

take my hand



the
newsletter of the
Asian Rural Institute

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Thailand — Home to over 60 Graduates

When I think of impressive graduates from Thailand, Mr. Bamrung Kayotha and the late Mr. Pipat Chai-Surin are the first persons who come to mind. Pipat graduated ARI's predecessor program* in 1969, and established a farm in Thailand's northern province of Chiang Rai. Practicing and training organic farming, Pipat risked his life to offer a place where people who had stained their hands with illegal drug farming run by crime syndicates could get the chance of a clean restart.

After completing his ARI training in 1989, Bamrung Kayotha returned to Thailand and started organizing indebted peasants in the Northeast where many families were suffocating from debts, averaging 100,000 Thai baht (over USD \$2,800) per family. Together with several hundred thousand farmers, he carried out a sit-in protest in the capital Bangkok. He thus succeeded in becoming the farmers' representative of the governments' agricultural policy planning

committee at a time when the state was so devoted to industrialization that it neglected the misery of the peasants.

Bamrung Kayotha then took local administrators on a trip to Nagai City in Japan's Yamagata region where kitchen waste is turned into organic compost for popularizing organic agriculture. The model was adapted in northeast Thailand. Now, Pong town is the center of organic compost making. With the help of compost from kitchen waste that the municipal government collects, farmers can grow organic produce. They sell it directly to citizens at the morning market, which shares the the same square as the city office building. Organic farming in that region is developing with unusual vigor. Through farming methods that do not need buying pesticides and chemical fertilizers the farmers have started to escape from indebtedness. I feel proud that ARI has given rise to capable persons such as these.

Kôa Tasaka

ARI board member & former director

Asian Rural Institute
Rural Leaders Training Center

* the Tsurukawa Institute's Theological Seminary for Rural Mission in Tokyo



At a Buddhist temple in Laos.
Front left: 2009 Lao Graduate Mr. Phan

One of the most enriching experiences of the trip was the interaction with my new Japanese friends. I didn't need to learn Japanese because our leaders, Dr. Kôa Tasaka and Mr. Masanobu (Masa) Sakurai, speak perfect English. As our tour progressed, every one of the ten Japanese participants gained confidence to speak at least some English with me. I must admit that when I first met my fellow travelers I was a bit taken aback by their question, "How old are you?" I soon discovered that my 83 years of life qualified me as the oldest person on the tour; thus I would be shown due deference.

I met everyone in Bangkok. Our tour leader, Dr. Tasaka, is a former director of ARI and an emeritus professor of chemistry at International Christian University. He also serves on various international agencies, especially those concerned with sustainable, organic agriculture. Masa, a graduate of a college of agriculture in Japan, spent much of the past 20 years in Thailand. Formerly a social service worker for the Shinto religion, he became a Christian about three years ago and joined the staff of ARI about three months before our tour began. The three women on the trip consisted of a college teacher, a

Journey to Laos and Thailand Reflections of an AFARI Member

Last February, ARI organized a ten-days study tour to Laos and Thailand to visit graduates. The group from Japan was joined by Darwin Mann (83) from California. Darwin and his late wife Mary Jane became formal AFARI members after a visit to ARI in 2008.

Photos: Masanobu Sakurai

housewife from Hiroshima and a 19 year old who is just beginning a year of volunteer service at ARI. Most of the men on the trip are longtime volunteers at ARI and live in nearby areas. They include a math teacher, a chemistry teacher, businessmen (all of whom also have small farms) plus some whose main work has been in agriculture. We were brought together by a common desire to learn of the work of ARI graduates in Laos and Thailand.

From Bangkok we traveled to Laos. Hosts were Mr. Hirano, (Japan), and Mr. Houmphan "Phan" Sengchanthong (Laos,

2009 ARI Graduate). Both men work for the Japan Volunteer Corps, doing similar development work to that of ARI. Upon reaching the rural areas of Laos I was impressed with the extreme poverty of the farmers. I had not seen such conditions even in Mexico, where I have traveled. Pigs, goats, small cattle and chickens roamed the streets and fields. There were very few automated vehicles and most of them were "ratinas" which consist of a long narrow wooden base, enclosed by a fence which carries families, produce and purchases – sometimes all at the same time. This is powered by

Training session in a Lao village. Recycled calendars are used to write on, as at ARI.



Janvan observes a neighbor farmer's pumpkin field. The very dry area needs irrigation with water from a pond.



a small Japanese made engine.

Our hosts showed us a demonstration farm where farmers come to observe improved methods of planting, irrigating, fertilizing and harvesting – all organically. Because both Laos and Thailand have a wet and a dry season and can only grow rice when there is rain to flood the fields, there is a constant danger of running out of food before the next wet season can bring produce. Besides digging substantial fields to hold water, the resource persons are helping the farmers use methods to retain moisture and demonstrating means of natural pesticides. The JVC workers have also developed a “Rice Bank” whereby farmers can deposit rice to have for future needs or to sell if it is surplus. According to Masa, “Some farmers don’t have enough rice to eat before planting of rice in their paddy fields. With Rice Bank farmers can borrow some rice grain for daily food. Soon after the harvest, they must return rice with interest which will be decided with all villagers. If they borrow cash, the interest is 100% but Rice Bank is just around 10%.”

In a village meeting nearby we heard an attorney warn villagers of the dangers of taking loans from eager bankers who could take away farms if the owners could not repay them. Apparently this has become an increasing practice.

From the villages ...

We crossed the border to Thailand and stayed in Sainarvon village with Mr. Bamrung Kayotha (1989 Graduate) and Ms. Khanuengnit “Janvan” Polkhayan (2009 Graduate). Bamrung has taught organic farming for many years, started cooperatives for villagers, has served as mayor of his village and is very active in organic farming organizations in his

country and abroad. He has often been at odds with the government of Thailand about agriculture and human rights policies.

Janvan, Bamrung’s niece, has taken over farming of her family’s land. She has continued her uncle’s work teaching organic methods to her family and neighboring farmers. She practices planting which provides natural pesticides and she plants some unusual plants (for there) such as pumpkins and bananas.

Masa explained, “All farmers in the northeastern part of Thailand have poor irrigation and are struggling with water shortage in the dry season (November - May). One of the most useful methods is digging a well and keeping the well water in a pond. The Thai government gives a subsidy to those farmers who are in the severe drought zone. However, making an application for a water reservoir is very complicated and is impossible for farmers. Janvan has helped many of her neighbors apply for a subsidy for making ponds. These are useful in breaking the total dependence on the rainy season to provide water for crops.”

It was the middle of dry season but they can manage their own farm with planting paddy rice and various vegetables organically for family consumption and for sale in a local market.

...to the city

It was a cultural shock to move from the impoverished rural areas into the northern city of Chiang Mai and the relative prosperity of this city. We stayed

at a hotel which also serves as the headquarters of the Church of Christ of Thailand, a body of more than 1250 congregations, three-quarters of which are in the north. In a nearby rural area we observed an organic farm. We learned that many young people are choosing to stay on the farm rather than moving to the city because of the appeal of organic farming.

Mr. Chomchuan Boonrahong (1988 Graduate) shared that many local and international residents are thinking about food quality and seeking organic farming products. Farmers in Chiang Mai are also trying to produce high quality organic products but still they need technical advice and marketing help. Chomchuan is organizing ISAC - Institute for Sustainable Agriculture Community in Chiang Mai. Through ISAC he promoted the organic agriculture movement in northern Thailand and established the organic market which is opened every weekend in Chiang Mai. He took us to the market on Saturday morning and we enjoyed organic coffee.

Our last event of the tour was a reunion of the many ARI graduates in Thailand. About 40 graduates and ARI friends met for dinner, reports of work and fellowship. It had been a very good, rewarding trip. I feel that I have a much better understanding of the work of ARI and an appreciation for the graduates who return to their homes to share their learnings with their neighbors.

Darwin Mann
(San Diego, California)



Connecting Businesses, Schools and NGOs in Thailand

Chomchuan Boonrahong, 1988 Graduate ISAC (Institute for Sustainable Agriculture Community)

AT ARI, CHOMCHUAN BECAME STRONGLY INTERESTED IN organic agriculture. During his summer short-term study, he went to stay at an organic farmer's place, Mr. Kaneko, together with his classmate. He sympathized with Mr. Kaneko's work against the construction of a golf course. Staying for four weeks, Chomchuan learned the philosophy of organic agriculture as a recycling-oriented agriculture based in the local environment in which producers and consumers are connected through a cooperative. The sight of local farmers and other residents joining hands to protect nature left a lasting impact on him. As the eldest son of a farmer, he engaged in NGO and agriculture work in northern Thailand after completing the ARI training. He also entered Chiang Mai University's Graduate School to study agricultural systems.

In the 90s, Chomchuan launched an NGO called ISAC (Institute for Sustainable Agriculture Community). The seminars on organic farming and environmental conservation that he conducted were open to farmers. He started a market for organic products in Chiang Mai City. This market has grown large and is set up along Chiang Mai's main road. It is managed by local members of the agricultural cooperative and many citizens make use of it. Furthermore, three persons from the ISAC have studied at ARI and are now busy working in rural communities.

Over the course of twenty years, ISAC has conducted research, popularized organic farming, cultivated new markets, and involved supporter organizations from Thailand and abroad. Through all these different activities, farmers can gain more income by growing and processing organic products.

"NGOs depend on external support groups to fund their activities," says Chomchuan, "and the personnel expenses of NGO workers need to be covered from those project funds, too. However, once a project ends the income stops. If you work at an NGO you're financially unstable. For that reason NGOs should become financially independent and ideally use their funds for projects only."

Right now there are only two young staffers at ISAC, but former members who are also ARI graduates maintain connections with it. Among them is a restaurant owner who uses organic products and a student pursuing a master's degree. Currently, ISAC is constructing a new facility with assistance from the Japanese embassy's "Grassroots Scholarship Fund." The building will be shared with the local organic agricultural cooperative, the regional organic products certification organization as well as other NGOs.

Chomchuan himself has earned a Ph.D. at the Asian Institute of Technology in 2012, after five years of study. He also lectures at the national Maejo University while still continuing his work with ISAC and other NGO's management.

Chomchuan says that Maejo University has conservation-oriented agriculture as a speciality and "educates not only scholars and public servants, but farmers, too." Through him, the university's efforts to spread organic farming and products has become even more vigorous and it now calls itself "Eco College." Inside the campus he established a direct sales store for farm produce that is run by about a dozen organic farmers. In 2015, he led a study trip to ARI for businessmen, organic farmers and NGO workers as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives of Thai businesses. His aim was to stir Thai food companies' interest in environmental conservation and sustainable farming as well as connecting NGOs with farmers.

Adding to all of this, Chomchuan is always willing to help when people approach him with questions about farming techniques. As a university lecturer and as an NGO worker, and as a farmer who loves his work, he makes an effort every day to spread the word about the importance of organic agriculture.

text & photos: Kiyoshi Nagashima
Former ARI staff 1973-2008

Two years later, US volunteer reflects on her time at ARI

*Rachel Buller, 2011-2013 Volunteer
Brethren Volunteer Service*

I GREW UP IN GEORGIA IN AN INTENTIONAL CHRISTIAN community non-profit called Jubilee Partners. Jubilee shaped me in a lot of ways, and its overall mission is to work with refugee resettlement agencies to provide ESL & basic life skills training for refugee families. As a child, I got to go swimming, pick blueberries, and play with young children my age from other countries. As a Cambodian-American, I learned to value diversity and seek out community. As a result, I went to a small college and almost all of my closest friends were international students.

Near the end of my senior year, I was faced with the now familiar question of what I wanted to do next with my life. Since I love travelling and volunteering, I decided to apply to Brethren Volunteer Service, which is a Christian organization that connects volunteers with service sites both domestically and internationally. I was most interested in ARI because of the prospect of living in such an international community—even though I was going to stay in Japan, I would still get to meet people from all over the world. I was accepted through BVS, and discovered after I arrived at ARI that it felt wonderfully like home.

Though it was familiar, ARI was like no place I had ever been before. People from over 20 different nationalities live and work together, learning and sharing their knowledge about sustainable agriculture and building a community over a 9-month training period. I learned how to take care of ducklings, how to prepare rice in a huge industrial cooker without burning my eyelashes off, how to plant potatoes using ‘nice’ or ‘mean’ parenting methods, and how to build a greenhouse, to name a few: all useful skills. But most rewardingly, I was able to share my knowledge of English with international trainees in exchange for their life stories and friendship. I was accepted as part of the ARI community, and I strongly felt that I belonged and that each person was important to the rest of the group. To me, ARI’s most important ministry is people—bringing them together, and modeling a way of life based on kindness and respect. ARI’s mission statement says that their work is ‘rooted in the love of Jesus



Christ.’ I found this to be clearly evident on a daily basis, and it is one of the things I miss most from the time I spent living at ARI.

I have been back in the US for two years now, and I’m currently living in Washington, DC. Since I’ve been home, I’ve bombarded people with descriptions and pictures of daily life at ARI. I had such a wonderful experience as a volunteer, and I wanted to capture those feelings and express to others what a special place ARI truly is. I’ve also developed a mysterious passion for sustainable agriculture.

The nation’s capital doesn’t have farms, but it does have a lot of nonprofits!

For about a year I worked part time at Green America, an environmental and social justice organization that advocates ethical consumerism. Green America supports legislation that protects the rights of small farmers, whether by promoting fair trade or fighting against the exploitation of children working in the cocoa industry. Because I have lived at ARI, it was especially meaningful to be part of an organization that is dedicated to speaking out on behalf of marginalized people and also to protecting the Earth for future generations. Like many non-profits world wide when funding decreases, staff decreases and they could no longer pay for my position.

I now work as Development Associate at Sojourners, a Christian social justice nonprofit and nationally circulated magazine. The majority of my first year back in the US was spent interning at Sojourners, so I’m happy to have found a position working with an organization that I honor and trust. I’m especially thankful to be involved in the work of bringing diverse communities together for the purpose of peace building.

Although I don’t know where life will lead me next, I’m certain that I will cherish all of the things I’ve learned at ARI, and that they will continue to guide and influence me throughout the rest of my life.



Myanmar

Sui Lian Thang

Hualngo Land Development Organization

In Chin state in northwest Myanmar there is a small strip of land called Hualngoland. This very poor rural area is where Sui Lian Thang (or short "Suia") was born and raised. Here he was shown by his father how to live, work and lead, by being a role model for him. His father was a hard worker who served the village as elected head for 4 terms, always supportive of the poor and fair to everyone, never abusing his power for selfish reasons but focusing on community betterment instead. It is also here where Suia had his most important childhood experience. In his community he learned how much joy it brings to harvest together what you have sown together.

After he grew up, Suia saw the need for help in this land he loves so much. As a man of God he first became a pastor and served his people for eleven years, while still spending his free time farming. However, he was not satisfied by how little he could help. He decided to join the only NGO in his area: Hualngo Land Development Organization (HLDO) whose mission statement is 'Every community

equally enjoys LIFE in its FULLNESS'. There he worked as a farm assistant in a model farm with Ni San, who is a 2014 ARI Graduate.

Suia says, "As a pastor I could only serve the people in my denomination, but by this agricultural method and model farm project I can serve everyone in my community."

The model farm is a permanent farm where nothing is wasted. Livestock manure from pigs and chickens is used to produce organic fertilizer like bokashi. The first model farm focusing on maize was destroyed by flooding, but instead of giving up, they started a second one growing primarily potatoes, a change made due to HLDO's good experience with potatoes.

Suia dreams of changing the entire farming system in Hualngoland from predominant shifting cultivation style agriculture utilizing lots of chemicals, to permanent fields utilizing organic agricultural practices. He believes this



will save his people from killing themselves by killing the earth, because "only when the earth is healthy, the citizens will be healthy, too. God has designed His kingdom in a way that the earth and the citizens depend on each other."

To do so, he seeks more knowledge, mainly in (servant) leadership, organic farming and livelihood. He hopes to find these things at ARI. After his return, he will start his own model farm in a different location than Ni San to spread his new knowledge and reach more of the Hualngo people. Suia wishes to serve the community because there is no bigger achievement for him than the love and trust of his people.

Manuel Reiff
Volunteer

Malawi

Towera Mtambo

Chingale Recovery and Development Program

Since 2012, Towera has been a worker with the Chingale Neno Recovery and Development Program (CHINRAD) in her home country of Malawi. Her father was a government social worker who loved helping people and was a wonderful role model for her. Towera's face lights up as she joyfully shares her childhood experiences of people coming to her home for help, knowing that they wouldn't be turned away.

Towera was doing volunteer work in the rural village where she had lived for years before joining CHINRAD as a full-time staff member. Her work involves early childhood education for needy children, aiding the disabled, food programs for both children and the elderly, child protection and programs designed to teach self sufficiency and provide food security for village members. She is especially proud of the CBCC (Community Based Child Care) program that she is part

Towera during a fellowship with ARI supporters



of. This program teaches the CBCC management committee and parents how to prepare nutritious food for children. Local villagers provide land for growing food and CHINRAD assists by providing seeds and fertilizer. Her work with CHINRAD and the many programs that they support have made a huge positive difference for the residents.

The village has endured droughts and floods caused by environmental degradation (clear-cutting of forests) and climate change, and many challenges remain. After returning from ARI, Towera intends to introduce new ideas for farming and continue her work as a community-based childcare provider.

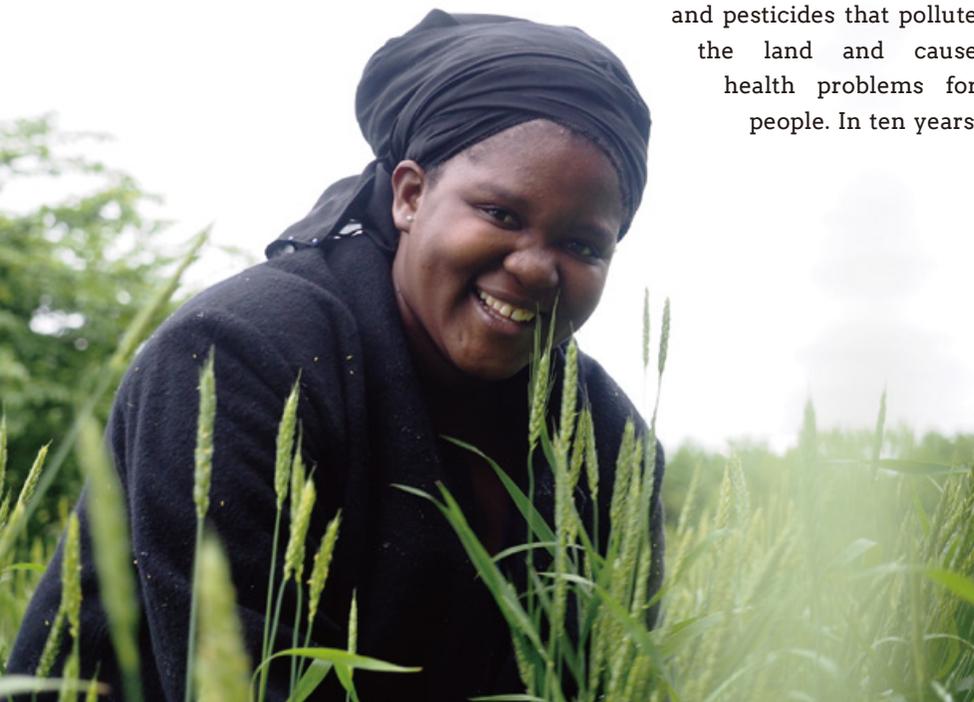
Towera's vision for the future of her community, and rural communities is "that there will be enough healthy food for everyone. People will grow their own organic food free from harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides that pollute the land and cause health problems for people. In ten years,

there will be enough healthy organic food for everyone, and hunger and malnutrition will have become a thing of the past." In twenty years, Towera dreams that everyone has enough food, and there is a surplus which can be sold to raise funds for education and programs to help the elderly, the disabled, children, and address other social needs. "People are no longer struggling just to survive, and environmental degradation has been halted and is beginning to be reversed. Biogas has replaced charcoal for cooking needs, and deforested areas are being restored to their natural state. In fifty years, there are no major problems. Everyone is educated and has access to health care. The land has been restored to its natural state. The struggle for daily survival is a thing of the past. Sustainability and caring for the environment are values embraced and practiced by everyone, having learned from short-sighted mistakes of the past."

How can this vision be achieved? It begins with education, like the kind that Towera is receiving at ARI. As she will share her knowledge as a servant leader in her home country, people will become empowered to embrace and implement sustainability in theory and practice, knowing that it is the right thing to do for themselves, their community, and future generations.

"Before coming to ARI," she shares, "I had thoughts of moving to the city, to see what that lifestyle had to offer. But now I am dedicated to serving my community for the rest of my life, seeing that healthy, thriving rural communities are the key to a sustainable future. I love ARI because it is a true multicultural community and it teaches grassroots people to be self-sufficient and to grow their own food. Helping others and doing God's work has brought many blessings into my life."

Dan Ruppert
Volunteer





Sustainable Technologies practiced at ARI

This summer we had adventurous visitors from churches in California and Connecticut. They wanted to learn more about "small-scale organic farming" and "sustainable techniques" at ARI. Ms. Nisreen Abo-Sido, Intern, and Mr. Yuto Yazawa, GI, took our visitors on an exploration of ARI's campus and had them interface with ARI's sustainable agricultural techniques for themselves. Our practices can be observed everywhere — from the farm shop to the bokashi room to the compost pile and the rice paddies! Please explore ARI's campus with us as we show you how ARI follows its mission to share and enhance local resources to build environmentally healthy rural communities.

An integral piece of ARI's mission includes promoting the use of local resources to foster self-sufficiency and, in effect, help reduce small farmers' dependence on expensive chemical agricultural inputs. The plethora of sustainable agricultural technologies practiced at ARI diverts waste streams and utilizes available materials to improve the ecological balance of the soils in which our crops grow to feed us and our livestock. Welcome to this virtual tour of the ARI farm!

Let's head over to the farm-shop and begin with one of my personal favorites: fermented plant juice (FPJ). FPJ, good for giving natural vital energy to plants, is made of natural growth hormones and chlorophyll extracted from either budding weeds or sprouting plants. We harvest the tops of these plants and layer them with crude sugar in a ceramic vase. Using ceramic traps the air necessary for fermentation, but what is the purpose of the sugar?

The sugar provides the energy necessary for microbial activity and generates

the osmotic pressure necessary to pull plant juices containing growth hormones and chlorophyll into the solution and the use of crude sugar also introduces minerals to our concoction. We apply FPJ by spraying a 200-250 times dilution liberally onto plants, especially on the growing fruits. I find the sweet smell of this dark liquid similar to that of barbecue and I've been told that it is safe to drink!

Other, less-delicious, homemade fertilizers we spray onto plants include water-soluble calcium (WCA) — made from a solution of cooked eggshells and vinegar—and water-soluble calcium and potassium (WCAP) — from bones and vinegar. In this way, we are using food waste to produce calcium and potassium beneficial for fruit growth.

Bokashi

Now if we venture across the road and into this little shed filled with rice husks, we will find bags of what we call "rice husk charcoal." We char this part of the rice plant that once held edible grains of rice. This beautiful, glisteningly dark blue charcoal serves several purposes: 1) High water, air, and nutrient holding capacity, 2) it gives living space for micro organisms, and 3) it contains ash which is alkaline and neutralizes acidic soil. We apply charcoal when transplanting seedlings.

Moving up the hill, we can see how bokashi is made! Bokashi is essentially composted chicken manure. Why do we use chicken poop? Well, we've got a lot of it, but, in addition, relative to other animal manure, chicken is most nitrogen rich and nitrogen functions as an integral component of amino acids which make up the proteins that help produce plant cells for healthy leaves and stems.

In addition to the chicken manure, we need soil, charcoal, rice bran, and indigenous microorganisms (IMO). Soil provides an array of minerals as well as a medium for microbial growth. Charcoal — as you may recall — promotes diverse bacterial growth while also controlling soil moisture. Rice bran introduces rich organic matter as feed for the microorganisms. IMOs are a diverse body of locally thriving and naturally occurring bacteria, which we collect and recolonize.

Lastly, we add water, turn the mixture each day, and continue to control the moisture and temperature of the bokashi; we monitor these elements because an environment that falls into extremes would then allow for the survival

Eggshells & Bones



Rice Husk Charcoal



Bokashi



Fish Waste



Fermented Feed



Duckweed



Frog



Visitor group from Walnut United Methodist Church, Southern California



Group from the United Church of Christ, throughout California and Connecticut

of certain microorganisms that would come to dominate our fertilizer, resulting in soil disease. Conversely, a soil with a variety of microbes can resist disease while producing a nutrient-rich environment.

Another advantage of bokashi is its quick production time. Whereas compost takes about a year to mature, it takes only about 1-2 weeks for nitrogen-rich bokashi to be ready for use. In warmer climates this process would be much shorter for both compost and bokashi.

Integrated Biodiversity Management

Next stop: mixing room! Here we make our chicken feed, a mixture of rice powder, rice bran, okara — soy bean meal— and— as the smell suggests — fish. We smoke waste fish heads and tails salvaged from a local supermarket to provide a source of protein for our chickens. The chickens go crazy for this food!

When we can't convert waste into feed, bokashi, or other forms of fertilizer, it often ends up in compost. The benefit of compost lies in its rich organic matter, which becomes feed for microbes.

Finally, let's head over to the rice paddies and observe some of the organic management techniques we are implementing there. From the surface, you can tell organically treated ARI rice paddies from neighboring chemically treated paddies: the water in the chemical fields are clear whereas our fields are clouded with life!

On the surface of the water, there is often a floating layer of duckweed. As a part of integrated biomanagement (IBM), we do not remove the duckweed but rather leave it there to shade other weeds sprouting underneath the water from the sunlight the weeds need to photosynthesize and

grow to compete with our rice. Moreover, as you walk along the rice paddy banks, you can see frogs, which feed on insects that nibble on our rice.

You can also observe strings netting the sides and top of one of our paddies. Any guesses what the string is for?

It keeps out birds that may eat the fish that we have introduced to this paddy. Fish : 1) feed on budding weeds, 2) introduce nitrogen into the paddies via their waste, and 3) when they bump into rice plants, they strengthen plant roots and enhance resiliency to disruptions. If the fish are too big they will eat the roots and tillers of the rice plant.

Another technique we use for controlling weeds is by controlling the water level of the paddies to either drown out emerging weeds by increasing the water depth or strengthen the rice plant roots by decreasing water depth.

Thank you for sticking along through the tour! Hopefully you learned something interesting and exciting. With observations and creativity, we can transform waste and utilize weeds for the benefit of agricultural ecosystems.

Nisreen Abo-Sido Wellesley College Intern



Nisreen is a 2016 summer intern at ARI from Quincy, Massachusetts, USA. As she studies environmental science at Wellesley College, she takes an interdisciplinary approach to examining global food systems and exploring methods of promoting sustainable agriculture that are healthy for both the environment and humans.

New AFARI Board Members' Trip to ARI

In 2016, four AFARI board members visited ARI, three of them for the first time. Here are some of their reflections.

My connection with ARI started with my parents Marge and Don Tarr. My father was one of Takami Sensei's friends at Doane College. My sister and I grew up hearing about the Takamis, where they traveled, what they were doing and what was happening at ARI. My parents traveled to AFARI meetings, welcomed Tom and Shinko to our home and visited ARI through the years.

My parents were always clear that supporting AFARI and ARI was their choice and that my sister and I should make our own choices about what we were called to support. Over the years I shared my parents' interest in ARI. I know my father and others spent many hours trying to help both AFARI and ARI develop long term plans rather than just "making do" month to month and year to year. And I believe he saw some real hope for the future before he passed away in 2006.

In 2008 I was asked to join the AFARI board. I was honored but cautious. Sure, I had the family history and knew a fair bit about what and how ARI was teaching. But I'd never been there. I'm an electronics and software engineer with no background in NGOs, missions, fundraising, or business management. After a few days of thought and prayer and a few discussions with the AFARI president I said "yes," and I'm very glad I did.

More than study and farming

So why did I finally travel to ARI? And why this March?

First, we expect AFARI board members to have a comprehensive understanding of what ARI is and how it works. We want to be sure that each board member has a personal connection to ARI. So we've adopted a policy that all our board members should make the trip. I'm not excluded. Life at ARI is more than study and farming. It's learning to live together the way we want the whole world to live together, and that can't be taught long-distance or second-hand.

Second, coming in March gave us the opportunity to meet directly with the ARI board of directors at their annual meeting. Despite 40 years of working together, there's never been direct contact between the members of the two boards. At the meeting I spoke of my family history with ARI, the changes I've seen in the past years, and the hope that ARI gives me for our future together.

Third, visiting before the participants arrived permitted us to spend time talking with staff members and volunteers individually and in small groups. That's where I really understood the deep faith, strength, love, and hope of the people who build a new intentional community of strangers each year and teach them how to do the same in their home communities.

Remaking Community

I have been reflecting on an important question. Before my trip to ARI, a friend asked me, "What do your life and activities have to do with ARI?" I am an engineer, a high school robotics advisor, a family man, and church elder. I knew



Steve Tarr (left) and Dave Coatsworth meet with ARI board members

Other board members' comments

JIM MARSEY — Throughout my short visit I saw dedicated instructors and participants who wanted a new direction in their lives and the world. Seeing the sacrifice that they were making made me glad that I could help, in even a small way, to make this a successful program. It has also made me more committed to sharing the story of ARI with people who might want to start giving support.

DAVE COATSWORTH — The staff and participants at ARI practice a philosophy of "foodlife." This philosophy is based on an understanding that food, the land, and life are inextricably intertwined. Many of the large companies in the agricultural industry worldwide put their priority on large increases in short-term crop yield. They give little consideration to the chemicals' long-term effects on the land and the people. Please continue giving frequent and generous gifts to the work of ARI through AFARI.

right away that the answer was "community." In almost all we do, we are looking for connection and community. In the story of the tower of Babel peoples from many countries, cultures, and religions are scattered, unable to communicate with each other or live together. The scattered people struggle to find a new way to live together with

God, each other, and their world. I believe it's absolutely necessary that we find ways to do that, especially as we realize that we have the power to destroy ourselves and the earth by intention or by accident.

Jesus spent his ministry teaching about the Kingdom of God with parables, poetry and street theater. But I

know a place where it's lived every day. I have pictures and stories. But you can go there yourself. You *should* go there yourself.

Steve Tarr

New AFARI Board Member

TAKE MY HAND / SHORT NEWS

NEW TMH EDITOR!

Kathy Froede changes to Ecumenical Relations



I first learned about ARI in 2007 when I went to a meeting where Steven Cutting and Fr. Laksiri, Sri Lankan graduate, spoke. Two years later, in 2009, I came to ARI as a long-term volunteer working in Ecumenical Relations with Steven. Little did I know that one day I would follow in Steven's footsteps as the Ecumenical Relations Coordinator.

Back in 2009 I was interested in meeting people from other countries and learning about their culture. I had traveled a bit but a one- or two-week vacation didn't allow me to see or understand what people's lives were like.

In 2012 returning as a staff member in Admissions and Graduate Outreach, I wanted to come back to ARI not only to learn more about the world but also to give back. As a person born in the US I felt I had so much and needed to give back to the world in some way. Working in Admissions I could learn about the work rural leaders are doing and find the ones who will best pass on the ARI training and philosophy. I loved knowing that I was helping to give someone an opportunity they might never have otherwise.

I see my ECU work as another way to pass on the story of ARI and widen our worldwide outreach. As I contact other organizations which care about the world, tell the ARI story and ask them to support our training, I am helping not only ARI, but many others as well, to change the world by helping those at the grassroots level with the greatest needs.

AFARI Speaking Tour Coming to 9 States

Beginning on September 22, AFARI Director J.B. Hoover and ARI Graduate Rene Guilingen from the Philippines, will be traveling to the states of Illinois, Indian, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and Montana. They will end the tour around October 16. If you live in one of these states and would like to host an event, meet with them or join a presentation please be in touch with J.B. either by phone or email.

(206) 349-2807 or jb@ileap.org

Graduate Stories Book to be published this Fall

Steven Cutting and Bev Abma have completed the Graduate Impact Study. The much anticipated book of stories is now being printed. Steven said, "One big learning was the diversity of contexts where ARI grads are able to use their ARI training. They don't all just go and do agriculture. Some work in education, some work with drug prevention, some work at peace building, some work with women's groups. This really comes out in the book. Leadership training is about building the capacity of a person to build the capacity of more people and this flowers in ways far beyond expectation."



Welcome to Recruitment, Micah Anderson!

NEW MEMBER!

Hello! My name is Micah, the newest member of the Recruitment and Graduate Outreach team at ARI. I came to ARI from Seattle (USA), where I managed an organic-farm training program serving refugees, immigrants and other marginalized communities. I also came with experience working with grassroots farmers in Zambia and Papua New Guinea. J.B. Hoover introduced me to ARI when I was in Seattle and I learned even more by hosting a number of ARI graduates in my small home there. I am excited to begin serving the ARI community and connecting with all the wonderful ARI graduates around the world.

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)

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

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

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Takami's Talk

☀ Visit to Takami by long time ARI friend

I first met Mr. Takami almost 40 years ago when I went to ARI as a work camper. Since then we have known each other for a long time. As my daughter Ayumi had joined in ARI as a staff from this spring, I decided to see Mr. Takami.

On arrival to the elder care home, Mrs. Takami pushed Mr. Takami's wheelchair to the lobby. He looked well with familiar his smiling face. Although he did not speak much, he listened to the ladies' chat pleasantly, sometimes popping into the conversation humorously. I was so impressed by his eyes still lively, and thoughtful words that reminded me of his strong will for ARI. (Yasuko Kikuchi)



The Takamis with Yasuko Kikuchi's daughter Ayumi in the nursing home.



✿ Takami Sensei Turns 90 in September!

Hello ARI Community! As summer has come to ARI in Japan there are lots of beautiful flowers, more food and life is abounding! It's also wonderful to share with you all that our beloved Takami sensei will be turning 90 years old this September 30th 2016. He is currently living in a assisted-living facility a few kilometers from campus. He is doing very well and misses the daily interaction with the ARI community.

Would you like to give him a message? Please email or post mail right away! See below for address and email. If you have a photo **with you and Takami**, make a copy and mail or email. No more than 2 photos please! (Please be sure to tell us who you are, when and where it was taken) We will give all messages and photos to Takami sensei when we celebrate 90 years of the life God has given to our beloved friend.