

— 5S and kaizen for the government sector —

Kaizen may be the most well-known concept in Japanese management and has been a key to the success of manufacturing industries. Kaizen approaches employ various tools, including 5S, quality control circles, total quality control, total preventive maintenance, just-in-time inventory, standard work, and automation. These have all been useful in improving the three productivity dimensions of cost, quality, and speed. The core concept of kaizen is to eliminate the three Ms of *muri* (overload), *muda* (waste), and *mura* (inconsistency) from the workplace by more efficient utilization of labor, materials, and equipment.

Kaizen tools and techniques can be equally instrumental in the public sector, as government agencies are increasingly expected to produce better services with fewer resources. The APO, in conjunction with the Lao National Productivity Organization and with co-sponsorship from the Colombo Plan Secretariat (CPS), held a training course on 5S and Kaizen for the Government Sector in Vientiane, 22–28 May, with the objective of training trainers from the public sector so that they can in turn introduce the techniques in their own workplaces. Twenty-one individuals from 15 APO member countries attended, along with 15 local observers from various government ministries and agencies and one from the CPS. The presence of the Laotian observers reflects the strong interest of the host country in implementing 5S and kaizen. Vice-Minister of Industry and Handicraft Somboun Rasasombath gave the remarks at the opening ceremony, which was covered by the local English- and Lao-language press and local television.

The two resource persons spoke on: transforming the government sector into a strategic competitive advantage; step-by-step implementation; successful 5S and



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kaizen in government; breakthrough organizational performance and change; integrating kaizen; applying kaizen to human performance; and performance measurement in government. The participants broke into small groups for discussions of how 5S and kaizen could be utilized in governmental organizations and prepared road maps for a kaizen excellence culture.

The United Nations Development Programme office in Vientiane welcomed the participants on a site visit and explained the details of its governance program in Laos. The Electricity Department, Ministry of Industry and Handicraft, also hosted a visit and briefed training course attendees on the department's work. 🌐