

Apply the Wisdom of Water Keepers to the Reconstruction of Afghanistan!

This year Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry (JAICAF) will implement “**Farmers’ Leader Training Project for the Assistance of Post-conflict Reconstruction – Training Course on On-Farm Water Management for Afghanistan**” with financial assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, aiming at the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, where approximately 70% of the workforce is engaged in agriculture, agricultural development and stability are strongly desired. As the country is situated in arid/semi-arid regions, its agricultural success largely depends on **water**. And irrigation systems including groundwater collecting channels known as “**karez**” have been developed. These irrigation systems have been managed by water keepers called “**mirabs**” for more than 4500 years. However, more than 20 years of fighting have destroyed their irrigation facilities and management systems, having deprived people of stable agricultural production and ruined village communities, which results in increased social anxiety. Mirabs are farmers’ leaders who are responsible for the management of equal distribution and effective utilization of water that is essential to food production. Also, their traditional organization plays a pivotal role in village communities. So it is the time to reevaluate the role of mirabs and to support them so that they can work effectively.

This training program will be provided mainly for mirabs who are the leaders of farmers and officials of Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) which supervise mirabs. It aims to contribute to the resolution of conflicts in Afghanistan by strengthening the mirabs’ organization and realizing effective and sustainable water utilization.

In the program, trainees will be lectured about “the history of water utilization systems in Japan”, “the summary of irrigation projects”, “the roles of water users’ associations and the establishment of their network”, and so on in Tokyo. Then they will receive field training in both Kagawa and Mie Prefectures to learn Japan’s experiences. Based on what they’ll have learned from the training, they will develop action plans which will be implemented after returning to Afghanistan.

In Kagawa Prefecture, as in Afghanistan, **water keepers** have long maintained small reservoirs and irrigation canals and have managed the distribution and effective utilization of water, while in Mie Prefecture, there are groundwater collecting channels called “**Manbo**” at the eastern end of the karez distribution, and these channels have supported people’s lives and agricultural production. In this training program, Afghan and Japanese **water keepers** will exchange their wisdom, find many similarities and differences between them, and learn a lot of things from their experiences expected to be accumulated. The results of the training will contribute significantly to the reconstruction of Afghanistan which has been in the forefront in the war against terrorism.

<Training Outline>

- Trainees: a total of about 20 persons consisting of mirabs from four regions (eastern, central, northern, and northeastern regions) in Afghanistan, MAIL officials and coordinator.
- Outline of the planned schedule

Date	Training outline	Place to stay
Saturday, September 24th	Arrival of trainees	Tokyo
Saturday, September 24th to Saturday, October 1st	Lectures and survey in Tokyo	Tokyo
Sunday, October 2nd	Tokyo → Takamatsu, Kagawa Pref. (by air)/Survey of Mannoh Pond, etc.	Kagawa
Monday, October 3rd	Kagawa Canal Land Improvement District (lecture and field training)	Kagawa
Tuesday, October 4th	Hohnen Pond Land Improvement District (field training on the management of irrigation canals, etc.)	Kagawa
Wednesday, October 5th	Kagawa Canal Management Office of Japan Water Agency/Kagawa Canal Memorial Park (lecture and field training)	Kagawa
Thursday, October 6th	Kagawa Pref. → Mie Pref. (by bus)	Mie
Friday, October 7th	Mie Canal Management Office of Japan Water Agency /"Manbo" Underground Irrigation Facility (lecture and field training)	Mie
Saturday, October 8th	Survey of water utilization facilities, etc. in Mie Pref./Return to Tokyo (by bullet train)	Tokyo
Sunday, October 9th to Thursday, October 13th	Develop action plans/Courtesy calls/Presentation of action plans and evaluation meeting	Tokyo
Friday, October 14th	Trainees return to Afghanistan	

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Please introduce this project in your newspapers/journals!