

# Japan's productivity support expands to Africa

**T**he efficiency and high level of productivity awareness of Japan's labor is recognized as an important component of the nation's industrial success.

This productivity awareness is the result of the human focus of the Japanese Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED). Established in 1955 as the JPC, the body launched a nationwide productivity movement centered on industrialization. In 1994, the JPC merged with the Social and Economic Congress of Japan (SECJ), becoming the JPC-SED and fusing the productivity know-how of the JPC with the think tank capability of the SECJ. Currently the JPC-SED, in cooperation with its 10,000 members from corporations, labor unions, and other organizations, plays a leading role in productivity improvement in Japan.

The seeds of the JPC-SED's productivity movement have blossomed in various countries in the Asian region and beyond. In the 1960s, Asian leaders recognized the role of the productivity movement in the dramatic recovery of Japan's post-war economy and requested the JPC's assistance in acquiring productivity know-how. The Japanese government, in collaboration with the JPC and seven other signatory nations, created the APO. The JPC-SED has since transferred Japanese technology and know-how in productivity improvement not only to Asia but also to Latin America and Eastern Europe. In 2006, the JPC-SED's international cooperation expanded to include Africa in line with government plans to initiate strategic productivity partnerships with that continent.

On behalf of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, the JPC-SED provided technical assistance to the NPOs of South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, and Mauritius, with APO regional support. Technical assistance included an observational study mission to Japan on Productivity Promotion and Facilitation, 13–28 October 2007. Four productivity promotion specialists from each of the four NPOs participated. The two-week program comprised presentations by the JPC-SED on productivity improvement activities and tools in Japan, several site visits, and numerous group discussions and hands-on exercises supported by JPC-SED experts.



*Hands-on exercise in printer assembly*

Portfolio Manager Rembuluwani Justice Tshifularo, Productivity South Africa, and his three colleagues explained that the majority of productivity tools had been introduced to South African companies by multinationals operating there. “But we were so impressed by the culture of working together here in Japanese companies, the efficiency in optimizing limited resources, and the humanity of managers, including top managers,” said Mr. Tshifularo.

Deputy Director of Industries Engineering Martin Mutuku Nzomo, Productivity Center of Kenya, speaking on behalf of the African delegation, thanked his Japanese hosts, saying, “We have obtained hands-on experience and were inspired by the software of Japan's productivity activities.” Sayaka Nakai, who was in charge of the mission at the JPC-SED, commented that, “While the APO's Africa project is at the regional level, the JPC-SED's support is more at the national level. Some challenges remain, including the physical distances between Japan and Africa. However, we strongly believe in mutual benefits and global prosperity through close cooperation in productivity endeavors.” 