

Basic productivity tools for SMEs

In all APO members, growing SMEs play a vital role in the development of national economies, not only by providing new sources of employment and replacing declining traditional industries but also for their innovativeness, creativity, and international competitiveness. A variety of practical, basic productivity tools are suitable for SMEs to achieve or sustain market competitiveness. A training course on basic productivity tools for SMEs held in Seoul, ROK, 2–5 July, was a collaboration between the APO and Korea Productivity Center (KPC). The course complemented the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Basic course held annually to benefit mainly NPOs. It was attended by 19 participants from 17 APO member countries, who represented NPOs, ministries, associations, and the public and private sectors.

Two resource speakers facilitated the four-day training course: Abdul Malek Mohamad Aripin from the Malaysia Productivity Corporation and George Hock Wong from Hoclink Systems & Services Pte. Ltd., Singapore. They were aided by two local speakers and the KPC's Director of International Cooperation and APO Liaison Officer Junho Kim. While learning how to use basic improvement tools and techniques for SMEs, such as total quality maintenance, 5S, kaizen, and quality control circles, participants had the opportunity to observe real-life applications in the service sector at Mun-Hwa Distribution Books and in manufacturing at DBI Inc. Those observations informed the drafting of participants' action plans for follow-up in their workplaces. Resource speaker Wong commented specifically on how impressed

he was by the “active and intense group discussions” prior to and during the action planning phase of the project.

APO Secretariat Industry Department Program Officer Muhammad Idham, who oversaw the course, received encouraging feedback from participants,

who were uniformly enthusiastic about the training received. The site visits were especially praised in participants' written evaluations. Kumar Subodh of India was in agreement about the site visits to SMEs “providing good examples” and suggested that a similar national-level course would be beneficial. Cambodia's Mao Savin planned to “share the key tools/techniques with my colleagues immediately and later with my young entrepreneurs' association” to create multiplier effects. Shahnaz Behboudi of IR Iran referred to the tools as “very meaningful” for her company and, like several others, wished that the course could have been longer. 🌟



Participants observing IT use in inputting inventory data at Mun-Hwa Distribution Books.