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p. 6, Study mission, Japan



p. 7, Meeting, Lao PDR



p. 7, BCBN, ROK

Establishing centers of excellence

The centers of excellence (COE) initiative was conceived in 2008 at the annual APO Governing Body Meeting (GBM) and Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM). In his closing remarks at the WSM, Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka gave an assurance that the Secretariat would take the COE from concept to reality. The Secretariat then conducted a series of in-house studies to define the criteria and roles of COE with input from NPOs. A COE meeting was convened at the Secretariat, 12–13 February, with three NPO heads from Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand; four liaison officers from Japan, the Republic of Korea, Republic of China, and Singapore; the Deputy Director-General of the National Productivity Council (NPC), India; and one Malaysian adviser.

Secretary-General Takenaka expressed his appreciation to the three NPO heads for their presence at this “informal, small, but very important meeting.” In outlining the background, he explained that the criteria for selecting attendees was their “intention and capacity” to act as COE and said, “I hope very much that this method will be supported by those countries represented here as well as those that are not.” Describing the meeting as ad hoc, multilateral, and consultative, he emphasized that it was a discussion-cum-brainstorming session. Two additional topics were added for discussion: the response to the economic crisis and new impact evaluation system.



MPC Director General Dato' Nik Zainiah

The first COE session was chaired by Malaysia Productivity Corporation Director General Dato' Nik Zainiah Nik Abdul Rahman, who reviewed the background to the meeting, adding that, “This consultative approach will help the APO realize issues within member countries and give ideas and feedback to do its job more effectively.” Research and Planning Department Director Mukesh Bhattarai then gave a presentation that defined a COE as “a formally designated body of knowledge and experience in a specific subject area.” He said that, “For the APO and NPOs, the COE concept could play a catalytic role in identifying and sharing expertise.” Another role of a COE would be helping NPOs develop potential areas of excellence with other NPO assistance facilitated by the APO. NPO representatives gave presentations on their areas of excellence, followed by detailed discussions resulting in a consensus on the pilot COE.



DAP President Kalaw

Development Academy of the Philippines President Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr., chaired the second session on practical steps for launching a COE. A cluster approach was suggested to exploit the strengths of other NPOs in the same area for greater synergy. SPRING Singapore was then proposed as the first pilot COE on business excellence. “SPRING Singapore is more than happy to take the role of the pilot COE,” said Singapore Liaison Officer Wong Wai Meng. The other NPOs promised full support under APO coordination.

The meeting then discussed the current global financial crisis and APO impact evaluation. Executive Director

CONTENTS

- 2....p-Leader—Thailand
- 3....Comment board
- 4....Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques
- 5....How to share productivity gains
- 6....Environment-friendly farming in Japan
- 6....Quiz winners
- 7....Program calendar
- 7....APO/NPO update
- 7....SG meets Lao PDR Prime Minister
- 7....BCBN from Republic of Korea
- 8....Philippine APO grantees
- 8....GBM announcement



Productivity roles in the financial crisis

Dr. Phanit Laosirirat

Executive Director, Thailand Productivity Institute

Most people assume that the topic of productivity does not have high priority during the current financial crisis. Similarly, workers may not be concerned with doing a good job when the job itself is in jeopardy, nor will they function at a high level of productivity. This in turn can negatively impact any organization's productivity and long-term efficiency. On the contrary, some say that this is a perfect opportunity for those in the quality field to lead the company to success. The quality department is in a perfect position to help senior management focus on cost-saving projects. However, immediate actions should focus on quick-hit opportunities rather than overall productivity improvement programs. Nichols and Houry (*Quality Progress*, 2009; January: 8–9) suggested that companies should shift from projects centered on metrics improvement to those focusing on improving poor quality. They should also accelerate projects that deliver hard dollars versus those that drive productivity improvements.

“At the national level, productivity has played a very important role in the financial crisis.”

Does this mean that long-term productivity improvement projects should take a back seat? On the contrary, the views above only suggest that short-term quality objectives may be adjusted to respond to the immediate crisis. Whatever course of action is taken, short or long term, organizations should constantly focus on quality improvement. We all know that the long-term result of quality improvement is productivity growth. If an organization continuously improves the quality of products and services, a crisis should be avoided. This view is reflected in the results of a recent survey by the American Society for Quality. The January 2009 issue of the journal *Quality Progress*



reports on a quick poll conducted on its Web site asking: “Could quality methods and principles have prevented the current financial crisis?” The majority (approximately 71.2%) of respondents said: “Yes.” It is not difficult to rationalize this position among quality practitioners. Specifically, quality principles are characterized as result and target oriented, customer focused, proactive, lean, accountable, and participative. When we add two important components of productivity principles, the environment (society) and ethics, quality could easily protect us from the worst fallout from the current financial crisis.

At the national level, productivity has played a very important role in the financial crisis. But productivity is not a culprit. The real culprit is the imbalanced economic development of the leading economies and can be simply explained using the demand-supply relationship. Productivity has been regarded as one of the most important factors in global economic growth since the last Industrial Revolution and particularly in the IT Revolution of the last two decades. Because of enormous investments in new technology, productivity levels have increased over the years. Productivity growth, when it is unmatched by real income growth, is the main factor that can lead to a financial crisis. When productivity rises, the production of goods and services (supply) increases as well.

In a healthy economy, production increases must be matched by greater demand for goods and services. The main source of demand is real wages that allow people to exercise their purchasing power. A healthy economy requires a balance between the demand for and supply of goods and services. When supply is greater than demand, one result is unemployment. On the other hand, inflation occurs when demand exceeds supply.

“Productivity-based gain-sharing is necessary for any economy to receive the full benefits of long-term productivity growth.”


In normal situations, the market mechanism ensures that demand increases in proportion to greater supply to maintain an economic balance. This implies that real wages must also increase with productivity growth. In reality, this is not the case. Most countries elect to follow a different path. To increase real wages (purchasing power) or demand, policymakers often opt to allow easy access to money by trimming interest rates while suppressing real wage increases. In his many recent books (for example, *Greenspan's Fraud: How Two Decades of His Policies Have Undermined the Global Economy*, 2005, and *The New Golden Age: A Revolution against Political Corruption and Economic Chaos*, 2009), Ravi Batra has accused the USA of leading this practice. The US Federal Reserve always came out against wage increases. As a result, the US minimum wage, which peaked at US\$10 per hour in 1969 in terms of 2008 prices, is now less than US\$7. Over time, a wage-productivity gap grows larger and creates a situation where supply is greater than demand. Leading economic powers,

especially the USA, have found a way to raise demand to cope with increasing productivity or supply: through debt. Debt increases people's purchasing power by allowing consumers to borrow more. The equation explaining this new economic relationship can be written as

$$\text{Productivity growth} = \text{Real income growth} + \text{Debt.}$$

Batra believes that debt is an artificial way to raise demand. Debt can postpone the problem for some time while economic imbalance builds and accumulates. Without that debt, goods and services will remain unsold and profit will not materialize. In this situation, company profits and shares skyrocket because the biggest beneficiary of productivity growth is companies. However, those are debt-supported profits. Everyone is happy because in the short term everyone wins. A debt-filled economy lasts only as long as consumers can service their debts. Over time, however, the demand-supply gap grows so large that debt servicing become impossible, and consumers start to default on their loans.

This happened when the housing bubble began to burst in 2007. In a chain reaction, the economy crumbles. The worst has yet to come. The housing market collapse and financial institute meltdowns are just the tips of the iceberg. We are talking about an oversupply of all production in the economy.

This is not to say that we should avoid thinking about productivity and methods to increase it. Productivity improvement is still necessary for economic growth that will finally lead to the well-being of the people. However, wealth as the fruit of productivity must be distributed fairly throughout the economy. Productivity-based gain-sharing is necessary for any economy to receive the full benefits of long-term productivity growth. It creates a fair distribution system that ensures sustainable development and cooperation among all sectors of the economy: producers, consumers, labor, and management. The APO has recognized the importance of this issue for many years and has organized various projects on the fair distribution of productivity gains among stakeholders. 



Comment board



*Deputy Director **Thilaka Jayasundara**, National Productivity Secretariat (NPS), Sri Lanka.*

Team leader, observational study mission on Productivity Improvement and Quality Control from Sri Lanka, Japan, 15–21 February, 2009.

This observational study mission (OSM) was conducted as part of the APO's Member Country Support Program (MCSP). One big achievement of the MCSP is that the NPS has built strong partnerships with private companies

while conducting a demonstration program with SMEs. In addition, the NPS developed a group of high-quality consultants as a result of their functioning as understudies to experts deputed by the APO to provide the necessary training and consulting services for NPS staff. This OSM also gave us an opportunity to learn practical knowledge and skills from Japanese SMEs. They demonstrated that small, simple improvements can bring about big changes in productivity. All the mission members absorbed not only knowledge of productivity tools and methods but also the Japanese attitude toward continuous improvement. We are now planning to organize a seminar to share our knowledge and experience with other SMEs in Sri Lanka. Two SME leaders who joined this OSM also told me that they were willing to share their knowledge with other SMEs. I really appreciate the efforts of the APO and Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, which made all the necessary arrangements and provided support for us.

*Deputy Director **Thai Vantha**, EUROTECH Import Export Co., Ltd. Cambodia.*

Participant, multicountry observational study mission on SME Development in the Mekong Region, Japan, 2–7 February 2009.

EUROTECH is an SME producer of bottled water in Cambodia with around 100 employees. In 2007, EUROTECH was selected by the National

Productivity Center of Cambodia as a model company to demonstrate how to implement 5S and kaizen. However, although we have been practicing these two productivity tools I was not sure how well we were doing. By attending this study mission, I could see the gaps between what we were doing and what Japanese companies have done, so that potential areas of improvement in terms of quality and productivity were identified. I am now certain that we will be able to achieve more through more effective 5S and kaizen efforts. This study mission confirmed the usefulness of these tools in helping to enhance quality and productivity. It also inspired me as a manager of EUROTECH. Some management methods of Japanese SMEs that I visited would be applicable to my company. Therefore, I will do my best to practice them to achieve higher levels of productivity.

*Shift Manager **Mahesh Shanker Mutthusamy**, Ceylon Cold Stores PLC, Sri Lanka.*

Participant, training course on the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) for Auditors/Lead Auditors, Malaysia, 14–20 January 2009.

The training course was a face-to-face follow-up to a 2008 e-learning course, which gave me a very clear overview of the ISO22000 standard and its application. The lessons of the e-learning course encouraged me to look at the routine of food-processing operations within my company from a number of different perspectives. The follow-up course conducted in January was a natural extension. The course content included abundant interactive expert presentations, group work, role-playing, and field visits, making it both informative and interesting. In addition, the final examination kept participants focused. I will use my upgraded competence within my company to improve the existing food safety management system. At the same time, I will work with the National Productivity Secretariat to disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired from the project in Sri Lanka, including the development of publications on food safety management written in simple local language for SMEs.



Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Green Productivity—Kelvin Chan

Inspired by the developments during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and Agenda 21, the APO developed the concept of Green Productivity (GP) in 1994 as a strategy for enhancing productivity and environmental performance for overall socioeconomic development. During the APO World Conference on GP in Manila in 1996, it was declared that, “Environmental protection should be promoted without sacrificing productivity.” The GP concept thus allows both large and small companies to improve their environmental performance even though many expressed initial concerns about productivity and profitability.

GP addresses all elements of a business system, including inputs, processes, output, and waste (including environmental pollution), while ensuring that products or services meet customers’ requirements and productivity is maintained or improved (Figure 1). The GP methodology comprises six steps and 13 tasks and is based on the continuous application of the PDCA cycle to achieve kaizen at the workplace (Figure 2). What makes the approach special is that it includes an investigative walk-through process of the entire workplace and reviews resource utilization in each step in terms of the material or energy balance.

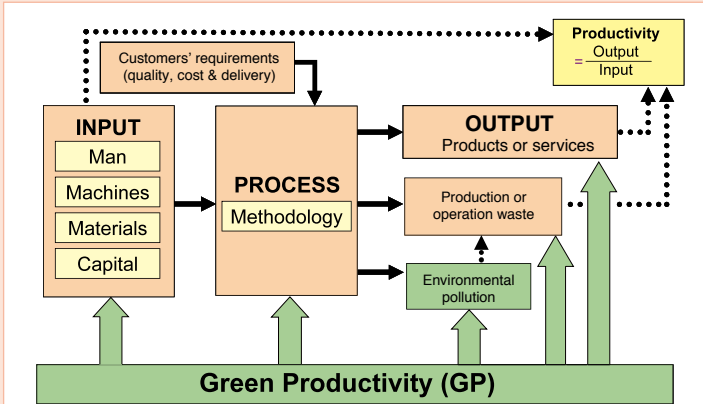


Figure 1. GP addresses all elements of a business system and helps improve productivity.
Source: Teian Consulting International, Singapore.

GP involves the application of various environmental techniques like the 3Rs (recycle, reuse, and recovery), eco-mapping, waste stream segregation, energy conservation, input material changes, design for environment, life cycle assessment, etc. Management and productivity techniques such as value engineering, 5S, 7 wastes, benchmarking, total productive maintenance, cost and benefit analysis, process flow charts, cause and effect diagrams, Pareto diagrams, etc. can also be easily incorporated.

GP helps to reduce the cost of operations through better resource utilization, reduced long-term liabilities, compliance with government regulations, and improved corporate image that will eventually impact profitability. For example, an automobile manufacturing company implemented more than

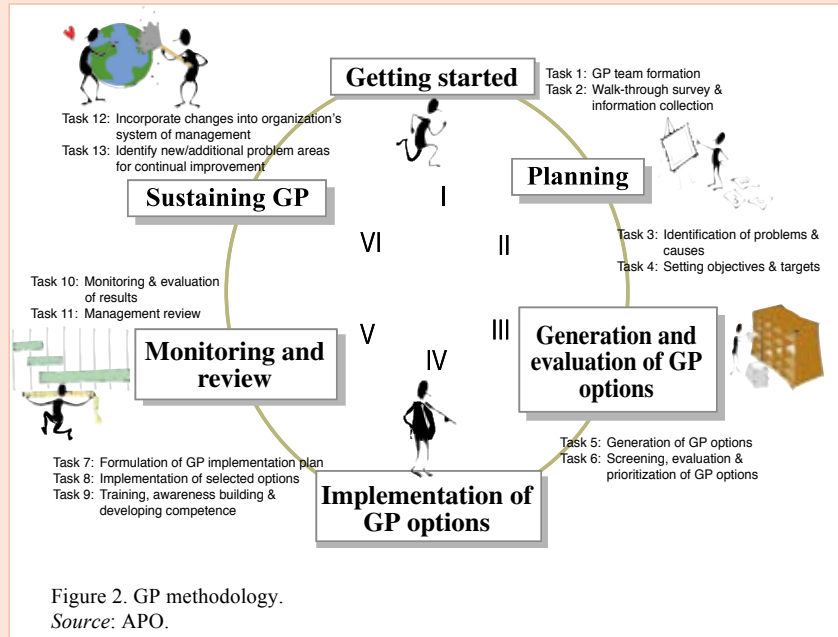



Figure 2. GP methodology.
Source: APO.

20 GP options that resulted in a financial gain of US\$5 million in less than two years. At the same time, GP creates opportunities to involve employees in initiatives that improve the value-added activities of the company and make the workplace more effective and safer. Over the years, in addition to manufacturing, GP has also been successfully implemented in the service, agriculture, and community development sectors.

GP can be implemented either as a “driver” or as a “tool.” The former requires companies to set up a companywide body to manage the program and to set objectives for deployment throughout the organization. When used as a tool, companies can form GP teams to work on assigned facilities or processes. For effectiveness, GP activities should be integrated with other management or productivity efforts. Successful implementation of GP activities requires strong commitment and leadership from the top management. Companies also need to have strong implementation infrastructure and a thorough understanding of the concept of GP and its tools and techniques. 



Contributed by Director and Principal Consultant Kelvin Chan, Teian Consulting International Pte Ltd, Singapore, resource speaker for the APO training course on the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Basic Program.

p-Glossary



To provide easy reference to productivity-related terms including methodologies, tools, and techniques, the APO developed the p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org). Definitions and explanations of GP and other relevant tools mentioned in this article such as the 3Rs, 5S, 7 wastes, etc. are given in the p-Glossary.

How to share productivity gains

“**E**xpansion of employment; cooperation between labor and management; and the fair distribution of the fruits of productivity among labor, management, and consumers,” were the three guiding principles of the Japanese productivity movement, which started in 1955. Japan achieved remarkable economic growth based on these principles. However, severe international competition and deteriorating domestic economy have led to changes in the employment system, working environment, personnel management practices, and labor relations in Japanese enterprises. The study meeting on the Fair Distribution of Productivity Gains among Stakeholders held in Japan, 19–23 January, examined the latest developments in productivity gain-sharing globally based on the Japanese experience. Eighteen participants representing employers’ federations, government, and unions, along with executives, management consultants, and academics, attended.

Hosei University Professor Hiroyuki Fujimura reported that the “new era of declining population since 2005” had been manifested in a shortage of labor in the long term, necessitating the employment of older persons in the workforce, and in an increase in the number of “nonregular employees.” Trade union membership in Japan has dropped sharply, although joint consultation is still undertaken in both unionized and nonunionized workplaces. Interpersonal relationships based on mutual trust are now under strain given current economic difficulties.

Dr. Peter Gahan of Monash University, Australia, presented three forms of gain-sharing: wages, financial participation, and nonfinancial benefits. Nonfinancial benefits include flextime arrangements, work and family initiatives, employee security and flexibility, and work and job sharing. Director Subramaniam Thiagarajan, National Trades Union Congress, Singapore, cited Singapore’s union-management response to the present financial crisis as three-fold: cutting costs to save jobs; investment in upskilling and reskilling to prepare for the eventual



JFE Steel Corporation union leader explaining its wage system

upturn; and not losing sight of the long term. The study meeting identified key challenges facing member countries: how to link performance with productivity; and how to diffuse productivity gains in companies to ensure that wage increases do not lag too far behind productivity growth.

The participants agreed that key ingredients for successful gain-sharing plans were simplicity, clear links between pay and targets, strong leadership, and involvement of top management and union leaders. APO and NPO training courses, along with technical support, could address the major difficulties and constraints associated with sharing not only productivity gains but also the pain associated with the current economic crisis.

Site visits to the Federation of JFE Steel Workers’ Union and Tokyu Department Store Group Labor Union demonstrated how management and labor can compromise on work-life balance, gender equality, different working styles of older workers, and transparency in wage systems through open dialogue. ☺

Establishing centers of excellence.....

(Continued from page 1)

Dr. Phanit Laosirirat, Thailand Productivity Institute, presented a summary of his article entitled “Productivity roles in the financial crisis” (*see pages 2–3 for full text*). He detailed how the economic crisis presented NPOs with the opportunity to convince companies, especially SMEs, of the effectiveness of productivity improvement methods. The meeting confirmed that the APO and NPOs should continue to promote productivity improvement, particularly in the field of capacity building, market access, and strengthening SMEs during the economic crisis.

The impact evaluation discussion began with Agriculture Director Song Hyun Choi’s presentation explaining the current and newly proposed project evaluation system. Currently, the Secretariat conducts onsite and online impact evaluations. The proposal is for third-party professionals to be designated to conduct future evaluations. This would necessarily require a high level of cooperation and involvement by NPOs. Delegates expressed their agreement with this and promised to provide the necessary support. Deputy Director General U.S. Singh, NPC, India, suggested the possibility of a cross-evaluation of projects among NPOs. He explained that a team of experts from one NPO could be deputed to another country to evaluate projects and vice versa.

The two-day session concluded with Secretary-General Takenaka thanking delegates for their input. Liaison Officer Wong of SPRING Singapore responded by thanking the Secretariat for hosting



Mr. Singh (L) suggesting NPO involvement in project evaluation

the meeting, which he described as a cross-fertilization of ideas. He added, “On the Singapore side, we are honored to receive your support to be the first pilot COE and to start this new APO initiative.” In an interview with the *APO News*, Kalaw commented that, “The important feature of this meeting is the process of consultation. I am sure that this process involving NPOs will make future decisions by the GBM and WSM closer to the reality in member countries.” The meeting reflected the APO spirit of mutual cooperation, and efforts to strengthen the cooperative network will continue. ☺

Environment-friendly farming in Japan

With the emergence of consumer power in the food market comes the demand for safer, better-quality food products. The need to produce food free from hazardous chemicals in environment-friendly systems is changing the entire farm production landscape. Farmers are becoming more responsive to consumers by switching to organic farming and other environmentally acceptable techniques. Japan is at the forefront of this change, with the government proactively promoting natural farming technologies. The APO organized a multicountry observational study mission on Environment-friendly Farming Technologies to Japan, 2–7 February, in collaboration with the Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry.

The highlights of the mission were field visits allowing participants to observe environment-friendly farming technologies including organic fertilizers and biofertilizers and the biopesticide production and marketing processes. Participants also witnessed the collective efforts of farmers, private-sector enterprises, NGOs, and local governments to change to organic farming methods. “Through those site visits, we acquired new knowledge and technology updates on organic farming, marketing systems, and agricultural cooperatives,” commented Regional Technical Director Dr. Joyce S. Wendam, Department of Agriculture, the Philippines.

Participants visited the National Agricultural Research Center in Tsukuba, which develops systematized production techniques and sustainability assessment tools for organic agriculture. A dairy farm in Asahi showcased the use of whole crop rice silage and production of organic fertilizers from farm waste. Wagoen Agricultural Producers’ Cooperative Corporation follows the natural cycle farming model from production to marketing. Yamada Biomass Plant in Katori demonstrated the use of manure and farm waste to produce methane for use in vehicles and as liquid and organic fertilizer.



A member of Deco-Pon Farmers’ Union demonstrating eco-farming techniques

The visit to Deco-Pon Farmers’ Union Co., Ltd. in Narita, Chiba prefecture, was particularly appreciated since it illustrated the importance of strategic partnerships among farmers, the private sector, and consumers. Farmers grow safe, delicious agricultural products that are distributed by Deco-Pon, a private company, to its customers who “invest” a specified amount in the union and receive fresh produce delivered to their doors as “interest.” “That provided a great example of how farmers can secure a market for their produce,” commented Director Dr. Arabinda K. Padhee, Department of Agriculture, Orissa State, India. “Deco-Pon also showed that farming can be enjoyable and promising. The financial growth of the company was both remarkable and sustainable.”

At the end of the mission, participants intended to disseminate what they had learned. They suggested follow-up action in the form of technology demonstrations, national seminars, training courses, presentations at farmer field schools, and observational visits to other countries. The use of print and broadcast media was suggested for these. 🌱

Quiz winners

The 2008 December issue of the *APO News* featured a quiz as a bit of year-end fun. The questions concerned the major APO activities reported in the *APO News*. Of the 70 entries, 35 had 100% correct answers (answers are available on the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org). To decide the prizewinners, APO Secretariat staff conducted a lucky draw. We would like to congratulate all the winners, who will receive their prizes soon. We also thank everyone who took part in the quiz and responded to our survey with suggestions for improvements and productivity messages. A sample message was: “Share the wonders of productivity through the APO,” by Dr. Vinay Kumar, India.



Winners of diary sets

M. Singaperumal (India)
Rahul Kirkire (India)
Rajaumbang Saragih (Indonesia)
Hamid Shabangiz (IR Iran)
Soo Chul Park (Republic of Korea)
Bindra Devi Shakya (Nepal)
Naveed Akbar (Pakistan)
Safdar Hussain (Pakistan)
Myra Atienza-Tenorio (Philippines)
Maribeth Delasalas Gamao (Philippines)

Winners of three APO publications

S. Shanmugam (India)
Vinay Kumar (India)
S. Dharmalingam (India)
S. Vijayendiran (India)
Satrio Noegroho (Indonesia)
Mohammad Reza Yousefipour (IR Iran)
Yap Yun Fung (Malaysia)
Jitendra Lohani (Nepal)
Cherryl Dela Luna Ortega (Philippines)
Tran Quang Chu (Vietnam)

Winners of APO T-shirts

Md. Khaleduzzaman (Bangladesh)
S. Tamarasi (India)
Hardadi Lukito (Indonesia)
Fatemeh Mina Razi (IR Iran)
Amireh Nikkhah (IR Iran)
Seyed Reza Navabi Qamsari (IR Iran)
Muhammad Syed UI Haque (Pakistan)
Faisal Rafique (Pakistan)
Gilbert Hu (Singapore)
P.V.V.U. Perera (Sri Lanka)

Program calendar

Indonesia

Workshop on Planning and Management of Rural-based Agroprocessing Enterprises, 11–15 May

► Objective: To review the performance of current rural-based agroprocessing enterprises in member countries, enhance knowledge of participants, and train them to plan and manage rural-based agroprocessing enterprises.

► Participants: Officers and staff of industry associations, governmental organizations, NGOs, NPO consultants, and academics involved in the planning, development, and/or management of agroprocessing projects.

e-Learning Course

Energy Auditing (based on the Global Development Learning Network of the World Bank platform)

Phase 1: 25–28 May for Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia;

Phase 2: 15–18 June for India, IR Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan;

Phase 3: 7–10 July for Cambodia, Fiji, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

► Objectives: To train participants in the concept, principles, and fundamental elements of energy auditing including how to carry out energy audits in industries and buildings.

► Participants: Energy professionals, industry managers especially from SMEs, building engineers/architects, energy managers/consultants, and energy auditors.

Kindly contact your NPO for details of future activities, including eligibility for participation. The project details along with the address of your NPO are available from the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

APO/NPO update

New APO Director for Bangladesh

Mr. Dewan Zakir Hussain, Secretary, Ministry of Industries, was appointed APO Director for Bangladesh, w.e.f. 2 February 2009.

New APO Liaison Officer for Fiji

Mr. Samuela Namosimalua, Acting Director, Labour Policy & Productivity, Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment, was appointed APO Liaison Officer for Fiji, w.e.f. 2 February 2009. His e-mail address is: snamosimalua@labour.gov.fj.

New APO Liaison Officer for Pakistan

Mr. Ejaz Rasul Chaudhry, General Manager, National Productivity Organization, was appointed APO Director for Pakistan, w.e.f. 2 February 2009.

The APO News is soliciting contributed articles on productivity endeavors, rewarding experiences during and after APO projects, and/or encouraging and inspiring examples of the productivity mindset in action, which will provide new ideas and energy to the dissemination of the productivity movement in member countries. Those whose articles are accepted for publication will receive an APO T-shirt. If you would like to share your valuable experiences, please contact Information Officer Sunju Lee at the APO Secretariat (slee@apo-tokyo.org).



APO Secretary-General meets Lao PDR Prime Minister Bouasone



(L-R) Takenaka and Prime Minister Bouasone

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka visited Lao PDR in conjunction with the national workshop on the Development of the One District, One Product (ODOP) Movement which was supported by the APO and implemented by the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Office, the NPO for Lao PDR, 21–23 January 2009. During his stay in Lao PDR, Secretary-General Takenaka had a series of meetings with Prime Minister Bouasone and other key stakeholders in the ODOP movement as well as in productivity promotion including Minister of Industry and Commerce Dr. Nam Viyaketh, the former APO Director for Lao PDR, and incumbent APO Director Somdy Immyxai.

BCBN delegates from the Republic of Korea



Dr. Choi (front row, R) receiving Secretariat briefing

Three delegates from the Korea Productivity Center (KPC) visited Japan, 28–30 January, as part of the Bilateral Cooperation Between National Productivity Organizations (BCBN) Program. The delegation was led by Dr. Dong Kyu Choi, KPC Chairman and CEO and APO Director for the Republic of Korea since December 2008. They visited the Secretariat on the afternoon of 29 January after paying a courtesy call on Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development President Tsuneaki Taniguchi. They received departmental briefings on major APO programs and activities, followed by a detailed introduction to the Green Productivity Program. In 2009, the APO expanded the scope of BCBN to include sponsored visits by high-level officials, including APO directors and policymakers, allowing them the opportunity to observe firsthand the productivity movements in other member countries and visit the APO Secretariat for information exchange.

Philippine APO grantees meet in Manila and Davao

As part of the strategy to harness APO alumni as partners in the productivity movement, the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), through its APO Liaison Unit and Regional Operations Group, held two APO Grantees' Forums: the first was in Manila on 29 October 2008; and the second in Davao on 5 December 2008. They provided venues for APO alumni to exchange knowledge from APO projects on productivity and quality applications and give updates on follow-up activities taken domestically.

The forum in Manila was held at the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel for Luzon-based APO alumni and experts from the past five years. It was attended by 49 participants representing government agencies, academia, industry associations and chambers, the media, DAP alumni, and NGOs. Three grantees gave presentations. University of the Philippines Professor Elvira Zamora, the national expert for the APO project on Management of Technology in SMEs, explained key issues and company-specific experiences. General Manager Dr. Antonio J. Pineda, Isuzu Cebu, Inc., the national expert for the APO research on Innovation and Competitiveness, highlighted the competitiveness ranking of the country and cited areas for improvement. Mt. Mogan Resources and Development Corporation President Jose O. Carino, an APO grantee who attended the study mission to Switzerland on Quality and Innovation, shared his company's experience in pursuing higher quality and innovation. During the open forum, APO Alternative Director and DAP President Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr., commended the speakers and participants for describing the productivity and quality endeavors in their own organizations, client organizations, and other venues.



Ambi (L) with the plaque of appreciation given by APO Liaison Officer Carlos A. Sayco, Jr. (R)

The forum for Mindanao grantees was held at the Grand Men Seng Hotel in Davao, the largest city on the island of Mindanao. Twenty-nine APO grantees from the public and private sectors were in attendance. Provincial Director Ma. Belenda Q. Ambi, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had attended an APO workshop on Biomass/Waste Utilization. Subsequently, she initiated several projects, conducted eco-briefings, and coordinated with local government units to respond to the perennial concerns of citizens regarding energy and the utilization of biomass waste.

DTI-XI Regional Director Marizon S. Loreto presented several innovations conducted in her agency through the implementation of the ISO9000 Quality Management System (QMS). With QMS adoption, Region XI (southern Mindanao) has become more efficient, focused, market driven, and development oriented in dealing with client welfare and protection. DTI Provincial Director Teolulo T. Pasawa, a grantee of the APO study meeting on Learning Organizations, explained how APO member countries had adopted the learning organization strategy in the public and private sectors. He also introduced various approaches and methods to facilitate adoption of the strategy for attaining business/organizational excellence.



Participants and DAP staff at the APO Grantees' Forum in Manila

The forum also created the APO Mindanao Core Group, which will participate in the planning of productivity and development projects with the DAP in which grantees are expected to serve as consultants or resource persons. ☺

Contributed by APO Liaison Unit Head Edna B. Tupas, Development Academy of the Philippines.

The APO Grantees' Forum is one of eight APO alumni bodies that play an important role in generating multiplier effects in national and regional productivity networks. For more information on each alumni body and its activities, please go to our Web site (www.apo-tokyo/alumni/).

Sri Lanka to host 51st GBM

The 51st Session of the Governing Body Meeting (GBM) will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 20–22 April 2009. Sri Lanka has hosted five Workshop Meetings of Heads of NPOs since it joined the APO in 1966, but this will be the first GBM to be convened in that country. The National Productivity Secretariat (NPS) will host approximately 70 delegates comprising APO directors and their advisers from 19 member countries, observers from various national agencies and international organizations, and APO Secretariat staff.

The Governing Body, the supreme organ of the APO, meets annually to elect the new APO chair and vice chairs; receive the Secretary-General's report and the auditor's financial report; set directions for the ensuing fiscal year's program; and approve the budget and financial guidelines. This meeting will also act as a venue for exchanging information and views on critical issues facing the productivity movement through country presentations. This year's theme of the presentations is "Productivity and the Global Financial Crisis," which will provide guidelines for repositioning the productivity movement to help member countries to address the current global turmoil.