

Productivity enhancement at community level: OVOP movements in Thailand and Japan

The Working Party Meeting on Integrated Community Development for the Mekong Region on the One Village, One Product Movement (OVOP) in CLMV Countries was held 19–24 December 2005. The meeting was organized to coincide with “OTOP City,” a national event of the One Tambon, One Product (OTOP) movement in Thailand.

When the OVOP movement was initiated 25 years ago in Oita prefecture, Japan, it was seen as a means to promote regional revitalization. Each local community identified one or a few products as locally specific, concentrated resources on its production, established it as a local brand, and marketed it to the entire country or beyond. The movement thus combined the production of commodities with local pride and human resources development. Villagers found that their local products became national brands and that many tourists visited their villages to enjoy local traditions and products. The leadership and unity of the community nurtured through the OVOP movement paved the foundation for sustainable rural community development thereafter.

The OTOP movement in Thailand, on the other hand, is strongly promoted by the present government as a core national policy for rural community development. Various support measures for OTOP producers and community groups are provided in the form of technical and marketing assistance. OTOP City is one of the biggest events, in which more than 3,000 producers/community groups exhibited and sold OTOP products; about 1 million people visited OTOP City from 17 to 25 December 2005.

The APO meeting was attended by 18 participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam, and six self-financed participants from Mongolia, the United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization, and Japan International Cooperation Agency, who had the opportunity to visit OTOP City and speak directly with producers and community groups. In addition to a briefing on the OTOP movement and OTOP City by Thai government representatives, the participants were asked to buy the most innovative OTOP products, identify the most impressive points of OTOP City, and analyze why they were appealing. Through such exercises, the participants were able to identify the factors behind the success of the OTOP movement and OTOP City in Thailand.

A field visit was made to OTOP production villages in the suburbs of Bangkok, after which participants drafted action plans on how to promote similar activities in their own countries. Participants from Cambodia focused on improving the quality of and marketing silk products; those from Lao PDR on disseminating the concept of OVOP; those from Myanmar on strengthening existing silk producers' cooperatives; and those from Vietnam proposed a trial project before introducing the long-term One Village, One Rural Industry movement nationwide from 2006 to 2015. The APO will support these initiatives under the special “ICD for the Mekong Region Program” funded by the Japanese government. 