



APO *news*

Cooperating with Africa on productivity

The APO sent a fact-finding mission to Africa, specifically to the countries of South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya, 14–25 September, to gain insights into the current status of the productivity movement and the organization and activities of the national productivity organizations (NPOs) on that continent. The mission members constituted two APO Secretariat staff, two officials from the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and one senior manager of the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development. The mission engaged in intensive discussions with top officials of NPOs, government officers, and representatives of employers' federations, national centers of trade unions, chambers of commerce and industry, and other organizations linked with the productivity movement in the countries visited.



APO mission in discussion with African productivity leaders

The mission was deeply impressed with the commitment and willingness of all productivity stakeholders to promote the productivity movement in their respective countries. Specifically, the National Productivity Institute (NPI) of South Africa and the Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC), which are the two leading NPOs in Africa, have been playing a dynamic role in increasing productivity in both the public and private sectors. The Productivity Centre of Kenya is still in an embryonic stage with the potential to grow with the tripartite support of the government, employers, and labor.

The NPI has a staff of some 100, with an annual budget of approximately US\$10 million. It has had October recognized as Productivity Month, initiated a school debate program sanctioned by the Ministry of Education, and is now tasked with facilitating the entry of marginalized groups into the mainstream economy. The NPI is thus interested in the APO's Integrated Community Development Program, in particular Thailand's One Tambon, One Product movement.

The BNPC, although smaller, managed to raise productivity awareness from 7.7% to 60% of the population in a five-year period. Its activities are aimed at both the government and private sectors. BNPC staff were mentored by SPRING Singapore in the 1990s. Its goal is to be the "preferred transformation partner" in achieving the 2016 vision for a "prosperous, productive, and innovative nation."

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"It says something about this new global economy that USA Today now reports every morning on the day's events in Asian markets."

Larry Summers

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Asian Productivity Organization
Hirakawa-cho Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 2F
1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102-0093, Japan
Tel: (81-3) 5226-3920
Fax: (81-3) 5226-3950
e-Mail: apo@apo-tokyo.org
Web site: www.apo-tokyo.org



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The mission met with President Thembo Lebang and Secretary General Dr. Yvonne Dladla of the Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA). PAPA is a loose body of NPOs, employers' federations, and management institutes recognized as a nongovernmental organization by the African Union. Hence its institutional character is basically different from that of the APO, which is intergovernmental. At present, the NPOs of Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, and Tanzania are members of PAPA. Due mainly to financial constraints, however, PAPA has yet to undertake notable operational activities.

Upon the completion of the fact-finding tour, the mission members made a number of recommendations that the APO may consider once strategic alliances can be formed with the African partners. Among those recommendations was that the APO give support to the capacity-building efforts of NPOs so that they can better cater to the expressed needs of the emerging private sector. Capacity building can be achieved through African NPO staff participation in the APO's regular activities, especially in cost-effective e-learning projects, attachment to NPOs in member countries, and the deputation of technical experts. 