Greetings from Director Tomoko Arakawa

I am not a graduate of ARI, but I think I am one of the products of ARI. When I came to ARI as a part time staff in 1995, I was with my 4-month old daughter and had very little knowledge about rural development, sustainable agriculture, servant leadership and, most importantly, the meaning of “that we may live together”. For 20 years of my working at ARI, my colleagues, participants, volunteers, graduates and supporters taught me all these things, showing and sharing their real experiences and real richness of life. I was raised up here and I am deeply thankful that God gave me this wonderful learning opportunity.

ARI is a very “special” place for the people who experienced life at ARI, no matter where the person came from. I think one of the reasons is the size of ARI. ARI is small enough to visualize all the linkages around us. Linkages between and among people, human and nature, human and God... linkages of all kinds. Because of that you can see where you are standing, although you are surrounded by variety of different people and cultures. You find out that you are special and precious, and an equal being with other creatures in this world and universe.

This is the strength of ARI. We realize here that we are all different, but also one in terms of our common goal of making this world a better place. ARI hopes to heighten this goal even more: We wish that “sharing scarcity” may be our common “property” of all human beings,” as Dr. Takami appealed 40 years ago. “Sharing” is a beautiful and important quality and characteristic of all human beings. But we need to nurture and put it into action more quickly now and in the future, because we all know that the lack of willingness to share has been causing tremendous tragedies on this earth. I strongly hope that more people who share this goal are nurtured and trained through life at ARI, and that each person will sow the seeds in their respective land, wherever it may be. Those seeds will bloom big and wide and send forth the fragrance of peace. How great and thankful this will be!
I finished as ARI director at the end of March, 2015 and handed those duties over to Mrs. Tomoko Arakawa, who was ARI’s associate director and general manager for the past several years. She has served ARI for 20 years and knows the school much better than I, even though she is 24 years younger than me. She will be the first woman director of ARI since Gretchen DeVries in 1990-92. I have every confidence that Ms. Arakawa will bring new vision and energy to ARI.

I became director on April 1, 2009 and served for 6 years. During my time we suffered the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, as well as effects of the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident at the same time. We suffered severe damage to the school’s most important buildings because of the earthquake, and our soil and farm products also suffered contamination by radiation released from the nuclear plant. Through this most difficult time I was truly fortunate, and happy, to work with Dr. Akira Niwa, Chairperson of the ARI board of directors. He really worked hard with our staff and helped us immeasurably to plan and initiate the reconstruction of ARI. He came to ARI almost every day after the earthquake and worked with us, shoulder to shoulder. But Dr. Niwa suddenly passed away by a heart attack on June 25, 2012. This is how I came to be asked to take up his position as chair of the board. My duties in this role will continue until the end of May, 2016. Although I have left the position of director, I have had the pleasure and honor to remain as the chair of the board of directors for a while.

**Leading through Crisis**

When I joined ARI in 2009, it was at the beginning of a fund-raising campaign for our 40th Anniversary, which was to be held in 2013. The main plans for this campaign were to build a new farm shop, a new main building (office/classroom/library), and also to prepare a simple publication that would review the 40 years of our Rural Leaders Training Program. We faced many difficulties to raise funds for these 40th Anniversary memorial projects, but decided to build the new farm shop first. It was during the construction of this new farm shop that we were struck by the earthquake and the nuclear accident. Three days after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, radiation fell upon our precious soil in a rain. We also discovered that the surface of the Farm Shop’s cement floor was also contaminated, because its roof was not up yet. We literally had to pick up the pieces after the earthquake, but we also had extra work to do to remove radiation from here and there. When we consulted an architect about our buildings’ safety after the earthquake, he reported back that most of ARI buildings were not safe and also provided a cost estimate for reconstruction, 670 million yen or about USD 6.7 million at the time. To be honest, when I first heard this figure I felt it would be impossible. But it was possible! Praise God, and our endless thanks go out to the many friends and supporters who participated in this miracle.

Our other worry was about the 2011 training program, which was to start just 3 weeks after the 3-11 disaster. Could we responsibly invite the participants come to ARI, with so much structural damage and the risks of contamination? The answer came from the Theological Seminary for Rural Mission (Nōden) near Tokyo, who kindly invited us to use their campus and dormitory facilities to conduct the first 3 months of our training program.

Through this period I was always encouraged by this Bible passage: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5)

**Renewed Commitment**

By the support of ecumenical partners and ARI supporters, we have been able to rebuild ARI’s damaged buildings. I want to express my deep appreciation to all supporters, and also to the graduates who prayed for us and sent us powerful words of encouragement in a difficult time. Even though we had many difficulties, we overcame these and were able to celebrate ARI’s 40th Anniversary with wholehearted joy. I am truly grateful that I was able end my term as director with knowledge that the rebuilding of ARI would be completed very soon, and it has been a great joy to remain as chair of the board to see it completed. Please know that this renewal of facilities has also renewed ARI’s commitment to serve and to lead, that we may live together, in partnership with supporters and graduates, and the people we serve everywhere.


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Ken’ichi Otsu
ARI Chair of the Board
St. Olaf College is surrounded by farmland. Corn and soybean fields, stands of pine trees, and even apple orchards make up the scenery around the peaceful college in the American Midwest. However, for most students at St. Olaf, these fields are only scenery. So, it was inevitable that incredible learning would take place when twenty St. Olaf students, myself included, headed to the Asian Rural Institute for the month of January 2015. At ARI, we learned about making compost, mixing pig feed, and harvesting carrots. Yet, the growth we experienced proved to be much deeper than agricultural knowledge. Life at ARI pushed our comfort zones physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually and we emerged more aware members of our communities and stronger leaders.

Life at an American college tends to instill certain ideas about leadership in students. Leaders are club presidents, administrators, or whoever else managed to acquire a title to validate their position as a leader. Leadership should be something that can be quantified on a resume. That is not to say that these people do not serve as true leaders, but this culture creates a top-down philosophy of leadership where leaders delegate and direct. Life at ARI challenged this idea of leadership for our group during our month.

Seven a.m. on a chilly January morning demonstrates the difference in leadership at ARI. At seven in the morning, on the dot, every single member of the ARI community gathers together outside, rain or shine. Everyone, from the director, to the volunteers, to my classmates and I participated in the ritual of morning calisthenics followed by FoodLife work. It did not matter what your “position” was in the community, everyone had the same call time and everyone had a job to sustain the community. The greatest skill a person had as a leader was to enthusiastically contribute to the community and encourage the same enthusiasm in those around them through mutual work and respect. This same principle repeated after lunch when once again every community member contributed to cleaning the ARI campus. These humble acts of contribution and care for the community instilled the responsibility of leadership in every member of the community and transformed the top-down leadership structure into a communal, horizontal distribution of responsibility. Leadership became about this responsibility rather than authority.

The effectiveness of this form of leadership infiltrated almost every aspect of life at ARI. The entire community gathered at seven in the morning even on the coldest, rainiest January mornings not because someone told them to or because they feared punishment, but because they knew their community relied on their work that morning and that they relied on the work of their peers. FoodLife work filled the community with energy, purpose, and enthusiasm, not a sense of burden. As a class, we experienced firsthand the authenticity of ARI’s motto: “That we may live together”.

However, this extends beyond just living in community with the other people at ARI, those at ARI live in community with the land. In the same way the people rely on each other and give to each other, the land gives to ARI’s inhabitants and the community gives back to the land. Labor, compost, and stewardship characterize the ARI community’s contribution to the land, while the land gives back in the form of sustenance and beauty.

Upon our return to St. Olaf, this new understanding of community and leadership continues to influence our thinking. In thinking about how we can become better leaders in our communities, we look for ways to communicate, not only to direct. One of the most effective ways to lead is to lead by example. In the time I’ve been home since my experience at ARI, I sought new ways to contribute to my community with an emphasis on action and impact, rather than obtaining validation of my efforts in the form of a title. Many of my classmates made the same efforts.

Our experience at ARI helped us grow our knowledge about agriculture and sustainability in Japan. After all, the title of our course was Environmental Sustainability in Japan. Yet the most impactful lesson we learned on this trip had little to do with the environmental directly. Through our experiences, our perspective on leadership and what it means to be a leader transformed. For many of us this guided our goals and actions after we returned home. For all of us, ARI made a lasting impact.

Caitlin Connell
Mohamed Nawsath Irfana Begam
Women Organization for Development, Equality, Peace and Temperance

Irfana works with her sending body WODEPT (Women Organization for Development, Equality, Peace and Temperance) in Puttalam, Sri Lanka to empower women through programs to promote gender balance and respect for human rights. In a place where there are many social inequalities, Irfana and her sending body work toward independent and balanced life for the women in her community.

Especially for women, the situation in Irfana’s community is not always easy. They have to struggle with problems, like being dependent on men, sexual violence, or husbands’ flight from family responsibilities.

These social problems affect many things in daily life, like the education and development of children, the empowerment of women, or economical development. Much of the human potential in women is wasted, where it could be used for common good, or to generate household income. Income is important not only for the independence of the women, but also for the education of their children.

Irfana’s sending body WODEPT tries to reduce the suffering caused by gender-discriminative constraints and to give women new opportunities. They are also working to uphold children’s rights and combat alcohol abuse.

To start with, they train the women to protect themselves against violence, understand about human rights and gender balance and teach them how to earn income through agriculture, food processing, fishing and dress making.

After the women receive the knowledge, they can apply for small loans to start their own business. On every second Wednesday, the organization pays out new loans and collects money from loans that have come to full term, respectively.

In 1995, the organization was founded with about 10 members. Over the next 20 years, many women joined WODEPT and now they have about 50 members, and they are still trying to reach more women. For the most part, women are working in this organization.

Irfana was personally affected by problems which are rooted in gender inequality. Her husband was ruthless and unfaithful, so she decided to get divorced. Fortunately, her father and her organization supported her a lot through this difficult period, which comforted and strengthened her.

After her divorce, Irfana has had a great deal of work to do, including taking care of her young son and working at WODEPT. She also had to get along with a small budget, but she can handle everything with the support she gets.

On Saturdays, she is observing “QUAZI COURT,” which is a counselling service where women can speak about their feel-
Irfana (center) and Job (right) listen to the “sharing” during Morning Gathering.

Philippines

Job Zambales Lagrada

Christians Meeting in Gospel Hall

Job Zambales Lagrada came to ARI from the mountain area of Palawan Island in Southwestern Philippines, where he is a missionary with his sending body Christians Meeting in Gospel Hall, a community of 50 churches. Job’s ministry encompasses work with projects supported by his Sending Body—a school, a wilderness camp and a model farm—but also compels him stand with people who oppose mining in the island of Palawan, which poses a serious threat to the environment and livelihoods of many farmers.

From the very beginning of his ministry after Bible School, Job was called to do more for his community, especially those who sought his assistance. “The real problem is not that they don’t have anything—they have land—it is they do not know how to use it,” says Job. Job and his mother, with the support of the 50-church community, created a school to assist youth who needed schooling appropriate for their circumstances. In this and other ways Job is working for the sustainable development of his community at Brookes Point.

Today, Job and his wife spend much of their time with the students in the school. When the youth graduate, Job seeks opportunities for further study at university, Bible school, or teachers’ college. He believes that educated teachers can do much for their community. “The highly educated can preserve native culture,” he says, “because their education instills a healthy sense of identity in their community roots.” For those with no post-graduation plans, Job helps them to find chances for further basic courses on whatever is relevant to their life at home. However, he thinks more change is necessary in the school’s curriculum, which is still geared in many ways to urban life. “Instruction needs to be more focused on agriculture, which is the livelihood of most Palawan families.”

Job was asked by his Sending Body to create a model farm, so now he is using this model farm as a chance to change the curriculum. After running the model farm for some time, he discovered that he really can change his community and reach not just the youth, but many levels of people who become aware of his training. At ARI Job has been looking for new ways to make the school’s curriculum more effective and relevant for his community, which might also address mining issues in Palawan.

Cora-Marlen Jess
Evangelical Mission in Solidarity Volunteer

For the future, Irfana prays that they can root out violence from her community and develop an economy and society in which women’s potentials are appreciated and fully employed. Since these problems also affect the education and development of children, Irfana hopes that they will also get more protection in the future.

Turner Ritchie
Brethren Volunteer Service Volunteer
This year ARI welcomed two participants from countries that were severely impacted by the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Western Africa: Ms. Dorothy Lewah Yeanany from Liberia, and Ms. Nafoei Finda Miatta M’ briwa from Sierra Leone. The outbreak led to introduction of extraordinary screening measures for Dorothy and Nafoei’s travel visas, which were cumbersome, costly and time-consuming. Thankfully both women received their visas, but they had to come to ARI 3 weeks early to complete a “quarantine period” before training began. After monitoring according to a check list of ebola symptoms - some which are identical with common cold symptoms - and reporting their body

Women in Nagaland, India have a way of building solidarity with each other, and upholding the dignity of their villages as a whole. For 15 years, Alemla Samuel has been involved in supporting these women. Alemla is a leader in the Chumukedima Self Help Group Federation, which organizes and assists 46 villages and 220 Self Help Groups. Within those 15 years, she has planted much joy and confidence in the lives of the women she works with.

15 years ago, villagers from Nagaland often depended on loans from the wealthy, because they could not benefit from government support. Paying off loan debts to the wealthy was difficult for the villagers. This often caused villagers to lose their possessions and land so that they could pay back the loan givers. The women were hard working, but were limited by their inability to read or understand the laws that protected their rights. Samuel began in 2001 to offer literacy training, and opened a bank account for the first Self Help Group of women in her immediate community. She then provided land for these women to farm, which brought their families into the field to help. Through the efforts of these women, families became stronger. With only half of the daily wage from the fields going to the bank and the remaining half becoming household income, the women were able to save money while paying off their bank loans. The lives of villagers became more sustainable, at the expense of the wealthy who used to profit from the unreasonable loans. After some time, neighbors noticed the positive effects of the Self Help Group and sought assistance from Alemla to help them, too. This is how the Chumukedima Self Help Group Federation was able to reach out to many villages.

The literacy training program and Self Help Group activities have given many women a way to lead their families toward sustainable livelihood. Because of the women in the Self Help Groups, women in those communities are now able to handle bank visits on their own, support each other’s livelihoods and gain sustainable incomes.

The Self Help Groups help the women utilize their skills and abilities to sustain their families as caretakers of life. From agriculture, to clothing, to handicrafts, these Self Help Groups have become an important support system for the women. Alemla feels that the women in her community and surrounding communities in Nagaland are key to creating rural development. They are mothers, farmers and housekeepers, and their roles and decisions within the home can sway the decisions of the men and children. They are the ones who have facilitated the change in the 15 years Alemla lived and worked with them.

Now, with a wealth of new knowledge in organic agriculture, Alemla returns to Nagaland confident that the network of women’s self help groups will improve food security and safety in their communities.

Turner Ritchie
Brethren Volunteer Service Volunteer

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temperatures to the Tochigi Prefecture Health Bureau twice-daily for 3 weeks, Dorothy and Nafoei were finally certified as “healthy” just before the remaining participants arrived.

After almost 10 months at ARI, the two women are excited to be returning to their homes in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which were declared “Ebola-free” in September and November, respectively. They are anxious to share ARI learnings with their sending bodies and communities, which are still recovering from the losses of life and social-economic disruptions caused by ebola.

In northern Liberia, Dorothy lives and works with the rural people with an organization called Tomorrow Leaders, which is a part of the Ganta Methodist Church. The organization helps with farming issues, tribal conflict, mothers and children who have been abandoned, and youth with drug problems.

Dorothy has been working with women groups and farmers as a volunteer. The farmers in her community usually plant sweet potato, beans, cassava, and corn. Dorothy said, “There are farmers who believe that no chemical means no production. For high yield, the farmer always thinks they must buy expensive chemicals. As for the reason I came to ARI, I came to learn and promote in my community about using available resources.”

During last year’s ebola outbreak the government of Liberia started raising public awareness about the disease, but most people did not believe it, including Dorothy. As the days passed and the number of dead increased, many became fearful to the point of psychosis and they did not even get out of the houses. They stopped their children from going to school and government employees were hesitant to go to work. Whenever someone went out of the house they washed their hands and legs when they returned home.

All the schools were shut down because children did not attend schools for more than a year.

Entertaining places were also closed down. People were afraid of gatherings and eating together.

Once all people believed the outbreak’s seriousness and understood the risks, government institutions, NGOs, Churches, women’s groups and youth started working together. “At first I was afraid and to participate in the women’s activities to raise awareness, but my son encouraged me not to be afraid, to work with them. After that I continued working with women’s groups on ebola issues,” says Dorothy.

So she started learning about ebola from government and passed what she learned to the most rural communities she served. She went door to door to raise awareness of how it spreads, how to defend against infection, and what are the symptoms.

“I told the people that the symptoms are vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding and coughing, and encourage people to always wear a face mask. I told them to keep away from others so you don’t get sick, and to take care especially of vomiting, diarrhea.

We also tell people several other things: not to touch the infected person’s body; not to touch or wash a dead body; people in direct contact with sick are high in risk; not to wash hands in the same bucket as other who have touched the sick; if a person shows any ebola symptoms, call the health center and they will come to pick them up.”

Those who got ebola sickness were treated at the Ebola Health Center, but many died in the health center because affected persons, or their families, did not want to go to the health center until it was too late. In the beginning families often hid their sick person, but after making them aware that they could send the sick family member to the Center, the risks came down. Those who were cured from EBOLA could return to their home village with a certificate of health. But even then, many of the community members were afraid to go near, sit with, or eat with them.

“Perhaps we give awareness and this restores the family and community relationships,” Dorothy added.

Khaling Toshang
Training Assistant (India, 2007)
From August 18-29, the 2015 ARI class traveled North for the annual Northern Japan Rural Community Study Tour. The purpose of this tour is to offer to participants the opportunity to learn about a variety of regional development initiatives and farmers movements (especially by organic farmers) in rural Japan, so they may consider what truly rich rural development might look like in their own communities.

The participants learn about agriculture and regional development at ARI, and they lead a life of self-sufficiency, consuming the products of their own organic farming practices. But it is also important for participants to step outside of the ARI bubble, to meet and learn from people who earn a living from agriculture and live in rural villages. The participants work with local farmers in their own countries, so what they learn from Japanese farmers is especially important to them.

The Study Tour focuses on two districts of Yamagata Prefecture, Okitama and Shonai, whose residents have been actively engaged in agriculture-based regional development for many years. These districts are unique in that the farmers themselves drive the community’s activities, and local government plays a supporting role to this. The local development policies and strategies that they observed in these two communities can serve as strong models for participants, as they apply what they’ve learned in their home communities. Here I would like to introduce a few of the Tour’s highlights, in the words of participants.

"In Tsuruoka, the organic farmers had launched such initiatives as a cooperative, and collaborative organic produce market, and organizations for food processing and agricultural production. At Shonai Cooperative Farm, the younger generation also participated in management, and also in market development for organic products. I also learned how important it is for community leaders to pour their time and heart and strength into community development."

Mary (Myanmar)

"I learned how we can build networks in agriculture. For example, creating direct sales between producers to consumers from producers, or setting up road-side vending stands. We are all dependent on food, but the present situation is that consumers and producers are isolated from each other. In order to rebuild relationships and also value, we must work to link various fields."

Tiliphina-Banenwaki Thomace (Tanzania)

"What I learned in Yamagata Prefecture Okitama district, Tozawa village, was that there is no magic solution in development. The important thing is that each member of the community is involved in village development and actively participates in all development activities. For rural development what is needed is encouragement toward participation by all community members from the very beginning, education for the leaders, network building with related organizations and effective utilization of the local resources."

Joseph Ndirangu Gitimu (Kenya)
2015 has been an important year for ARI Graduate research, with two big studies going on or wrapping up (see page 15). We are now pleased to publish some first results of a long term "Impact Study" on our website with a renewed section called "Graduate Impact." Here, you will find a growing number of stories, photos and short videos that shine a light on how grassroots leaders are serving their communities in Africa and Asia. A book with more stories is to follow in early 2016.

This Impact Study is being sponsored by the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the United Methodist Church Committee on Relief (UMCOR). It enabled two researchers, external consultant Bev Abma and former ARI staff Steven Cutting, to visit over 230 graduates in 12 countries for interviews. Their journey led them from villages in North East India to the coast of West Africa, and back to Japan. They are still in the process of analysing the data, but the stories on our website provide a first glimpse of the various ways ARI graduates impact the lives of people worldwide. You can browse them at http://www.ari-edu.org/en/graduateimpact/

(Christy is seen beside Timothy in the photo of staff housing residents on p.13)

ARi has welcomed a new staff member, Mr. Masanobu SAKURAI, in the farm section. Masa came to us from Thailand, where he worked as an agriculturalist for 12 years at Saraburi Farm, a 160 ha spread affiliated with the Church of World Messianity. He brings with him a wealth of practical knowledge about tropical agriculture and effective micro-organisms. Masa hopes to welcome his Thai partner to ARI in the new year.

**Welcome, Masa!**

Our beloved Rev. Timothy "Uncle Timo" Appau has been waiting 2 years for his beloved partner Christy to join him at ARI. Christy arrived in November, and the couple are now residing in one of the new staff houses. Christy is from Cameroon and Timo is from Ghana... so how did they meet? At ARI, of course! Both are graduates of ARI, 2009 and 2001 respectively. We are all very happy for them! (Christy is seen beside Timothy in the photo of staff housing residents on p.13)

**Welcome, Christy!**

Ruypa Vero is the most recent arrival into the ARI community. Vero is from Nagaland, North-east India, and is ARI General Manager Kaori SAKUMA’s fiancé. Their upcoming wedding will surely be a highlight for the ARI community, not only because it is going to be a happy occasion, but also because theirs will be the first wedding to be held in the Oikos Chapel.

**Congratulations, Kaori and Vero!**...almost

Once again, J.B. Hoover, Executive Director of American Friends of ARI (AFARI), completed a full-length marathon to raise scholarship funds for ARI participants. This year JB ran the Cougar Mountain Trail Marathon near his home town of Seattle. Overcome by cramps at around the midway mark, JB was forced to walk for part of the way, but regained his running legs and made it to the finish line. This valiant effort raised more than $12,300 for ARI scholarship. When participants and others in the ARI community heard JB’s tale, we were truly inspired... and now ARI director Tomoko-san has the runner’s bug! Congratulations, JB, and thank you to all supporters!

**Run for a Scholarship 2015**

Koki ARAI first came to ARI as a temporary part-time staff in 2014, but this year became a full staff member. Working in the General Affairs section, Koki applies his IT knowledge to keep ARI's database up to date and troubleshoot for staff computers. He is also actively engaged in our sales and guest-receiving activities.

**Welcome, Koki!**
The Oikos Family

ARI’s new “Oikos” Chapel lives up to its Greek name by being a “home” for a wide community

It has been more than a year since we began using the last public building built on the ARI campus, the Oikos Chapel. In fact I can remember how in the autumn of 2014 I and others were so excited about the new building soon to be dedicated... and now it seems as if Oikos has been there since the beginning!

When we opened Oikos chapel we went through a very intentional process of deciding how and when to use the space for both personal reflection and spiritual growth, and of course for community reflection and spiritual growth. One of my fears was that we might limit the usages if we created too many regulations. This is why I am happy to share that Oikos Chapel has been widely used and is cherished by many, both in the ARI community and those in the greater community.

Fittingly, with daily Morning Gathering being the focus of our usage, it is truly where we become a true Oikos, or feel as part of God’s family. A place where we sing and pray, laugh and cry, share and ponder about life and how we are experiencing it. Where is God in all of this, and what does it mean to grow spiritually? These are two questions that we are continually invited to think about as we listen and learn from one another.

Yet this is not the only usage of this new family home. Almost every evening and morning you can find people there. The Chapel is a personal space for personal devotions and prayer, as well as a gathering place for communal song and prayer. The voices of the ARI gospel choir, MINNGOS, can be heard every Tuesday night and you will find a small group intently pondering scriptures on Thursday nights. The small tatami room near the entrance has heard many conversations. From private counseling and group consultations during the day and evening to the daily morning farm planning meeting, people huddle in turns around the beautiful wooden table. We also have discovered the Chapel is a wonderful place, with great acoustics, to record our community CD, ARI Voices, every November.

But beyond this, we are so happy that others in the community have found an important place to gather. A Korean worship service met every Sunday afternoon for 7 months, and local groups have often requested use of the Oikos chapel for their worship services. Local artists gathered one night to sing for Nepal, in a widely successful and meaningful charity concert this past summer in response to the earthquake. We’ve also had several opportunities in Oikos Chapel to hear about the lives and work of ARI graduates, and to find a greater meaning in the mission that we all share together.

I believe God is molding the Oikos Chapel into a place where many people come to form a family, a home, a place where our hearts and lives are moved and transformed. Won’t you come and join this family?

Jonathan McCurley
ARI Community Life Coordinator, UMC missionary
ARI's chapel planning team visits a traditional farm house nearby for preliminary survey. July 2013

Community members participate in the dismantling of the 110 year-old home. July 2013

The post-and-beam frame is carefully disassembled by professionals. August 2013

Chapel construction moves forward on campus, close where once the outside stage used to be. From February 2014

Community members plaster the earthen wall with their own hands... Completion is near! June - July 2014
New buildings for farm and the staff
ARI’s disaster reconstruction plan is nearing completion

Multi-function Agricultural Building

This year we were able to begin use of the new Multi-function Agricultural Training Building. The old pig pens that used to stand in its place were damaged in the Tohoku Earthquake of 2011. However, we were forced to use the old pens with quick-fix timber reinforcements until late 2013, when the pigs were moved into their new home up the hill, which was built with a disaster recovery grant from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This year, with the tremendous support of United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR), we dismantled the old piggery and erected this new multi-purpose facility on the same site.

The new building has six sections. At the South end is a unique space where we make organic “bokashi” fertilizer, which is very important in our training program. Until now, bokashi was made on concrete floors. When produced on concrete, air does not enter the material well and fermentation doesn’t proceed well especially in the portion that is in contact with the floor. The bokashi making room of this training building has a dirt floor, and this enables microorganisms to work more easily. After a few months of use we could see that indigenous bacteria had taken root in the dirt, giving it a whitish appearance. This bacteria quickly goes to work when we are making the next batch of bokashi. In other words, the dirt floor has become a rich den of useful indigenous bacteria.

Beside this space we now have a garage for several small farming machines, which had been exposed to outdoor weather for long periods since the 2011 disaster.

The next space, which is presently used for storage of building materials and as a wood-working shop, will also sometimes be used to make a fermented feed for our livestocks.

The fourth is a flexible space available for use by participants as needed. Right now there are several hand-built incubators here, which were created by participants who chose this as their summer individual project.

In the next room we have a large gas burner on the floor, which is connected to a gas outlet that pipes methane gas down from the new pig pens, where fermented pig manure is used to produce bio-gas and introduced into the gas line. We use this renewable energy to boil fish that will be mixed into fermented feed for chickens. This biogas-fed cooking capability has not only improved ARI’s circulation of internal resources, but offers to participants a concrete example of local resource use, self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Finally, in the sixth room we have water taps that are used to clean our 200-liter plastic containers, used to store fermented feed for chickens pigs and goats. Until this year we had washed all of our feed containers outdoors, even in the rain or winter cold, but now we can do this under a roof! This space is also used to store the empty containers.

We could not even imagine the possibility of such a useful facility immediately after the earthquake of 2011. We give thanks to God, who works through all of the people who support the Asian Rural Institute.

Osamu Arakawa
Associate Director, Farm Manager

Comforts of a New Home

This year 4 new buildings were completed on the ARI campus. Three are single-storey family homes and one is a two-storey quadruplex of 1-BR apartments, all for ARI staff. Compared to the previous houses - 40 year-old wooden structures that became extra draughty after the big jiggie of 2011 - the new homes are solid, warm and energy efficient. Kathy Froede, ARI’s Admissions Coordinator, is one of the new residents.

Looking back, I don’t think I have ever lived in a brand new place. Moving into my new home, I have been blessed. It is a big responsibility, too, to keep it nice and new throughout my life there.

My place is one of the four apartments in our small building, on the bottom floor facing the forest. Each apartment has a bedroom, one room with kitchen and living area, toilet and shower room. It has lots of windows, which is one of the first things I looked for when renting an apartment back home.

We, on ground level, are happy that we have a solar heated floor. My place is warm and toasty now and hopefully that continues through the winter. The floor is made of beautiful natural wood... but so soft! We have to be very careful not to drop things when moving about. I was told that to take out a dent, put water on it for about 30 minutes, then use a hair dryer to dry the spot and the wood will lift up. I’ll have to use that technique very soon!
Our ABC
Measuring radioactivity in ARI and beyond

The ARI community has depended on ARI Becquerel Center (ABC) for the safety of meals since late 2011. To guard against the risks of radiation, caused by the 2011 accident at Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plant 110km away, ABC has been measuring a sample of every crop harvested from an ARI field, every batch of chicken, pork, fish and duck destined for our tables, every new growth of fruit or wild vegetable picked from ARI property, and regular samples of soil and water since January 2012.

By the end of November 2015 ABC’s volunteers had measured approximately 4,000 samples, using two German-made Gamma spectrometers. Many of these samples were brought by farmers and consumers concerned about the safety of their food and environment. One kindergarten near us is still measuring a sample of every lunch served to its pupils!

Thankfully radiation levels of all crops from our cultivated fields, as well as our livestock meats, have measured well below our 37 Bq/kg standard - adopted from Belarus’s standard for children, set after the Chernobyl disaster. Soils from our fields have also been within acceptable limits and the groundwater we drink has remained at 0, or “non-detectable” in spectrometer language. This is all good, but we need to remain vigilant. Mushrooms and other wild vegetables from the forest floor are still showing radiation levels too high for our tables.

With the passage of time, government has gradually removed restrictions on the sale and distribution of food products that had been controlled since the Fukushima accident. There is some concern among consumers and safety advocates that this opening of the market to previously controlled products, combined with complacency, may expose the public to new, elevated risks.

So, with financial support from Evangelical Mission in Solidarity, ABC started this fall to perform “spot checks” of products that recently returned to market—especially seasonal mushrooms that might have come from a local forest. While most spot checks have been fine, a few products have been above the official government standard of 100 Bq/kg. In these cases we alert the appropriate authority so that the source can be advised, to minimize risk to the public.

Several of the ABC volunteers are also playing a key role in a local “Alternative Dispute Resolution” (ADR) for residents of northern Tochigi, where ARI is. Trough the ADR citizens are seeking compensation from Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) for physical, commercial, or mental/emotional impacts of the Fukushima fallout in a government-supported process outside of the court system. Approximately 2300 households, or 7200 persons are represented in this ADR claim. Review of claims by the ADR review panel are still in an early stage, and the full process is expected to take about 2 years.

ARI honors the ABC volunteer team, Messrs Takashi AKUTSU, Shohei FUJIMOTO, Takayuki HAYASAKA, Mineki NISHIKAWA and Yukio TAKASHIMA, for their countless hours of service to the people of Nasushiobara city, and for helping to ensure the daily safety of ARI community members.

David McIntosh
ARI Ecumenical Relations

Short link to the ARI Becquerel Center: http://wp.me/P2vvLi-32
Creating Peace through Service

Turner Ritchie came to ARI in January, 2014, through the Brethren Volunteer Service. Through his genuine interest in people, love of music and infectious laugh, Turner contributed to the life and mission of ARI in very many ways. Turner has seen two sets of participants and fellow volunteers arrive and leave ARI, and now the time has come for him to return to the U.S. Staff are having trouble imagining life without Turner. ARI has been richly blessed in Turner, and now we wish him every blessing as he departs.

“Serve by learning from others.” This was the apt advice I received in my volunteer training before coming to ARI. Knowing nothing about agriculture, or rural development when I came, all I could do was learn from others. I followed this advice the entire time I was here as a volunteer.

ARI is a place where people can learn to be assertive and active in their communities, so they might make positive changes. This was the best possible place for me to serve as a volunteer from the Brethren Volunteer Service. Life at ARI offered encouragement and insight into what comes next for all of us, including me.

Having majored in peace studies at university, many questions came to mind during my time here, because I could ask training program participants about real things happening now, which I only read in books before. Many participants shared with me heart-wrenching stories of conflict and its effects in their communities, and about the challenges of pushing for rural development where they live. I gained a better sense of how globalization effects lives in places I might never see, and how people are working to address issues that arise. All of this helped me to understand how I might best serve them in the training to make their time valuable.

After ARI I’d like to go into the field of peace building with the sense of service. I feel it’s a trajectory that is consistent with my faith, my studies and my learnings at ARI. Maybe mediation, maybe nonviolent intervention, maybe working in conflict zones... Whatever it turns out to be, there’s no question my time at ARI has shown me how incredibly rewarding it can be to work for peace and community.

It was a blessing to serve ARI, to help the staff to fully focus on the training and keep the school going. I hope that I can come back in the future to see the school’s growth. To the 2014 and 2015 classes, and also to the 2016 participants I’ve come to know through my work in Admissions, Ganbatte ne! (Do your best!)
How does ARI’s training program impact rural leaders? To find out the long term effects, a study was conducted under the auspices of Sophia University’s Institute for Comparative Culture (Tokyo).

A grant from the Fetzer Institute in the United States allowed researchers to conduct a two-year study, on campus and abroad, through questionnaires and interviews with graduates, participants, staff and volunteers at ARI. In the 40-year history of ARI's training this objective assessment by a third party was the first of its kind, though it had been a long-held wish for which there had been no opportunity in the past. We greatly appreciate that through the recommendation of Prof. Richard Gardener (Sophia University), ARI was chosen as the subject of the Fetzer Institute's study, and that Ms. Sarajean Rossitto, a Tokyo-based NGO/NPO consultant with rich practical and research experience, was available to coordinate the implementation.

On April 28, the results were presented at a public presentation at Sophia University's Yotsuya Campus. Despite the lateness of the hour about 60 listeners among whom were ARI supporters, university students, and individuals related to NGOs and Christian organizations took part. From ARI, director Arakawa, as well as missionary Timothy B. Appau and meal service coordinator Zacivolu Rhakho (who are also both ARI graduates) joined to present information about ARI and their experience as graduates.

The main finding from this study showed that the majority of the surveyed graduates continue their activities related to the philosophy and practice of sustainable agriculture, servant leadership and community building - the three main pillars of ARI’s training. Further, many graduates confirmed that they were personally transformed by the values expressed in the motto, “That We May Live Together.” Graduates who sustain a deep influence on local communities believe that the reason for their success is ARI’s “value-based learning,” represented by the servant leader model, is being utilized.

We are happy that this assessment was realized as an external study. However, it has also produced some homework for ARI, by bringing into focus a number of issues that we need to tackle to improve the quality of our training and the institute’s management.

The detailed report “Bridging the Grassroots” is available for download:


Interested in volunteering?

For an impression of what volunteers experience check our web video on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qg8kRG5SOLw

Joey Anderson
US Episcopal Church

This year, we had long-term volunteers from Japan, the US, Wales and Germany
How to donate to ARI

**USA**

US citizens may make tax deductible gifts to ARI through AFARI. Make out your check to the American Friends of ARI and send it to:

American Friends of ARI (AFARI)
c/o J.B. Hoover, Executive Director
1121 N 94th St.
Seattle, WA 98103-3305

or donate online through AFARI at http://friends-ari.org/

**Canada**

Canadian citizens can make a tax deductible donation to the United Church of Canada to support ARI. Cheques payable to the UCC should be sent to:

United Church of Canada
Partners in Mission Unit
3250 Bloor St. W.
Etobicoke, ON M8X 2Y4
Attn: Pat Elson (Please designate “ARI” on the cheque)

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Foodlife notes

“GOATS”

In 2011 ARI was forced to give up its cow, because radioactive fallout from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident made it impractical to keep her. But demand for milk remained strong in the community even after we gave up the cow, and we also felt it was important to include at least one herbivore in the training program. After monitoring local grass for two years, we judged in late 2013 that contamination had fallen enough to bring a herbivore back to ARI.

There were several factors that led us to choose goats, rather than another cow. Goats are able to survive even in deserts and barren environments, and can consume a wider variety of foods than cows, including rough food and wood from the pasture. They can eat the same vegetables and fruits as humans, but don’t have to compete with us because their range of food is much wider. They produce nutritious milk, and their feces and urine are very useful as raw materials for rich compost. And, when the time comes, a goat’s meat and fur can also be used. Goats are also easy to handle, even for beginners of livestock breeding, and goat-raising does not require large-scale equipment to start up. All of these factors contributed to our choice of goats over another cow.

Fortunately for ARI, in the spring of 2014 we were able to receive several goats from a farmer who was letting them go. This allowed us to include goat rearing in the training curriculum from last year. Compared to Japan, many countries of Asia and Africa are more “developed” in their knowledge of goats, so much of the learning was student-to-student. Late in the training program we began work with several participants and volunteers who enjoy carpentry to build two new goat pens in the old “Mighty Cow Shed.” Their raised-floor design was offered by participants, and we will be using in the training next year.

*by Takashi “Tuny” Ōtani (Livestock Manager)*

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American Friends of the
Asian Rural Institute
Rural Leaders Training Center - Japan

c/o J. B. Hoover
1121A N94th St.
Seattle, WA 98103

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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