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Measuring impact for further improvement

To improve project planning and implementation, the APO seeks feedback from participants and organizations who have taken part in its projects or received services. In 2007, the Secretariat began evaluating the impact of APO training courses via online survey questionnaires to gauge the extent to which participants utilized the knowledge and skills they had acquired. This was extended to include e-learning courses in 2008.

This year, the APO Secretariat has introduced new evaluation measures as a follow-up to suggestions made at the recent APO Governing Body Meeting (GBM) and Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM) to make evaluation reports more objective and accurate. At the 2009 GBM in Sri Lanka, Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka stated that the new project evaluation method had a three-fold purpose: “greater objectivity; depth of coverage; and NPO involvement.” Secretariat Research and Planning Program Officer Kamlesh Prakash explained that, “This will be achieved by introducing independent third-party evaluations and visiting member countries for onsite evaluations and interviews with NPOs, project participants, and their supervisors. NPOs will coordinate and be more involved in conducting the evaluations.” Prakash coordinated the evaluation process during June and July in collaboration with NPOs and Asian Center Professor Dr. Serafin D. Talisayon, University of the Philippines, who served as the external expert.



Evaluation expert Dr. Talisayon (L) conducting an on-site assessment at Sardi KN, Indonesia

Both multicountry and national projects completed less than three years previously were evaluated. Geographic coverage of the online surveys extended to all APO member countries. However, the field visits and interviews focused on Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, and the Philippines. Project impact was assessed using questionnaires, statistical analysis, interviews, field observations, and firsthand accounts from the projects. “While quantitative items in survey questionnaires are useful for statistical analysis and making generalizations, the results are limited to the categories in the questionnaire. Interviews and firsthand accounts yield insights not anticipated when the surveys were designed,” explained Dr. Talisayon.

Forty multicountry projects and five e-learning courses were selected for evaluation; the latter were only subjected to online surveys. Of 750 sent, 277 were returned, a response rate of 37%. Dr. Talisayon noted that this was a relatively high response since returns from e-mail surveys typically range from 5% to 10%. Questions were under four headings: adequacy of course contents; impact of training; feedback on experts; and transfer of knowledge/multiplier effects. “Participants gave the highest average scores for ‘adequacy of course content.’ It is also clear from the average scores of items under ‘impact of training’ that most participants viewed the courses as beneficial in terms of additional skills, motivation, higher productivity, job satisfaction, and professional development,” reported Dr. Talisayon. Participants regarded e-learning as generally effective despite technical problems experienced by some.

Among national projects, four demonstration companies and four consultancy services under TES were evaluated. Dr. Talisayon and Prakash supplemented the questionnaires with visits to the demonstration companies. Dr. Talisayon noted that, “It is evident from the survey response, site visits, and interviews with managers and staff that the projects benefited the recipient companies. Of the six survey respondents from the recipient companies, two reported a ‘very high’ impact on pro-

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Improving Philippine public-sector productivity for performance excellence

Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr.

President, Development Academy of the Philippines

APO Alternate Director and NPO Head for the Philippines

Public-sector productivity (PSP) has always been considered as a critical component in the drive toward enhanced national competitiveness. To help achieve this, the APO and the national productivity organizations must play active roles.

PSP defined

PSP, as defined by Marc Holzer and Stuart S. Nagel in *Productivity and Public Policy*, is the ratio of government outputs to government inputs; the efficiency and effectiveness of government activities; and/or the added value created with taxpayers' money.

PSP promotion efforts in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) as a government think tank and capacity-building institution promotes “good governance and productivity and quality improvement” in the public and private sectors through education, training, research, and consulting services in partnership with key stakeholders.

Earlier initiatives in promoting PSP

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the DAP was successful in introducing and institutionalizing productivity and quality concepts, tools, and techniques like 5S, quality circles (QCs), basic industrial engineering, labor-management consultation mechanisms, and quality management in the private sector. Numerous organizations were established to help sustain promotional efforts, with many still active today.

While promoting productivity and quality in private companies was relevant because of the impact on their bottom lines, it was not the case in public-sector organizations. PSP was initially promoted in the 1980s through the establishment of work improvement teams, an adaptation of QCs in government agencies. Much of the initial promotional work of the DAP on PSP approaches and technologies can be traced back to the 1970s.

The DAP initiated the Government Productivity Improvement Program from 1988 to 1992, implemented through an interagency Government Productivity Improvement Council, chaired by the



Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). That was followed by the formulation of the National Action Agenda for Productivity from 1995 to 1998, led by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and DAP, with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department of Labor and Employment-National Wages and Productivity Commission.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, a Medium Term National Action Agenda for Productivity (MNAAP) was drafted and implemented by the Philippine Council for Productivity, a public-private-sector partnership, with NEDA as Chair and the DAP as Secretariat. A key program of the MNAAP was the Philippine Quality Award (PQA) patterned after the US Malcolm Baldrige Awards. Republic Act 9013 was enacted to institutionalize the PQA. The awards are conferred annually by the President of the Philippines to honor public- and private-sector organizations that practice effective quality management and have demonstrated outstanding improvements in product/service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance. The DTI is the PQA manager with the DAP and the Philippine Society for Quality as administrators for the public and private sectors, respectively.

Recent developments in PSP

In line with the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan of 2004–2010, the government initiated reforms like the Rationalization Program, which

streamlines government agencies; Procurement Reform Law which modernizes, standardizes, professionalizes, and regulates government procurement; Integrity Development Review, a corruption-prevention tool to assess agencies' corruption-resistance mechanisms and vulnerability to corruption; Integrity Development Action Plan (IDAP), the national anticorruption plan for prevention, education, investigation, enforcement, and strategic partnerships; and Moral Renewal Program, which promotes value formation activities and the enhancement of the IDAP.

In October 2006, a National Summit on Competitiveness was convened by the public and private sectors to improve the country's competitiveness ranking. Among the six competitiveness improvement areas identified, two were related to public-sector productivity: upgrading management expertise in government; and reducing transaction costs and improving transaction flows in government. A National Competitiveness Council was created as a public-private-sector partnership to develop and oversee the implementation of an Action Agenda for Competitiveness, build a culture of excellence, and promote public-private-sector partnerships as a means to achieve these. Among the goals of the Action Agenda for Competitiveness was for all government agencies to have ISO9000-certified quality management systems. With the DAP as a member, a five-agency Government Quality Management Council was created to develop and implement the Government Quality Management Program and ensure that government agencies will be ISO certified by 2010.

Another landmark PSP initiative was the enactment of Republic Act 9485 (Anti-Red Tape Act), requiring government agencies to have a Citizens' Charter, a public document that specifies in clear terms the what, why, where, who, when, and how a service is availed of by citizens. Report card surveys must be periodically conducted to receive citizens' feedback on agency performance. The DAP is one of four agencies tasked by law to ensure compliance.

On the performance measurement side, an Agency Performance Excellence (Apex) Assessment was

conducted by the DAP for the Office of the President on how well 17 government agencies fared in terms of: accomplishment of their mandate; management of their stakeholders, human resources, and financial resources; and their corruption-prevention efforts. Aside from this, the DBM has the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework (OPIF), which measures agency performance in relation to sectoral and societal goals, while the Civil Service Commission has the Office Performance Evaluation System (OPES), which measures individual performance in relation to agency goals. With the recent introduction and pilot-testing of a Performance Governance System using the balanced scorecard approach by the DAP for government agencies under presidential instructions, it appears that the integration of the APEX, OPIF, and OPES into one framework is on the horizon.

Conclusion

The DAP advocates PSP for performance excellence. Its twin focus areas on good governance and productivity and quality can now be harmonized into PSP. Instead of using “anticorruption,” it is now becoming more acceptable

for government agencies to adopt and apply productivity and quality tools and label their programs as part of PSP improvement efforts. The DAP proposes that stand-alone bureaucratic and corruption-prevention reforms being undertaken in the public sector are complementary building blocks, and when twinned with productivity and quality initiatives that are now mandated by law and executive issuances may evolve into a government-wide PSP national reform agenda that will enable public-sector organizations to achieve quality and excellence in serving their mandates and delivering services to their constituents.

With the APO recognizing that the public sector is critical in the productivity and competitiveness drive among member countries, the adoption of PSP as a new thrust area is a welcome development. It is hoped that the APO can evolve a common framework for PSP, building on the study meeting in the Republic of Korea last August where participants and experts shared experiences and insights on the subject. Undoubtedly, PSP is important because it is government that creates a conducive environment for competitiveness to be achieved. 🔄



Comment board



Achara Kuwinpant, *Chulalongkorn University–Global Development Learning Network, Thailand.*

Training Coordinator, APO videoconferencing-based e-learning training courses using the GDLN platform of the World Bank.

“An important and fascinating feature of the APO e-learning courses is that they almost all feature topics that are ‘red hot’ and in line with demands from the current economic and industrial spheres,

e.g., Six Sigma, energy auditing and energy efficiency, ISO, etc. Naturally such courses easily attract the attention of the participants, especially those who are from the private sector. The contents of the courses are what corporations require, and thus the participants recruited are a suitable target audience. It is not surprising then that the participants are very attentive given that they need to apply the tools and methodology acquired to their actual work. The expert design of the courses augments the participants’ intrinsic interest by blending interesting, exciting elements such as videoconferences, group work, field trips, and country presentations. I have observed that the participants become actively involved in brainstorming during group work to create good presentations. Despite the fact that there is no actual prize for winning the ‘best presentation’ accolade, group members still seem to feel elated when their papers win the competition.”

Chairman Nadeem Ahmed Khan, *ROI-School of Excellence Pvt. Limited, Pakistan.*

Participant, study meeting on Knowledge Management in the Service Sector, 15–18 June 2009.

“The meeting was full of new ideas, learning, and discussions. The expert speakers delivered their articles and the concepts of KM in the service sector exceedingly well. In particular, I found Mr. Praba Nair’s presentation on enhancing service excellence through KM very interesting. Mr. Nair introduced many use-

ful methods and models such as the Malcolm Baldrige criteria, strategic knowledge gap analysis, and the service quality gap model. Based on what I learned from the study meeting, I immediately identified a number of quality gaps; including a customer satisfaction gap, conformance gap, design gap, and customer marketing research gap. I am now working on developing quality standards. Another key point of the meeting was the introduction of the APO’s KM framework. We found that the framework covers all aspects of KM implementation in the service sector and also evaluates the KM process step by step. Furthermore, it enables organizational goals to be aligned with KM implementation goals. I believe that this will enhance the capacity of all individuals involved as well as of the organizations they belong to.”

Plant Manager Waheed Ahmad *Capital Food Industries, Islamabad, Pakistan.*

Participant, e-learning course on Exporting Agrifood Products to Emerging Global Markets, Phase 3, 4–6 August 2009.

“It was a wonderful experience to participate in this course. It was aligned precisely with the challenges faced by the agrifood industry in our country. All credit should go to the APO staff members in charge for their continued support during the course. The content of the course was easily understandable, and all the resource persons were proactive. While I had only limited knowledge on halal food products prior to the course, the presentations by Mr. Irfan Sungkar, a resource speaker, provided in-depth information on halal food products and their growing demand in the global market. I am convinced that there is a business opportunity there, so my company has started the application and evaluation process for halal certification. We are also looking forward to producing organic food products and started outsourcing the major raw materials for the production of organic biscuits. The APO must do everything possible to encourage the maximum participation of the food industry in such projects. I would also like to suggest that the APO organize study missions to model industries in nonmember countries in the future. I thank the APO for assisting industry professionals in achieving advanced levels of productivity.”



Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Lean Management—John Parsons

What is lean?

Lean is a systematic, continuous improvement approach that concentrates on creating more value for customers by eliminating activities that are considered waste, i.e., any activity or process that consumes resources and adds cost or time without creating value. Lean applies to the entire organization and supply chain and can provide the foundation for widespread organizational improvement. To “think lean” is to switch from an internal to an external focus. After becoming accepted in the manufacturing industry, lean is increasingly being applied across other sectors from healthcare, retail stores, and banks to offices, call centers, hospitals, and government departments.

What are the origins of lean?

Lean principles had their beginnings in the manufacturing industry in the mid-1950s as the Toyota Production System (TPS). The TPS rejected the belief that productivity could be raised by working “longer, harder, and faster” and instead directed efforts to delivering the right products to the right place at the right time; anything not involved in achieving that objective was deemed suspect waste. Waste covered anything from overproduction to excess waiting to unnecessary process steps. Toyota’s success was truly astonishing as, by the 1980s, the average vehicle took only around 17 hours to build while Mercedes spent as much time simply undertaking rework.

What are the basic principles of lean?

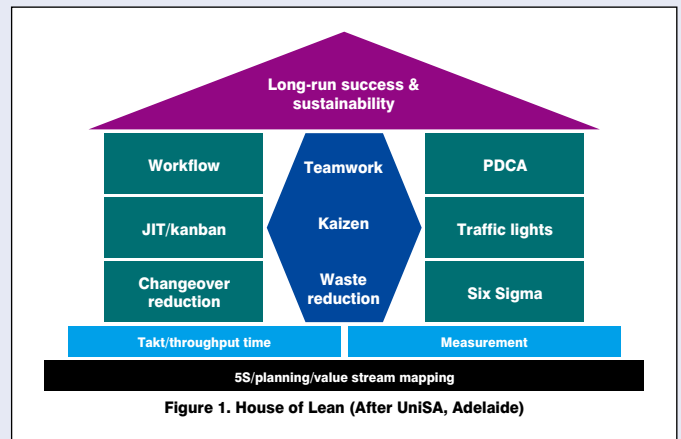
Following the publication of *Lean Thinking: Banish Waste and Create Wealth in Your Corporation* by James P. Womack and Daniel T. Jones, we now tend to view lean as embracing five main principles:

- Specify what creates value from the customer’s perspective, i.e., what the customer is willing to pay for.
- Identify all the steps across the whole *value stream* from raw materials to finished goods which deliver customer value.
- Make sure those steps *flow* better: eliminate delays and interruptions to create a smooth process.
- Let the customer *pull* value and deliver it when the customer wants it, not when you want to supply it.
- Strive for *perfection* by continually removing successive layers of waste.

The principles of lean also apply to the product development process and the provision of service and back office support. Lean thinking can also be extended to product design and development by identifying bottlenecks in those processes that add unnecessary delays.

Building a “House of Lean”

Sustainable lean programs are best built from the ground up. Figure 1 shows the typical elements of the building process.



What benefits and performance improvements does lean bring?

The benefits of lean are proven and well documented. Typical results include:

- Significantly reduced lead times and doubling of inventory turnover;
- Up to 50% reduction in floorspace requirements;
- Up to a 40% increase in overall equipment effectiveness;
- Higher productivity with quality improvements;
- Improved customer satisfaction; and
- Reduced costs and enhanced profitability.

As so many will testify, these are not just potential benefits. Having already increased productivity by more than 20%, the managing director of an electronics company stated, “In the spirit of lean excellence, we are confident that we can raise productivity by a further 5% to 10%.” Similarly, the general manager of a packaging company indicated that, “By challenging traditional practices our productivity has increased, quality has improved, and staff morale is soaring.”



Contributed by Principle of Resource Alternatives Australia John Parsons, resource speaker for the APO training course on the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Advanced Program. Parsons is a fellow of the World Academy of Productivity Science and of the Institute of Management Consultants and has over 25 years of experience as an executive with National Productivity Organizations in three countries.



p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org).

Value addition to agricultural products

World-renowned US investor and businessman Warren Buffett defined value as: “Price is what you pay for, value is what you get.” The definition cautions us against using a simple equation of value and price and gives us food for thought on the topic of value addition in agribusiness, its importance, and the skills and methods to harvest the benefits were the key topics of the APO training course on Value Addition to Agricultural Products held in Suva, Fiji, 22–28 July. It was implemented by the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) with 19 overseas and six local participants.

“In many developing countries here in Asia, we produce a wide variety of agricultural products, but have not yet optimized the economic benefits we can derive from them. This is due in part to inadequate knowledge of appropriate value-adding technologies coupled with poor infrastructure facilities and the absence of coherent policies to support such an undertaking, especially in rural areas,” said Secretariat Senior Agriculture Program Officer Joselito C. Bernardo in explaining the training course background. The five learning modules emphasized broadening the understanding of participants of the importance of value-adding activities as well as enhancing their knowledge and skills in using various value-adding approaches and technologies.

“Value addition to agricultural products is the process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity,” explained Executive Director Reuel K. Virtucio, Punla sa Tao Foundation, the Philippines. Mr. Virtucio also introduced various value-adding technologies such as processing and preservation techniques, dehydration and drying technology, freezing technology, packing, labeling, etc. His session was followed by sessions led by Director Dr. D.B.T. Wijeratne, Ministry of Agriculture Development and Agrarian Service, Sri Lanka, and Professor Navam S. Hettiarachchy, University of Arkansas Fayetteville, USA, all of whom shared their expertise and experiences in methods for farmers, small entrepreneurs, food processors, and others in the supply chain to upgrade the value of agrifood products.

At the end of the seven-day training course, participants agreed that value ad-



Preparing breadfruit for processing

dition is an important concept and approach in today’s business environment where innovation in farming and agrifood processing are important to remain competitive and to optimize returns from an enterprise. It may entail producing a commodity for a special market; changing the form of the commodity before it is marketed; changing how a commodity is packaged and labeled for the market; changing the way a commodity is marketed; or even adding a new enterprise to an existing one. The course also provided ideas and practices on deriving other marketable items or developing new ones from primary products, coproducts, and even from by-products previously considered to be waste.

“Most of all, we learned that value addition creates jobs, which is critically needed at this time when employment has been shrinking due to the economic crisis,” stated Bernardo in his closing remarks. Many participants agreed with his comments and joined him in thanking the resource speakers and the TPAF for making the training course so successful. “We learned a lot and now it is the time for us to utilize it all in practical ways,” said Manager Manoj Tilakarathna, VITI Foods Limited, an agrifood-processing company in Fiji. 🌀

Measuring impact for further improvement..... (Continued from page 1)



Evaluation team at Adarish Printers, Bhopal, India

ductivity and four a ‘high’ impact. This was supported by operational impacts that are clearly visible to both managers and employees.” Regarding the TES projects, he stated, “Recipients were aware of the positive impact but were also cognizant of improvements needed in TES. The majority of improvements suggested were measures to sustain learning and practice beyond the consultancy period.”

In the survey questionnaires, interviews, and field visits, impacts were assessed at individual, organizational, industry, and regional/national levels.

The individual level of the impact was assessed in terms of work performance, professional career, and personal life. The report included examples of individuals whose personal lives and attitudes had improved after being involved in APO projects. The report also described cases demonstrating that the impact at organizational and regional/national levels could be generated “when the right people took part in the right training at the right time and then utilized what they had learned in meaningful, positive ways.”

The report is being finalized for submission to the WSM. It will contain anecdotal quotations, suggestions made in response to open-ended questions, and the expert’s recommendations along with a detailed analysis of the survey questionnaire results. There is a saying that, “If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it.” These impact evaluations will allow the APO to take further steps to improve the quality of projects and activities by confirming where we are. The APO would like to thank all the individuals and NPOs involved in this important process. 🌀

Managerial skills for agribusiness SME entrepreneurs

The requirements of agribusiness are demanding in terms of technical knowledge of farm production, postharvest handling of products, marketing strategies, and time allocation. However, these issues can be addressed if entrepreneurs are equipped with essential management tools and entrepreneurial skills to make them more efficient, productive, and competitive. This was the reasoning for the APO's training course on Improving the Managerial Skills of Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness SMEs held in Sri Lanka, 3–10 August. The Sri Lankan Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Services implemented the course.

Twenty-three participants from the public and private sectors, government, and academia acquired key skills and methods in nine modules: Entrepreneurship and management of agribusiness; Business operations and management; Human resources management and personal entrepreneurship; Marketing of products in domestic and export markets; Enhancing market access; Finance-based decision making; Tools and techniques for productivity and quality improvement; Food safety management for agrifood products; and Food traceability throughout the food chain. The three resource speakers tutored the participants in the processes and methods of performance improvement activities. In addition, to provide hands-on training opportunities, each module featured a practical group exercise. A half-day field visit to a pineapple farm and an agrifood product retail outlet allowed participants to meet local agribusiness entrepreneurs and observe how the skills they learned in the classroom are applied in the real world.

Course feedback was positive, with Chief Resource Person Yong Kok Seng, Managing Director, QMC Resource Centre Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia, commenting that, "Participants enjoyed the course because of their active participation in the numerous group exercises and sharing. Although they appeared anxious as the



Group design of a food safety management plan

course approached the written examination on the last day, it obviously motivated them to concentrate on the training."

Yong, who coordinated the course and conducted the exam, attributed the success to course design and preparation via close communication between the speakers and the APO Secretariat. "The content of each module, group work activities, and pre- and postcourse examinations were developed and streamlined in continuous discussions among resource speakers," explained APO Agriculture Program Officer Dr. Muhammad Saeed. It was also announced that the training modules covered in the course would be published as a manual. The APO believes that this new training manual will assist increasing numbers of agribusiness entrepreneurs to equip themselves with the modern managerial knowledge, tools, and methodologies. 🌀

Cambodian BCBN delegates visit Secretariat

The Bilateral Cooperation Between NPOs (BCBN) Program has been a model of mutual support and cooperation for productivity improvement among APO member countries. The program sponsors visits of high-level officials, policymakers, and opinion leaders from one member country to another to observe firsthand proven productivity policies and projects. Under this scheme, four delegates from Cambodia visited Japan, 24–26 August "to learn more about the Japanese productivity development policy and experience of Japan and the One Village, One Product development of Oita prefecture." The delegation was led by Secretary of State of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME) Chea Sieng Hong, who has been the APO Director for Cambodia since January 2009. Cambodia is the most recent APO member, joining in 2004. The National Productivity Center of Cambodia under the auspices of MIME hosted the workshop meeting of the Heads of NPOs in Siem Reap in October last year.

The BCBN delegates visited the Secretariat on 24–25 August to meet APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka and receive departmental briefings on major APO programs and activities. Secretary Hong commented, "After four departmental presentations, we now have a more complete understanding of APO activities, especially at the Secretariat office. We learned about the history of the APO and the programs each department is involved in. Previously, my experience with the APO was limited to participating in the Governing Body Meeting in Sri Lanka in April. I am surprised at the broad scope of APO programs and the dedication of the Secretariat staff, including the Secretary-General, to improving productivity and making member countries competitive. I am very



Director Hong (L) presenting a memento to Secretary-General Takenaka (R)

proud that Cambodia is an APO member and would like to work with the APO to improve the productivity not only of Cambodia but also of all Asian communities."

The delegates paid a courtesy call on Japan Productivity Center (JPC) President Tsuneaki Taniguchi and were briefed on JPC activities before calling on Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry on 26 August. They then traveled to Singapore, 27–29 August, to learn about SME-related activities and the country's productivity movement from SPRING Singapore and the Singapore Productivity Association, respectively. 🌀

Program calendar

November

Sri Lanka

Certified Lead Auditors' Training Course on EMS (ISO14001), 2–6 November 2009.

▶ Objective: To train participants to become environmental management system auditors and develop and operate the systems in compliance with ISO14001.

▶ Participants: Selected participants who attended the e-learning course on ISO14001 and performed well.

Republic of China

Workshop on the SME Management Model: Strategies for Sustainable Growth and Competitiveness, 2–6 November 2009.

▶ Objective: To examine the global and regional best practices of SME management and identify and formulate new strategies for the sustainable development of SMEs.

▶ Participants: SME owners, entrepreneurs, or government officials/NPO consultants involved in policymaking for the development of SMEs.

Malaysia

Training course on Development of Productivity Practitioners (DPP): Advanced Program, 2–20 November 2009.

▶ Objective: To equip participants with advanced productivity improvement principles, techniques, and approaches.

▶ Participants: NPO staff who attended DPP: Basic and have been involved in at least two productivity improvement projects or have equivalent knowledge and skills in using productivity tools and techniques.

Japan

Multicountry observational study mission on Successful Cases of Employment Generation in Rural Areas, 10–17 November 2009.

▶ Objective: To enhance participants' knowledge of approaches and strategies for rural employment generation.

▶ Participants: Mid- to top-level policymakers/planners or senior executives of rural community-based organizations, industry associations, SMEs, and NGOs involved in planning, developing, and managing activities like rural industrialization and entrepreneurship development for employment generation in rural areas.

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.



*Participants learning about Asiana Airlines' CRM activities
Multicountry observational study mission on Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Republic of Korea, 3–6 August 2009.*



*Discussing productivity promotion strategies
Training course on Development of Productivity Practitioners: Basic Program, Philippines, 6–31 July 2009*

50th WSM to convene in Manila

The 50th Workshop Meeting (WSM) of Heads of National Productivity Organizations (NPOs), the annual program planning meeting of the APO, will take place in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, 20–22 October 2009. The Philippines, one of the eight founding members of the APO, was where the APO Convention was ratified in 1961, followed by the establishment of the organization. The Development Academy of the Philippines, the NPO of the Philippines, will be the host organization.

The WSM brings all NPO Heads and Agriculture delegates together to evaluate the previous year's projects, finalize projects for next year, and undertake strategic planning for the subsequent biennium. With the new biennial budgeting system, the WSM has an important role in reviewing the two-year program plan and presenting it to the GBM for the Directors' decision on total membership contributions. The coming meeting, following the 2007 WSM held in Hanoi, will discuss program plans for 2011 and 2012 and identify priorities. Other major items on the agenda include a statement by the Secretary-General, finalization of the program plan for 2010, and country presentations to share the views and recent experiences of NPOs and Agriculture delegates.

APO/NPO update

New APO Alternate Director for India

Ms. Renu Sharma, Joint Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, was appointed APO Alternate Director for India, w.e.f. 3 June 2009.

New APO Director and APO Alternate Director for Japan

Mr. Masato Kitera, Director General, and Mr. Kazuo Sunaga, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, were appointed APO Director and APO Alternate Director for Japan, respectively, w.e.f. 10 August 2009.

APEAEN holds 4th International Conference

APO alumni bodies form networks of productivity practitioners, professionals, and stakeholders, which create opportunities to exchange experiences and skill sets in specific areas of interest. The Asia-Pacific Association of Educators in Agriculture and Environment (APEAEN), an alliance of educators formed after a 1997 APO project, has proven that a regional network of APO alumni is a powerful channel for information sharing.

Starting on 3 August 2009, the APEAEN, in collaboration with Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine and Obihiro City Office, conducted a four-day international conference in Obihiro, Hokkaido, Japan. The fourth biennial conference was also supported by agricultural cooperatives in Obihiro and Shihoro and international institutions and organizations including the FAO and APO. The APO dispatched two resource speakers, President of EARTH University Dr. Jose Zaglul, Costa Rica, and Chung Hsing University Professor Dr. Shiann-Gwo Jeang, Republic of China, under the auspices of its Technical Expert Services Program. APO Agriculture Department Director Song Hyun Choi attended the opening ceremony and delivered a congratulatory address in which he said that, "When organizing projects, the APO always emphasizes the importance of follow-up activities by participants, and hence we encourage them to establish networks among themselves. The APEAEN is a shining example of such a network and the APO is proud of its success."

The fourth APEAEN conference had the theme Education for Sustainable Community Development with Emphasis on Cooperation with Communities. It brought together more than 250 participants from academic institutions, community development organizations, and government offices from the Asia-Pacific region. "The success of the APEAEN is founded on all its members sharing common interests and needs. Therefore they are always interested in exchanging information. Another factor is its good governance, especially its dynamic Secretariat," commented Adjunct Professor of Agricultural Education Dr. Samuel T. Mancebo, University of the Philippines Los Baños, and APEAEN treasurer. The Secretariat



Panel discussion in progress

is operated by four staff, headed by Executive Director Dr. Cely S. Binoya, Professor and Extension Director, Camarines Sur State Agricultural College, the Philippines. They contribute their time and expertise to association activities including Web site management, publications, and communication with members.

The conference included an educational tour of agricultural cooperatives in Obihiro and Shihoro. The participants saw how agricultural schools and universities work together to achieve better farm productivity. Good educational practices in agriculture and the environment and good extension practices were described in 24 presentations in parallel sessions. There were also five poster presentations by students from the Republic of Korea. The conference concluded with summations by Dr. Zaglul and Senior Extension, Education and Communications Officer Dr. Malcolm P. Hazelman, FAO. The APO is happy to support the activities of APO alumni bodies and looks forward to the establishment of more organizations like the APEAEN. 🌀

People behind the scenes: Kamlesh Prakash

Everyone carries around their own stereotype of people from a certain country or region. This can sometimes be prejudicial and jeopardize human and business relationships and careers, especially in this era of globalization. Despite the danger of roughly categorizing people based on their origins, we sometimes meet people who match the general features and think to ourselves "see?" with a knowing nod. I assume that most people who meet Kamlesh Prakash, Secretariat Research and Planning Program Officer, would say, "I knew it," when they learn that he is from Fiji because he embodies the friendliness, generosity, and openness associated with those beautiful islands renowned for their swaying palm trees and gentle breezes.

"His cheerful, friendly disposition and personal passion for knowledge management (KM) throughout the meeting... made the learning and sharing sessions really enjoyable and open," wrote a participant in a recent KM study meeting held in Malaysia of which Prakash was in charge. It is clear that other people also feel the same way about him.

However, when you hear his enthusiastic, encouraging, enlightening presentations on any topic he is responsible for, you quickly realize that his easygoing disposition is not the result of his birthplace but rather of his confidence in his work. His consummate professionalism was again

confirmed in the recently completed impact evaluation survey. Since Prakash was assigned to the project in March this year, his work schedule has been busier than ever. He managed to juggle the demands of issuing a project notification and developing questionnaires and the onsite interview instruments while coordinating with NPOs. Although the project encountered a setback when the designated external expert became ill and had to withdraw from the mission, Prakash managed to keep all the balls in the air.

"It was impressive that he managed to identify a replacement expert who was both capable and available for such a difficult assignment on a tight schedule within only two days. I was pleasantly surprised at the scope of his professional network and his risk-management capacity," commented a Secretariat colleague. Despite everything, Prakash completed his mission on schedule, visiting six countries with the expert in tow as planned. When he returned to the office from the first batch of interviews, this writer witnessed Prakash hard at work catching up with the backlog on his desk and preparing for another 10-day mission. Although he looked somewhat tired, he still had that smile on his face showing his true character and fortitude. Or maybe that is just because he is from 'miles of isles and isles of smiles'. Please correct me if I am wrong. 🌀

