

# take my hand

Connecting lives across the globe  
Winter 2020



Hadijah Nnkiruuta from Uganda carries a freshly harvested bundle of rice at ARI's annual *inekeri* community work. More about her on page 6.

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# Completion and Commencement

The countdown to the end of the Rural Leaders Training Program started several months before the “Commencement Ceremony,” with some participants telling us the number each day.

The participants were both excited and anxious—excited for graduation, that they would see their families soon, and writing plans of how to pass on the ARI training when they returned to work. They were anxious about the same things—sad to say goodbye to the community, wondering how they would adapt to things back home.

Staff and volunteers were also excited and anxious—excited that we were going to send off twenty-two new graduates who would return to their rural communities to put into practice what they learned about servant leadership, community building, and sustainable agriculture.

We were anxious because we would be saying goodbye to our friends; both participants and volunteers with whom we had built bonds with over the past nine months.

## The Commencement Service

Why do we call our graduation ceremony ‘Commencement’? It is the ceremony where we grant the Certificate of Completion to our new graduates. But it is not an ending, it is a beginning! It is the beginning of the transformation of rural communities. It is also the continuation of the new graduates’ journey of transformation as they return to their daily lives and work to build an environmentally healthy, just and peaceful world in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential.

By the time you, our readers, receive this issue of TMH, the new graduates will have been home for almost two months. Please wish them well as they commence this new journey.



**Kathy Froede**  
Ecumenical Relations



## TAKE MY HAND

Newsletter of the Asian Rural Institute, Winter 2020 issue

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**PHOTO  
Celebration**

The 2019 participants await their graduation from the Rural Leaders Training Program with dance.

## What's Happening

### A New Focus on Energy Consumption

Last year, experts, funded by a government subsidy, measured the total energy use in all ARI facilities (except for the dormitories). As a result, we found that ARI emitted 81 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> for the year. The high amount was mainly caused by an unknown leak found in a water pipe used for retrieving water from our well.

In addition to showing data in clear numbers, the experts presented concrete suggestions to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Among them were some rather easy solutions, such as changing the temperature settings of freezers and upgrading to the latest models that have higher electricity efficiency ratings. A few suggestions, like generating energy by installing solar panels, are costly and not easy to implement right away. However, we can continue to reduce our energy use more in years to come by implementing some or all the suggestions given to us.

### Typhoon Hagibis Foreshortens HTC

Our 2019 Harvest Thanksgiving Festival had to be cut to only one day due to super typhoon Hagibis that hit Japan in October. HTC normally runs for a full weekend.

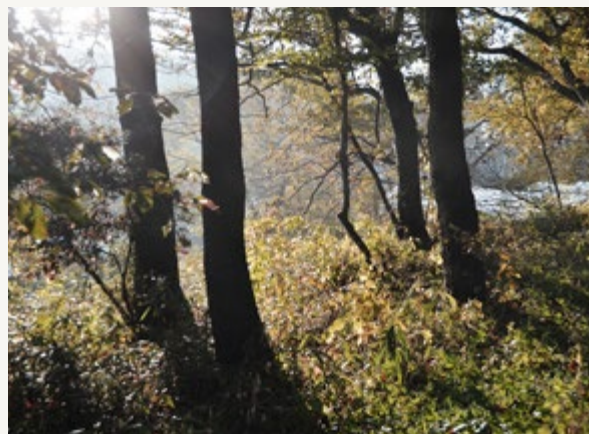


Many parts of Japan were damaged by the storm, but we were fortunate to get through without major damage. It was the heaviest continuous rain we had seen in many years. Community members worked together to make sure that our livestock was safe and that everything was tied down that could have blown away. Our heart goes out to those who are still rebuilding their lives after the storm.

### A Forest Management Plan

ARI has a small forest next to campus; however, it has been underutilized in the past. In 2019, a team was created to make a forest management plan. The team's first task consisted of mapping all the trees and plants in the area. For a long time we assumed that there was not much plant diversity to be found, but, in fact, the forest holds a diverse ecosystem of trees and other plants that all have various uses. Each of these can help ARI become more self-sufficient and maximize our use of local resources.

To bring more community connection to the forest, there is a plan to develop meditation spots as well as a pathway for visitors and the community to better enjoy the nature that surrounds us. The future of the ARI forest rests in the management of the land.





## Peace from the Soil

ARI intensifies its focus on food justice and peacebuilding to enhance its training and impact on the world.



Tomoko Arakawa  
Director

**F**ood is and always has been essential for all humans. Eating is an indispensable part of life for all creatures on earth. However, the meaning of food and the purpose of growing food has changed over the years. Farmers, in the past, primarily grew food for their families and their local communities. Only after feeding themselves would they sell the surplus. But now, many farmers grow crops to sell on the market so that they can buy food for their families. The main purpose is to earn a profit. Farming is then maximized by increasing the size of land and utilizing a lot of chemical inputs and technology. In this transition, food is transformed from being part of peaceful human coexistence to becoming an element of competition, even conflict, that may lead to violence.

At ARI, however, we promote peace and reconciliation through food justice.

Many of our graduates' communities are in areas where war, conflict, discrimination, and other forms of injustice are rampant. Graduates are often engaged in the heavy physical, mental and emotional demands of peacebuilding. But although peacebuilding, along with healing and

reconciliation, has always been an important part of life at ARI (indeed, ARI's very foundation goes back to the goal of reconciliation and restoration from the destruction that Japan brought during World War II), we have not highlighted these themes in the Rural Leaders Training or during our community life activities in detail until recently.

We have now chosen a more intentional focus on reconciliation and peacebuilding in our training because we have access to abundant resources and a rich environment for nurturing leaders to address conflict situations. We also strongly desire to research and learn more intentionally how we can enhance our role in peacebuilding throughout the world.

### Backgrounds of conflict

As I mentioned, many of the participants come from countries with conflict situations, countries such as East Timor, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Some come from ethnic groups marginalized in their own countries such as the Karen, Shan, Chin, and Kachin tribes in Myanmar. The roots and types of conflicts vary. In many of these areas, people are fighting for independence or more autonomy from their central governments. In Cameroon, tension between English-speaking regions that demand independence and French-speaking security forces are escalating and the fight affects the daily life of the people. Terrorist groups continue to destabilize many areas of the world, especially in Africa and Asia.



## Foodlife: Practice for peace

It is from this background of participants' situations that we make ARI a safe place to learn nonviolent conflict resolution and to help members gain knowledge about living together in peace.

Conflicts, disputes, misunderstandings, and hurt feelings are all part of our everyday life. From the beginning, the ARI campus community—participants, volunteers, working visitors, and the staff—has been deliberately designed so that members learn how to address these emotions in healthy ways. Living, studying and working together on the same campus requires a great effort, and we slowly build up the skills for living together here and elsewhere.

ARI has one more unique feature that transforms members to be able to work for reconciliation and peace: Foodlife. Everyone produces crops, cares for livestock, takes turns in cooking, and shares meals in the dining hall as members of this community. Foodlife gives us the spiritual experience of connecting and reconnecting with each other despite everyday conflicts and misunderstandings. It generates opportunities to face, serve, appreciate, forgive and reconcile with each other, even without words.

## Peace from the Soil – demonstrated by graduates

The work of ARI graduates after they return home varies, but many of their activities contribute to bringing peace and reconciliation through Foodlife-related activities.

Khaling Toshang in Manipur, India, is bringing conflicted tribes to one table by promoting food security as well as women's and children's rights. Fr. Josemarie Kizito in Uganda is managing a training center in a refugee camp equipped with farms and vocational training for refugees coming from neighboring countries. These are just a few examples, but Foodlife is the philosophical and practical base in many of these activities.

In summary, then, by securing food, vulnerable people regain dignity and fairness. And more importantly, safe food grown sustainably can bring peace to communities. We refer to all these actions of Foodlife-based peacebuilding as "Peace from the Soil."

Photos:

- (1) Rice harvest at ARI. 2019 participant Ruata Rem Lal from Myanmar smiles despite the heat of Japan's September sun.
- (2) In 2017, American peace activist WindEagle met Japanese business professionals at our "How to Live in Peace with Community" retreat program.
- (3) Women who lost family members in Sri Lanka's civil war pound grain. They are members of Navajeevanam Widows Group, led by 2012 ARI graduate Reverend Nishanta Gunaratne.
- (4) A member of North West Pig Farmers Cooperative Society feeds piglets. 2014 graduate Titus Atomba (left) keeps this project running in the midst of violence.



## PROJECT

### Collaboration with Texas Christian University

Due to the work that ARI has begun in peace and reconciliation, Texas Christian University (TCU) awarded ARI its 2019 Global Innovator Award. The award partners ARI and TCU faculty, staff, and students in a long-term collaboration to address critical global issues.

The focus of the programming is on how to develop peace and reconciliation within ARI's curriculum. One of the initiatives that has already begun on campus are peace and reconciliation workshops, conducted in 2019 by two professors from Kumamoto University and Osaka Women's College. These workshops focused on peace in a broader sense as well as individual opinions about what peace at ARI looks like. Art and storytelling were shared as tools for peace building and reconciling differences. Through these community-wide workshops, community members were able to have open discussions about peace and share ideas on how to get closer to the ideal vision of peace at ARI.



PARTICIPANT PORTRAIT

## Chicken, Goats, and Lemongrass

Hadijah Nnkiruuta strives to increase Ugandan women's income through agricultural training.

Born into a family of eight children, with a father who was seldom at home, Hadijah was raised by her mother, her grandmother, and her older siblings. She was the sixth child in the family. As her mother struggled to raise and educate the children, Hadijah experienced hardship, but family members always supported each other. Her mother was a source of strength and encouragement.

When Hadijah was ten, she lived briefly with her grandmother in her village. "I was surprised by what I observed: poverty, inequality, hunger—the desperate lives of rural farmers, especially women."

Paying for her children's school fees was a strain on Hadijah's mother, but despite her difficult path, Hadijah finished secondary school with a high score. Life became easier when she received a full scholarship for university studies. During her studies in social work, Hadijah had two internships, the first of which was with Mental Health Uganda. There she earned the respect of her program coordinator, Muhammad Kyeyune, who was impressed by her commitment and diligence.

### Empowered through business

Later, a call from Mr. Kyeyune became a major turning point for Hadijah. He was starting a new foundation, SORAK Development Agency. The focus of its first project, which was funded by the U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturer Bristol-Myers Squibb, was to slow the spread of tuberculosis and to minister to HIV patients. Hadijah started her career at SORAK as a volunteer, working in the office and traveling to villages.

One accomplishment that Hadijah remembers well was an intervention on behalf of 150 HIV-positive rural women who were either pregnant or breastfeeding. The major goal of the project was to increase the women's income levels through entrepreneurship training and livestock support—poultry keeping, piggeries, and goat rearing. The project was successful in that some women received piglets, constructed pig pens, and have become well established. Others started their own small



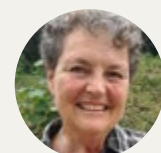
businesses, and a few now earn income by selling eggs from chickens donated by SORAK. Challenges included the women's limited skill in handling livestock and low self-esteem due to the stigma they had to endure because of their illness.

### Entrepreneurship for women

In 2012, Hadijah became SORAK's coordinator for youth and women projects. She began a lemongrass project to empower and provide income for rural women. She delivered free lemongrass seedlings to women with HIV and the elderly. Lemongrass is highly valued for its essential oil. SORAK harvested the plants, then distilled them in its own factory to produce the oil.

It was through one of SORAK's partners, Japan Global Fund for the Environment, that Hadijah first heard about

ARI. She recognized that the concepts incorporated in ARI's Rural Leaders Training Program—organic farming, servant leadership, mobilization and empowerment of local farmers—were an excellent fit. "I now look forward to returning to Uganda and to SORAK, where I will put my learning at ARI to work," she says. "I also dream of one day establishing my own organization to restore hope in rural women through organic farming and leadership training."



Judy Carl  
Ecumenical Relations volunteer



PARTICIPANT PORTRAIT

## Open Up the Land

Mana Hleih teaches his people to care for each other and the soil.

How far do you have to travel to reach the nearest airport? For pastor Mana Hleih from Myanmar, the whole trip takes around eighteen hours: four hours by motorbike, four hours by van and then another ten hours by bus. This might seem a difficult task to accomplish, but the ability to travel around in Myanmar has greatly improved since Mana's childhood. "As a child, it would sometimes take up to two days of travel just to get to where my sending body is located because there were no roads for motorbikes." This means that it could take four to five days to reach the airport.

Not only has transportation improved in recent years, but also how people are able to build and see things. "When I was young, we used [to burn] pinewood for light in the evening so that we could study. But now we use solar panels to give us electricity."

The buildings have also changed from bamboo structures into wood and block. Still, Mana's community in the rural part of Myanmar faces many struggles.

### Between conservation and ownership

As a pastor and community advocate at the Chaungyaing Baptist Church, which is a branch of his sending body, the Kanpetlet Township Baptist Association (KTBA), Mana has worked to develop new relationships and methods to empower people in his village. Spending a lot of time meeting with various organizations, he was able to gain a deeper understanding of what his area needs to become more self-sufficient and increase its ability to combat climate change. Together with multiple NGOs and other organizations, Mana brings education on these environmental and

social issues to his community.

Natural disasters, such as landslides, have started to grow into recurring environmental problems. They affect the rural people's ability to farm and provide for themselves. Another issue is the practice of shifting cultivation, or 'slash and burn,' especially in the forest areas which destroys the natural ecosystem and the trees which give oxygen.

As a response, Mana has started to implement several projects. One of them is a forest conservation program called Redd+. Mana hopes he can persuade the community to change the methods of farming and to increase conservation of the forests around his village when he returns.

At ARI, Mana has learned skills in organic farming that he can now introduce. "When I go back to my village, I hope that I can improve not only farming but also land tenure. There is a lot of land that the government does not allow to be recognized as owned by the local people. If it was recognized, it would help our communities." The livelihood of Mana's community is supported by the food they can produce and the work they put into the land for their families. Less access to their own land means less income for rural families. Mana is focused on helping his people grow in a positive direction, much like his journey at ARI. By opening up discussion with government authorities and sharing with them the needs of his community, Mana hopes to win recognition of some of their land rights and open up opportunities for aid in the area of climate change prevention as well.



Caitlin O'Quinn  
Ecumenical Relations volunteer

1) Hadijah gives cut grass to chickens during Foodlife Work.

2) Sweet potatoes! Mana (right) and Hien (left) work together to dig *satsuma-imo* from an off-campus field.



# » News Clips

## CAMPUS

### Farm Improvements— Backed by U.S. Supporters

With the generous support of the United Church of Canada, ARI was able to purchase new farm equipment, including seed sowing attachments for the tractor, a self-propelled lawnmower (photo 1), and a replacement vehicle.

Funds were also given to construct a concrete pathway for our piggery which lets pigs move to different rooms more easily (photo 2). Many participants raise pigs back home, so learning new ways of caring for them is beneficial for their communities.

Through the support of Pearl City Community Church, Hawaii, we upgraded our brooding houses (photo 3) to improve disease control and maintain a safe environment when working in the poultry section. Now our chicks can grow up without the worry of wild animals harming them or the spread of diseases. This renovation also prevents rain from entering the houses and keeps the chicks warmer during the cold months.

Photos:

(1) The new self-propelled lawnmower in action.

(2) The new pathway between the pig pens.

(3) Staff member Timo is working on the brooding house renovation.



## Individual Summer Project

During the summer, our Rural Leader Training Program participants can enhance their learning by selecting an individual project. They use these projects to try out new ideas they have learned at ARI and see how they can be applied to their own communities.

Each participant creates a goal s/he want to accomplish with the project, followed by gathering the supplies needed or working with the staff to plan trips off-campus to farms or schools. Some of the projects include the practice of appropriate technology, soap making, food processing and many more.

### BACKYARD FISH POND

Ibrahim 'I.B.' Fousseini & Cornelio 'Corns' Masunong

I.B. from Ghana and Corns from the Philippines built backyard fish ponds to demonstrate how a small space can accommodate three fish ponds. The sale of mature fish can provide much-needed income for local people in their home villages.

The two made three small, overlapping, wooden fishponds. After lining them with waterproof plastic sheeting they released small, purchased fresh-water fish. Plastic tubing and a small water pump (with a strainer) recycled the water. The fish grew to maturity within three to five months.





ARI STAFF

## Continued Connections

Manosi Chatterjee-Abe is ARI's new Admissions Coordinator. She continues her family's dedication of serving the marginalized people of the world.



My connection with ARI spans over forty years. My father, Ardhendu Chatterjee, is a 1976 Rural Leaders Training graduate from India, known by many ARI community members as “Mr. Chatterjee,” and my mother, Satoko Abe-Chatterjee, is from Japan. I also served as an ARI volunteer from 2016 to 2017.

I often refer to myself as a first filial (Fi) hybrid: a mix of India and Japan. I grew up in India, where my parents work with marginalized farming communities. Through my Bachelor's degree in Literature, I started understanding my parents' calling and valued it more through my Master's in Sustainability Science at United Nations University in Tokyo.

During my year of volunteering at ARI, I wrote of my experience: “Though I arrived with the initial goal of self-improvement and simply working with my hands, I understood how through serving and focusing on others I could also focus on myself.” I realized that, like my parents, I am passionate about community and ensuring that the voices of marginalized people are heard. I also realized that I am privileged. I can work towards a more just society with or without facing the many injustices that exist across the world, especially in grassroots rural areas.

Coming back to ARI as the Admissions and Recruitment Coordinator gives me the opportunity to re-engage with ARI's “community of learning,” where its mission is accomplished by a powerful Reflect-Act-Reflect cycle. Life is bound by many such cyclical patterns, as are concerns about sustainability. These are both immediate and future concerns that require big and small changes in society and within ourselves, changes that you, the supporters, are part of by making this training accessible to people and communities that will benefit from it. I look forward to journeying these paths with you all!



### SOAP MAKING & GREEN TEA PROCESSING

Jeremiya Narzary

Jeremiya completed two summer projects, both of which he will introduce in his town in India. He plans to train congregation members in the Boda Evangelical Lutheran Church (his sending body) to make soap and tea for selling.

Local people currently must buy dish soap in the market and sell their green leaf to brokers for a low price. These two projects will allow them to sell directly to buyers and earn much-needed income.

#### *ARI Dishwashing Soap*

The ingredients include filtered cooking oil, caustic acid (sodium hydroxide) and warm water. All are mixed for 45 minutes, to allow the acid to work; then the mixture is poured into plastic soap dishes and set aside to dry and harden for four weeks before using.

#### *Green Tea*

The green leaves are picked early in the morning. They are then roasted in a pan for five seconds, rolled on a mat and squeezed. This procedure is repeated several times until the moisture is gone. The dry leaves are then spread out in the house to dry.





# Together, Possibilities Can Open Up

Learning and Impressions  
from the 2019 ARI  
International Graduates  
Meeting in Parapat, Indonesia



Kathy Froede  
Ecumenical Relations

The 2019 ARI International Graduates Meeting took place on 5-9 November 2019. Hosted by the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) and Rev. Debora Sinaga Uno, the event was themed “Food and Justice Reconciliation.”

For this fourth international graduate meeting in ARI’s history, graduates and guests came from various Indonesian islands and from Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste. They were joined by the United Evangelical Mission and diverse ARI supporters from Japan and the U.S. Everyone who attended joined in exchanging ideas and learning from each other, resulting in an exciting event.

### *The purpose of the gathering:*

- Exchange information between graduates about their work and how they use ARI’s Rural Leaders Training.
- Take exposure trips to local graduates’ communities to see their work and how they relate to other organizations.
- Unite our understanding of global issues and challenges today, especially how we can tackle the issues of food, peace, and reconciliation.
- Create collective actions, whether at the local or international level, regarding food, peace, and reconciliation, especially if we consider our natural resources as the source of food and life.

### A warm welcome

When Director Tomoko and I arrived at Medan Airport, we were met by many of the graduates, both local and from overseas. They held up a banner welcoming us and announcing the conference. It

was a wonderful moment to see the smiling faces of old and new friends. I felt all of us were family immediately.

We loaded onto a bus, and our first stop was Serdang Bedagai Regency, where Mr. Soekirman (a 1988 short term training graduate) had become the *bupati*, or governor, of the region. He arranged a luncheon with about a dozen or so Indonesian dishes.

We next traveled towards Lake Toba, stopping for dinner at Pematang Siantar, the home of Rev. Debora Sinaga (1991 graduate, 1996 Training Assistant). She is the first woman to head HKBP’s Diakonia Department, and she aspires to become the church’s first female bishop (or *ephorus*).

### Day I: Opening and reunion

On the first day of the conference, HKBP invited girls from Elim Orphanage to perform a Batak tribal dance; the HKBP choir sang for the opening ceremony. A singer and piano player from Hephata Home for the Disabled gave such an impressive performance that I did not realize they were blind! This day was a big reunion for the ARI family from near and far.

Both visits on this first day, the opening ceremony and the visits to graduates, were wonderful introductions to Indonesian culture, cuisine, and hospitality. The food throughout our trip was delicious, if a little spicy! We enjoyed the abundant fresh fruit that we miss in Japan. For the first time, I had avocado juice. I never knew you could drink avocado and add chocolate syrup—delicious!







Photos:

(1) Rev. Debora Sinaga (left), Agnes Lumbantobing ('15 graduate, HKBP Ressort Simarmata, center) and director Tomoko Arakawa (right) at the conference.

(2) ARI graduates Kengo Ishida ('12, Japan) shows his and his wife Veny Tampubolon's ('05, '12 Training Assistant) farm to Lasitha Udaya ('08, Sri Lanka) and Gani Silaban ('08, Indonesia).

(3) Graduates of different years and countries enjoy a ride on Lake Toba.

## Day 2: Exposure tours

On day 2, we broke up in four separate groups, each one heading for a trip to see the work of graduates in various locations around Lake Toba and North Sumatra's east. We visited diverse working environments, from a food forest for livelihood and sustainability to coffee farming and processing, and a home for the disabled which teaches handicrafts, culture, and farming. We saw graduates helping villagers who had been displaced by Mount Sinabung's volcanic eruptions with sustainable agriculture development. Regional leadership with ARI training can truly help with economic empowerment, and the orphans we met benefit from graduates' skills and educational programs.

There were many highlights on this day, among them the conversations that took place on the buses en route to the graduates' work sites. It was a special time when graduates and guests could get to know each other better.

## Day 3: Seminar and sharing

This day was packed with presentations, discussion and sharing. After breakfast, we had an "ARI-style" morning gathering. The chairperson was Lasitha Udaya (2008) from Sri Lanka. Through the theme of "That We May Live Together," he said that we should try to learn about each other's religions. He spoke of how that will bring respect for one another, because "no religion says a bad thing." As an example, he demonstrated similar texts from Christian, Islamic

and Buddhists traditions. The meeting concluded with Siva (Ms. Subramaniam Sivapackiyam, Sri Lanka, 2003) offering a Hindu prayer.

The main seminar revolved around the interrelations between food, peace, and justice. Rev. Nelson Siregar spoke about the threats to food sovereignty in Indonesia. These threats are increasing because of many food imports which people consider to be superior to local food. Other reasons include population increase, price fluctuations, and lack of government funding for skill enhancement or agricultural and environmental needs.

"The way ahead is not easy," Nelson said, "but the Indonesian people are working towards building alternative communities with equality." He mentioned ARI's role in preparing leaders to strengthen local farming organizations and environmental awareness; he also highlighted the need to empower people to advance human rights, build credit unions, and spread organic farming. "Without self-sufficiency or food and justice, there is no peace; without justice, there is no prosperity." He pointed out digital technology's role in enhancing people's opportunities by assisting them with capacity building, information transfer, and networking to build solidarity.

Rev. Debora emphasized our need to teach respect for food to children and neighbors. As we become more developed, she said, we treat food with less respect: by cooking too much, by taking more than we can eat, and by throwing food away. "Sharing meals brings people together over the necessity of life. This

sharing provides a time of fellowship, which can lead to understanding, reconciliation, and peace. As Takami Sensei said, "Sharing food is sharing life." The presentations were followed by Q&A and plenary discussions.

## 'Together' is the key

There were more opportunities to travel around the area for sightseeing and learning following the conference. But one of the biggest takeaways was that graduates value working with each other. Together, they said, many possibilities open up to help rural communities to work toward peace and reconciliation.

Graduates can help ARI's recruitment by providing short internships for new applicants to evaluate their suitability. They can observe and conduct joint training, share successes and struggles more regularly, network, and organize a meeting each year. "It all starts with us! If we, ourselves, practice home gardening, buy and promote organic products, create seed banks, educate our families about food and use food as a tool for peace and reconciliation, we can bring dignity and unity to others and achieve local food security."

When I asked Tomoko-san what she took away from the trip, she mentioned the graduates' passion for what they do and believe in. "They want to involve the local people and look to the next generation to continue their work." She felt the graduates' attitudes were humble and modest, with a serving spirit—different from other leaders in their positions.

*Many thanks to HKBP and other organizations for their support that made this important occasion possible. We appreciate all who organized and joined the meeting. There were many HKBP staff (both graduates and others) working before, during, and after the meeting. This showed the great friendship and cooperation among all involved.*



GRADUATES

## A Rural Leader Can See What Others Cannot

Sierra Leonean educator and activist Mambud brings a wounded community together through sports and farming.

A rural leader can see what others cannot. These are the words that kept running through my head during a recent trip I made to see ARI alumni in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

### Understanding your resources

Mambud (a 2018 graduate) told me he wanted to build a school in his community. So what are the main components you need for a school? Students, teachers, and it's good if you can have classrooms. The classrooms are already there, being built by the hands of the community block by block. The students are the local children. The teachers are extremely bright young men from Mambud's Church, International Full Gospel Fellowship, Canyon Hills. They have the talent, the dedication, and the will to be teachers at this school. What they don't have (yet) are teaching certifications or money for university tuition. So Mambud is finding a way to sponsor them.



Steven Cutting  
Graduate Outreach  
Coordinator

What impresses me even more about this school is that Mambud found all the needed components right in his community. This school is being "homegrown" by his own people, people who by most indicators would be called poor. If you have money, you can build your house on the flat lowlands. If you don't, you live in the mountains and carry up everything you need on your head. Everything means everything, including water and even the blocks for your house.

Where others may see what the people lack, Mambud, a rural community leader, sees what the people have. He has a vision. It is a vision rooted in the understanding of, and sharing in, the hard lives of his people, and drawing from the tremendous capacity they hold to take them forward one step at a time.

### Soccer players

A second example of "A rural leader can see what others cannot" was shown to me in the form of a football (soccer) match. There was skilled ball-handling, adept passing, and great excitement each time a strike was made on the goal. The only thing unusual about it was that all the players had only one leg and the goalies had only one arm. During Sierra Leone's brutal eleven-year civil war, the rebels would amputate limbs to terrorize the population. The war is long over, but the victims live on.

At ARI, Mambud took to heart the lessons he learned about producing healthy food through





organic farming and sought a way to connect this with the lives of the amputees. A new idea was born—football gardens, or agro-football, some have called it. Fortunately, the Single Leg Amputee Soccer Association (SLASA) has a large plot of land just outside of Freetown where a new project is taking form—a football pitch and vegetable gardens. It's a place where the teams can play and practice their sport and provide for themselves and their families by growing and selling safe, healthy food.

### Remarkable graduates

Mambud's work is one of many community-oriented changes being implemented by our graduates in Sierra Leone.

There is Sannoh who, in just three months, built a poultry house with a fermented flooring system for 2,000 birds and started an organic farm. There is also Charles who is managing the farms of Njala University. He raises maggots to use as a low-cost local feed source for fish and chickens. And there is Nafei who started her own hair salon and teaches hairstyling to young single mothers. These remarkable Sierra Leonean graduates are part of the worldwide family of ARI graduates who dedicate their lives to serving their communities.



- 1) Mambud (left) and the association members start the work on their garden land.
- 2) Soccer practice at the beach.
- 3) Children of the International Full Gospel Fellowship at their church.
- 4) Bustling street in front of Mambud's SLASA office in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city.
- 5) Fish farm at Njala Uni. Graduate Charles (center with tray) shows interested students around.

*Steven Cutting went to Sierra Leone following an invitation by Dr. Donata Elschenbroich, a German ARI supporter and education expert, and her husband, film maker Dr. Otto Schweitzer. Donata and Otto produced a short documentary from this trip: "A Football Garden for Sierra Leone" which can be viewed here:*

LINK <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Ze36o05jc5nj65kzEjZKkTxlS22h125t>





The Hale family from left to right: Caroline, Charles, mother Lenore, Betsy, and Roger



SUPPORTER  
JOURNEY

## Major Gift Moves ARI Into a New Phase

The Hale family donates \$50,000 to establish ARI's Graduate Outreach Position.



In December 2015, the Hale family siblings, Betsy, Charles, Roger, and Caroline, donated \$50,000 from the estate of their parents to AFARI to establish a new position at ARI—the Graduate Outreach Coordinator. Their parents had left part of their estate for the siblings to distribute to organizations that they felt were doing exceptional work in the areas of peace, equity, education, and the environment. Betsy, the eldest and the leader of their effort, approached AFARI Executive Director J.B. Hoover with this possible opportunity. Together, they hit on the idea of addressing a great need at ARI which also was in the spirit of the thinking and values of their parents.

Betsy's knowledge of ARI and its graduates came from personal experience. She hosted four ARI graduates on separate occasions for ten-week stints while they attended the iLEAP training program in Seattle. "They were stellar individuals who carried what they learned back to their communities," remarked Betsy.

Betsy visited ARI in September of 2013 for its 40th anniversary. While there, she joined several small group discussions with ARI graduates from around the world who spoke about what they had learned during the nine-month course. She remembers passionate discussions about the importance of youth continuing to farm, of the challenges of convincing communities to value organic agriculture, and of the threats of extractive industries contaminating farmland. For the brief time she was at ARI she joined the Foodlife Work teams and created meals from food grown on the campus.

In choosing grants she and her siblings look for authentic and strong leadership. She observed those qualities in how Ms. Tomoko Arakawa directs ARI and how J.B. Hoover leads AFARI.

In 2016, ARI established the Graduate Outreach (GO) position and in 2018 hired Steven Cutting. There are three expected positive impacts from this position: making curriculum more relevant, increasing numbers of quality applicants and supporting Graduates to be more effective in their work.

As to the impact already made by the GO position, Director Tomoko-san reflects:

I believe that establishing the GO position brought ARI into a new phase. Through the GO's critical work, the graduates are now visible to all the staff, volunteers, and other ARI-related people. We feel close to them because we know what they are doing. Already we see that the increased knowledge about the challenges and opportunities graduates experience in their communities helps make our curriculum more relevant. I really appreciate the Hale family because the grant was offered at the right time and contributed to the birth of Graduate Outreach.





FAREWELL

# Remembering Loyal Members of AFARI



We honor four wonderful human beings who strongly supported the vision of ARI.

## REV. DAVE CUTTING

Reverend Dave Cutting died on September 2, 2019. He was 84. It was during Dave's time as a college student at Doane University that he met and became lifelong friends with ARI founder Dr. Toshihiro Takami, a fellow student at Doane.

One of Dave's favorite stories with Takami was about those college days. One Sunday afternoon, the two of them were driving back to Doane after filling in as guest preachers at a church. Dave felt too sleepy to continue driving. He asked Takami if he could take over at the wheel for a while. He said 'sure,' and Dave, the trusting soul that he was, stretched out in the back seat. Some time later he was awakened by a policeman tapping on the window, wanting to see the license of the driver. Evidently, Takami neither had a license nor much, if any, experience behind the wheel. The officer said that the car was weaving about and he was concerned that the driver had been drinking. Jolted from his sleep, Dave explained things to the officer and apologized. They paid \$25 to the cover the ticket Takami received—the amount they had been paid for their preaching. Dave had no trouble staying awake for the rest of the drive.

Dave served on the American Friends of ARI board from 1998 to 2006 and was president of the board from 2003 to 2004. One of his greatest contributions was taking over the printing and mailing of "Take My Hand" for many years.

A complete obituary may be found at: [LINK Dave Cutting's obituary](#)

## RICHARD THORNGREN

Richard Thorngren died on September 19, 2019. He was 96. Richard's wife was a college friend of Mary St. John, who was an Episcopal missionary in Japan and a strong ARI supporter. Richard was an enthusiastic traveler and when the Thorngrens visited Mary in Japan she took them to ARI. The visit made a lasting impression, turning Richard into a strong financial supporter from the 1980s onward.

Just two weeks before his passing, former AFARI President Pam Hasegawa and current AFARI Executive Director JB Hoover had a chance to visit Richard, who recounted in great detail his visit to ARI.

## BETSY MANNERS

Betsy Manners died on October 22, 2019. She was 94. Her husband Roger had preceded her in 2005. Both had met on a ship when Betsy traveled to Paris to take care of the children orphaned by the war. After that, Roger got to know Takami from Doane College.

Betsy and Roger married in 1949 and moved to Omaha, Nebraska where they founded Countryside Community Church and had four children. Countryside grew a great deal and became a very strong institutional supporter of ARI. In 1983 Betsy and Roger, with others, founded AFARI to support ARI. Later, they moved to Connecticut and in 1993 they brought a large group from Bradford Congregational Church to Japan for ARI's 20th-anniversary celebration.

Betsy was a board member of AFARI from 1988 to 1995. She continued to be a strong supporter until her death.

A complete obituary may be found at: [LINK Betsy Manners' obituary](#)

## REV. CLARENCE HIGGINS

Reverend Clarence "Clip" Higgins (below seen with Dr. Takami) was born on April 24, 1929, and passed away on Monday, November 25, 2019. Clip and his wife Janice visited ARI in 1993 and remained dedicated supporters. Clip was an avid gardener and beekeeper. He was also a leader in the Methodist Church. We give thanks for his many contributions to ARI and AFARI.



## How to donate to ARI



### USA

U.S. 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 the Asian Rural Institute, Inc.**  
2028 E Ben White Blvd #240-9000  
Austin TX 78741-6931

or donate online through AFARI at [afari.net/make-a-difference/support-ari/](http://afari.net/make-a-difference/support-ari/)

### 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**  
Church in Mission Unit  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200  
Toronto, Ontario M8X 2Y4  
Attn: Pat Elson

(Please designate "ARI" on the cheque.)

## American Friends of the Asian Rural Institute, Inc.

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# Takami's Talk

*"So, peace is a concept, but also a situation in which people are making efforts for themselves and for others and for creation to realize the best of themselves including themselves."*

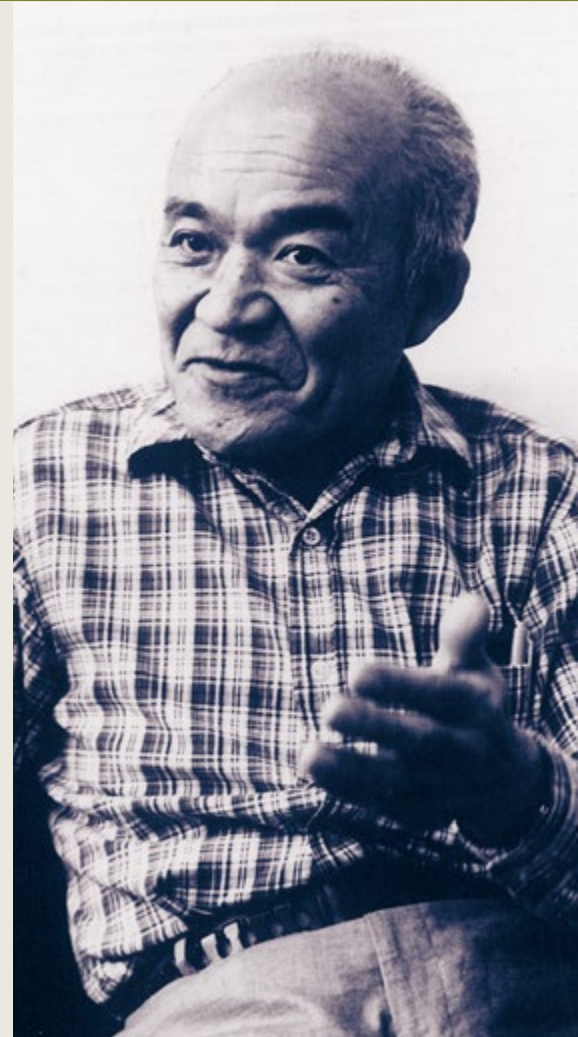
Toshihiro Takami

(A Conversation on "Peace" with Dr. Britt Yamamoto, 2004)

For peace to become a reality, we must learn to work together with the knowledge that we are all working towards the better life of the other. We are all at different stages of life and have been given experiences both negative and positive. If there is no understanding of difference and acceptance of one another, then there will never be peace. We need to have a mindset that views working together as an

opportunity for growth rather than an inconvenience. At ARI, community members must work together to accept differing opinions and solve problems in order to maintain peace.

(Caitlin O'Quinn)



That We May Live Together

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