Seminar and Workshop in Fiji

International Affairs Department

In October, a seminar and workshop were held in Fiji as part of a project formation survey, for which I will report.

This time, participants included representatives from local governments, private companies, and JS, making the preparations somewhat complicated.

First of all, regarding the trip's timing, we had only decided to travel around November last winter. We adjusted the schedule through discussions between the Japanese organizations that had participated in the trip, which took place about two months prior. However, the schedules of each organization and each person in charge were mixed up, and the schedule changed back and forth.

If the schedule is not decided, creating and sending the request letters for the seminar and visits to be submitted to the government agencies to be visited in Fiji is impossible, so we were relieved when the schedule was decided.

The Japanese participating organizations also discussed the seminar structure. This work was also carried out last year; this time, the seminar content was structured based on results from previous years.

According to the JICA survey report and the presentation materials from the Fijian side during last year's trip, there were problems with Fiji's sewerage projects, such as “the quality of the treated water often exceeds the discharge standards. It was found that there were factors such as (1) the lack of a facility maintenance manual, (2) the aging of facilities, and (3) the shortage of both public and private sector sewerage engineers.

Therefore, it was decided that the municipal participants would give a presentation on the importance of developing a facility maintenance manual, the corporate participants would present on selecting facilities and equipment suited to environmental conditions, and JS would present on the importance of human resource development.

In addition, we decided to hold a workshop using the "Why-Why Analysis" method to help the Fijian sewerage engineers gain a deeper understanding of the issues.

Companies such as Toyota Motor Corporation utilize the "Why Analysis" method to evaluate the effectiveness of measures aimed at addressing a problem. The technique involves identifying the factors that caused the problem (the "why"), then determining the factors that caused those factors (the "why" again), and so on.

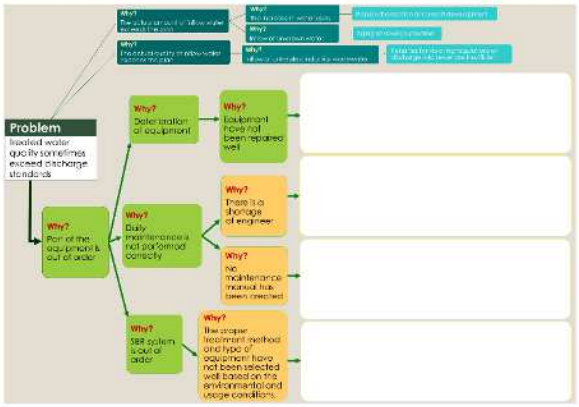

Figure 1 ：Why Analysis Template

Generally, the "why Analysis" is repeated five times, but in this workshop, the repetition was limited to four times because of the short time available. The Japanese side prepared the first three, and the participants from Fiji considered the factors afterward (Figure 1).

As you might expect, or perhaps contrary to expectations, coordinating with Fijian government agencies via the request letter was not straightforward. After sending the letter (which was sent by email), we didn't receive a reply for about ten days, so we asked the local coordinator to contact the person in charge at the addressee's end. We were told that the person in charge had changed, so we should send it to the new person.

While thinking, "If the person in charge has changed, why not just forward it to the new person..." I sent it again to the person indicated and shared the information with the local coordinator, who also made an appointment.

The coordination continued even after the trip to Fiji, allowing the workshop to be held. The participants from Fiji were divided into two groups. They wrote down the factors they thought were causing each problem on sticky notes and stuck them in the blank spaces on the "Why?" sheet.

I was worried that the participants might not be able to form opinions, but they seemed to find it more interesting than a one-way lecture, and they actively wrote down the factors on sticky notes.

Some participants were experienced staff members in charge of WWTP operations and maintenance, allowing us to gather many opinions on specific factors.

Once we had gathered a certain number of opinions, we discussed which factors were appropriate and necessary within each group and then had the representatives present the results (Photos 1 and 2).

After the workshop, participants commented that they had a better understanding of the issues facing Fiji's sewerage system and how to move forward.

Photo 1: Workshop scene

Photo 2: Workshop presentation scene

This business trip to Fiji was fraught with problems, such as difficulty making appointments and uncertainty over the final number of participants in the seminar and workshop. Still, we were able to complete it successfully.

We want to thank everyone involved for their cooperation.