervently hoping for favorable and invaluable results from this review and evaluation mission.

Saug-Libuganon Left RIS begins new AWD demo farm, expands area





Left: An orientation workshop was held for farmer-cooperators on April 27, 2009.

Right: New batch of farmer-cooperators received seeds

By Vincent Buenaventura, IDO, SALLE RIS, Region XI

With the relative success of Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) method of Water Saving Technology demonstrated in the first pilot IA, Saug-Libuganon Left RIS decided to continue practicing the technology and even expand the area of demonstration farms in the coming cropping seasons.

For the Wet Cropping Season 2009, AWD will be practiced in another randomly selected IA area and will be rotated until all IAs have experienced the technology. The fund provided by JICA utilized in the first round of demonstration is being used as a revolving fund by the NIS. This time, JICA provided only a minimal amount for the purchase of seeds, perch tubes and meter sticks. Other farm inputs needed were purchased out of the revolving fund.

A total area of 32.57 hectares with 21 farmer-cooperators will be covered by the second round demonstration of AWD.

An orientation workshop for the new set of farmer-cooperators was already conducted. At this point, seed sowing was done during the 3rd week of May.

Furthermore, SALLE RIS Staff are making sure that the AWD in the original demonstration farm area will still be continued and monitored every cropping season.

SNAPS

Photo highlights of major TCP2 events and activities for 2009.



TCP2 held the 2nd Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) Meeting and annual Project Implementers Workshop (PIW) on February 13, 2009. The JCC, attended by key officials from NIA-CO, JICA and representatives from Department of Agriculture and Embassy of Japan, aimed for the approval of the TCP2 Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). The PIW, on its second year as well, was organized to prepare the detailed plan of each Project site based on the approved AIP.

Engr. Bayani P. Ofrecio, NIA-CO IDD Irrigators Development Chief, delivered a presentation on "Effective Communication and Feedback" as part of the Skills Development Training in Community Organization and Mobilization for NIA Staff. The training, held on February 16-21, 2009 at the NIA Training Center in Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet was attended by Field Staff (IDO and Water Masters) from Regions 1, 3 and 11.





PMO, Regional and Field Staff (Regions 1, 3, 6 and 11) pose for a posterity photo after three days of intensive presentations and discussions on the NIA-JICA TCP2 PDM, Implementation Plan, Review of Year 1 Accomplishments, and Preparation of Detailed Plan of Operations for Year 2 during the TCP2 Review and Planning Workshop held on March 11-13, 2009 at Camelot Hotel in Quezon City.

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Myths of Bucao Soils

By Hiromasa Suzuki, PMO



Botolan, Zambales in 1992.

In June 1991, a series of Mt. Pinatubo eruptions generated a devastating amount of volcanic ash, lava, and massive earthquake. The sky became dark in daytime, and ash fell over 100km from the mountain. After the eruption, volcanic ash flowed massively together with rain and that *lahar* flushed away many towns in Zambales, Pampanga and Tarlac.

The outburst rendered Bucao RIS in Botolan, Zambales as among the irrigation systems heavily affected.

Due to this natural disaster, the system suspended its operation for almost 10 years. Average production of rice dropped from 80 cavans/ha (1991) to 60 cavans/ha (2007).

Since then, people had believed that Bucao system was encountering the following: a) Acidic soil, b) Acidic irrigation water, c) Lack of Zinc, d) Hydrogen sulfide gas emission produced by soil.

Moreover, farmers had theorized that they needed to retain standing water at all times during planting season and applying fertilizer twice during the season was the best farming technique. After I first interviewed Bucao farmers, I have also believed these myths.

But why are these myths? Because all of these factors were proven to be wrong after the TCP2 project team and PhilRice scientists examined the paddy fields on February 19, 2009.

The results showed these facts: a) both soil and water have neutral pH levels, b) the gas from paddy fields may be methane gas, c) the soil has lesser oxygen, therefore d) rice production was affected by reductive soil disorder.

After knowing the scientific factors for low productivity, our strategy for water management and rice farming practice have to change: a) Drying the soil is good to provide oxygen to the paddy and the soil. Therefore, b) Alternate Wetting and Drying method is suited for the area. c) Deep plowing is good to agitate top soil and lower layer. d) Multi-time fertilizing (total volume of fertilizer same as now) is effective to avoid nitrogen loss.

Otherwise, even if NIA provides ideal volume of water to the paddy, we cannot expect improvement of productivity. Then, everybody's effort for better water distribution will not be fruitful.

I would like to emphasize that "knowing facts is the way to knowing counter measures". Bucao system's case is just a tip of the iceberg but also big step towards better production and management.

Now, we already harvested dry crop in project sites. And we have plans to alter the farm management system in Bucao RIS for the next dry season. In that time, I expect to see better harvest with new water/plant management scheme. When that time comes, we could see this change, and then I can say: "Myth busted!"





Left: Minus-One Element Technique from PhilRice
Right: Dr. Nobuyuki Kabaki, JICA expert at PhilRice, measures the acidity level of irrigation water in Bucao.