

# take my hand

Connecting lives across the globe  
Summer 2020



ARI "new" Morning Gathering  
with social distancing measures

## TRAINING IN TIMES OF CORONA

Despite many challenges and setbacks, ARI has begun the 2020 Rural Leaders Training Program, with numerous adaptive measures in place.

PAGES 4-5

## PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS

How 2020 participants from Rwanda and Indonesia work to improve their land and communities.

PAGES 8-9

## VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

Read how one long-term volunteer's future was changed by his experience at ARI.

PAGE 10

## SUPPORTER JOURNEY

We hear about a major early legacy donation given by long time supporters.

PAGE 11

EDITORIAL

## The Next 50: From Vision to Plan to Action

The April edition of *National Geographic Magazine* looks ahead 50 years, offering two possible futures. The optimistic path posits, “How We Saved the Planet.” The pessimistic side predicts, “How We Lost the Planet.” The future is not determined. We can choose which future will be the case.

In 1973 a small group, led by Dr. Takami, formed a compelling vision for the world. They changed their lives and began the hard work of training leaders on how to live in order to achieve their communities’ visions. As an expression of this shift, in 1986 ARI contracted with nearby Batô Town to reforest and steward a six-acre hill-side property for 50 years. ARI continues to care for this forest to this day.

In 2023, ARI will mark its first 50 years. In keeping with the founders’ vision and plan, ARI and AFARI leadership are working together to articulate our vision and plan for the next 50 years. In January ARI Director Tomoko Arakawa led the staff, an AFARI board member, and me in a visioning process. It was an exciting beginning. Despite the impact of Covid-19, the planning is continuing.

It is clear that to achieve our vision for the next 50 years, we will need to make life changes, including significant commitments of resources. A number of ARI’s staff have already put ARI in their wills—a practice not common in Japan. The AFARI board and staff pledged to do the same.

We will soon share this vision with our worldwide community of supporters and look forward to exploring with you how we can make the next 50-year vision a reality.



**J.B. Hoover**  
AFARI Executive Director



### Physical Distancing

Community members keep their distance during mealtime.

### TAKE MY HAND

Newsletter of the Asian Rural Institute, Summer 2020 issue

#### Publisher

Masaoki Hoshino, Tomoko Arakawa

#### Editors

Kathy Froede, Thomas Fujishima, Caitlin O’Quinn, J.B. Hoover, Judy Carl

#### Proof-reading

Judy Carl

#### Layout and Design

Jun Yagisawa

#### Printing

EDMS Inc.

#### Overseas Distribution

J.B. Hoover, AFARI

2020 ©Asian Rural Institute

## What's Happening

### New Egg and Water System for Chicken Section

How many eggs does a chicken lay in one 24-hour period? This is a question often asked by new people at ARI! The answer is one egg per chicken. With over three hundred chickens this can mean having to clean over two hundred eggs per day. Egg cleaning happens every evening and if the eggs are too dirty, it can take about 1.5 hours to finish. To make this process more efficient, the egg-laying system was renovated. Once an egg is laid, it rolls down to a box where it can be picked up in the evening. This limits the amount of dirt that can attach to the eggs because it is away from the chickens and the fermented floor, which is used for composting. We also changed the water system for the chickens to limit bacteria exchange and reduce stress.



New egg box

### Transporting Farm Materials

ARI recently needed a new truck to use on the farm and for deliveries. The previous truck was over 30 years old! Thanks to a generous gift from the United Church of Canada, we have a new-to-us, previously owned truck for moving items such as sawdust, lumber, and pigs to market. Although repaired over the years, the old truck had many problems, and it eventually wore out. One of those problems was having specific parts that are no longer manufactured or difficult to find. This problem sometimes took time to resolve and was not a reliable method of repair due to the daily need for the truck.

The new truck allows us to safely transport materials around the campus as well as reduce the amount of time it takes for pig shipping. The previous truck had attachments that needed to be removed every time the truck was used for unloading our pigs or other materials. The new truck has fold-down walls that save time and labor. ARI is grateful to have been able to purchase a truck that will help with the overall operations of the farm.

### Swine Flu Prevention at ARI

The Swine flu was eradicated in 1992 but recently has reappeared in some Asian countries, including Japan. Since its reappearance, world governments have put into place strict guidelines to reduce the spread. At ARI, we are using the following countermeasures to protect our livestock:

1. Restrict visitors from entering all livestock sections, whether they are from Japan or another country.
2. Volunteers and Staff coming from outside of Japan cannot wear clothes from another country during livestock work for 4 months upon return.
3. No vehicles can go into the piggery area.

These measures are to reduce the chance of transferring the virus, but it is also hurting ARI's ability to raise pigs. We must purchase materials from outside to comply with the regulations. The materials included: building a fence around the piggery to keep wild animals out and spreading lime powder to reduce insects. For the first time, we are required to vaccinate our pigs. This is costly for a small farm.

The demand for ARI pork is growing, but instead of raising more pigs to meet the demand, we are reducing the number of pigs to help prevent the virus. The more pigs that we raise, the higher the chance of them contracting the virus. This means that we are unable to expand our ARI pork market now. Although we may face difficulties due to preventative measures, keeping our livestock free of disease is a top priority.



## Training in Times of Corona

ARI continues with the 2020 training program despite the challenges



Tomoko Arakawa  
Director



Yukiko Ōyanagi  
Associate Director /  
Curriculum Coordinator

Even during the pandemic, ARI continues its training of rural leaders so that the communities hit the hardest by these difficulties will have servant leaders who can guide them towards sustainable living. By the end of April 2020, eight overseas participants were able to make it to campus from their countries. Additionally, two Japanese participants enrolled, plus we have a 2020 graduate intern, a 2019 Japanese graduate, who is staying one more year for advanced training. Usually, we have 25-30 participants, but this year, we have ten. With these ten participants plus the GI, we started the Rural Leaders Training Program on May 1, 2020, the opening ceremony was celebrated only by those of us living and working on campus.

To some of you, it may seem as ill-advised to conduct the training program this year. Please be assured that ARI would not go forward with it if our leadership did not feel we could do so in a safe manner. Even with a small number of participants, we are committed to continuing their training. Many parts of the program are yet to be decided as conditions in Japan change often. We have already taken necessary measures to prevent the introduction and spread of the virus in our community.

We have also adapted the curriculum in several ways:

- Due to the small number of participants, we can keep “physical distance” easily. Classes are held outside when possible, windows are left open, and chairs are arranged in a way that respects our distance requirements.
- During our twice-a-day Foodlife Work, we usually have three or four groups (G1: goats and fish, G2: pigs, G3-4: chickens). This year, participants, volunteers, and staff were divided into two groups (G1: goats and pigs, G2: chickens). Field management may be more difficult, but on the other hand, participants will have more opportunities throughout the year to lead their groups.
- We canceled our homestay program in Tokyo, and our other observation trips are not confirmed. If canceled participants will have more discussion and sharing sessions on campus.

We have also adapted our daily life schedule in several ways:

- holding Morning Gathering outside
- wearing a mask during all gatherings, classes, and kitchen work
- washing and disinfecting hands frequently
- receiving visitors and study campers after June 1

There have been no lockdowns in Japan, but since the middle of March, the government has issued strong requests to stay home. The virus will continue to affect the number of visitors to ARI. Also, gifts and other funding from organizations and individuals have decreased. We may need to prepare ourselves to face a substantial financial burden due to the reduced number of visitors and programs.

In 2011, during the Great Tōhoku Earthquake, several participants said, “This year, we had difficulties, but because of that, I learned a lot of leadership skills.” We hope that a positive reaction will happen this year, too. All participants overcame many difficulties to come to ARI and are highly motivated. A few of them had to sleep in an airport in transit and one traveled for five days to reach ARI. Our staff is motivated to meet the challenges so that these rural leaders can return to their communities with the necessary knowledge to serve their people.

### Leadership and support

We are receiving reports that rural areas where our graduates live are experiencing extreme hardship. Governments are shutting down nearly all transportation, including that required for movement of food. For those living in rural areas who are not producing their own food, food shortages and high prices are threatening their very existence. Now, more than ever, rural leadership and food self-sufficiency are critical.

Your past support has indeed been an investment in preparing leaders for such times. Those communities with ARI graduates, who have been working to improve food self-sufficiency, will weather this storm and be able to assist others. For these reasons, we feel we must utilize the opportunity to train this small class of 2020 so that they will make a difference in the world following COVID-19.

### Confident about the future

Our ability to live sustainably has kept our confidence high through this challenging time. We are fortunate to have enough food to eat on campus (as you probably know, we are 85-90% food self-sufficient). We enjoy working together on our farm, feeling gratitude for each harvest God gives us. We have community members who support, care about, and love each other. The patience and resilience that was born out of the experience in 2011, after the Great Tōhoku Earthquake, keep giving us courage and hope. With graduates and supporters around the world, we encourage each other.

ARI Chair of the Board, Rev. Hoshino said, “Ironically, as we keep more distance, we see that we are not alone. We discover new bonds and new ways of caring.” We will find new and creative ways to live according to our motto, “That We May Live Together.”

We wish you and your loved one’s safe passage through these difficult times.



Photos:

- (1) The Opening Ceremony in 2020.
- (2) The 2020 participants after their Opening Ceremony service in Koinonia.
- (3) The “new” way of teaching. Osamu Arakawa and the participants wear masks during class while also remaining distant from one another.
- (4) Agus at Community Event: Although having to remain physically distant. The ARI community was able to enjoy a community event outside with fellowship and activities.



(1) John (center) with the four Sierra Leonean participants.  
(2) Cooking meals together.

## GRADUATES

# Stranded but not Lost

Graduate offers hospitality to participants stuck in Ghana.



**Manosi Abe**  
Admissions Coordinator

Each year, ARI participants must visit the Japanese Embassy in their country to obtain their visas to travel to Japan. For the African country of Sierra Leone, which does not have an embassy, participants must travel abroad to Ghana. What was meant to be a standard trip completed in a few days, has now taken close to three months and counting for four of our 2020 Sierra Leonean participants.

While they waited for their visas Sierra Leone closed its border on March 20th, leaving them with only one way to go—forward. Then Ghana implemented a nationwide lockdown on March 22nd which now meant that they were locked in, stuck in an unfamiliar country with no notice of when borders and airports would reopen. Japan shut the entry of international students as well. ARI reached out to its network of graduates in Ghana for help, and John Yeboah in Kumasi of the Peace Love Vegetable Growers Association (graduate of 2018) offered his assistance.

In this difficult time, John has not only provided safety, lodging, and food but has also upheld the ARI spirit. He developed a schedule and curriculum so that the four participants can make best use of their time. John, who is a prominent farmer in his community, also freely shares

his resources of organic farming and the principles he gained from his ARI training. Through practice and observation, the participants are learning servant leadership, planning, time management, and the values of Foodlife.

Nevertheless, this hospitality is not without challenges. Supporting four people is a big task mentally and financially. The lockdown hinders the participants' commute to John's farm, and John had to resolve conflict in the community who feared that foreigners would bring the virus. And like many around the world, the participants carry the stress of being away from their loved ones during the pandemic, but we believe their resilience will see them through.

As we continue our wait for borders to reopen, our first priority remains to get our participants home safely. This period has taught them, John, and us at ARI many things. Perhaps the biggest road that has opened up is considering whether graduates can conduct more of such short-term training. It could expand the outreach of ARI's philosophies while deepening and strengthening our graduates' learning, network, and skills; however, the next time around, we hope it will be intentional.

## NEW STAFF



### Mimi Hoffman

*Community Life, Women's Dorm Coordinator*

"The mission of my work is to maintain a healthy living environment where people feel at home, safe, and loved so that they can live to their fullest potential throughout their stay at ARI."



### Noriko Nakayama

*Educational Programming Section*

"I am working specially to educate Japanese youth. I look forward to meeting visitors and offering them many chances to learn, like I learned from ARI."

## A Ten-Year Journey with ARI

Zacivolu Rhakho shares the lessons she has learned during her time at ARI and how she will use this experience in Nagaland, India.



God has blessed me with ten years of experience at ARI, beginning as a participant in 2000 and as a regular staff from 2013 to 2019. In my joys, sorrows, confusion, and confidence, ARI gave me a chance to fail and to grow. It helped me discover myself as a woman and my personal gifts and abilities to be able to walk together with people wherever I am planted.

When I began my work as the FEAST (Food Education and Sustainable Table) Coordinator, one of my priorities was to change how we think of food. “Food security and food safety are both strongly related to environmental issues. We are ignorant of safe food—now we are living in the context of ‘consumption as a fashion;’ that is the reality of life. Remember, FOOD IS MEDICINE!” This simple paragraph in the ARI Training Handbook helps participants think deeply about their lifestyle, their family economy, and their community at large, for which I am grateful.

Peacebuilding can start at the table, especially at places like ARI. Everyone is busy working in different areas, but when it is mealtime, regardless of class, religious backgrounds, or tiredness from work, people sit side by side, chatting, laughing, and sharing.

### Empowering women and children through food education

Many years ago, while my family was still living in the village, we always had food at home. When I went to another town to study, I discovered that what

I wanted most for myself was school education. Realizing that our village needed educated persons, I thought of starting with my siblings’ families. That is how my empowerment as a little girl began. However, despite my efforts concerning children’s education, the biggest thing I learned is that food comes before anything else. If children do not receive adequate food, they will not have the ability to learn. By educating the mothers, children can receive the right nutrition to sustain their bodies for their learning.

### Improving education, home economy, and society

I am going back to Nagaland to continue to work with my people at the Chakhesang Women Welfare Society (CWWS), an organization working in the areas of women’s empowerment and economic uplifting. I will also help run Grace Home Khutsokhuno (GHK), which I started with my niece, Ms. Zhopovelu Lohe. We educate children and parents on the importance of food for children’s growth and how to move towards a sustainable way of life.

CWWS was my Sending Body to ARI. This time, they requested that I return and lead the organization in leadership development work. At first, I was reluctant to accept, knowing that Grace Home Khutsokhuno is my priority and where I want to invest my time and effort. Still, I agreed to work with CWWS for a few years, succeeding in the position of Executive Director.

### Changing the minds of children

When I look at the activities in my village and the mentality of the younger generation, I am thankful that I could continue learning at ARI while I was working there. I could plan out all the things for GHK through the kitchen work at ARI. My goal was to create a place for the young generation to learn about food sovereignty and sustainable life through sustainable agriculture in the village and how to preserve rural life, which can enhance their families’ health and economy. I believe this will bring peace and harmony from the family to society at large.

### Thank you to supporters

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all the supporters, from the time I was a participant to when I became an ARI staff. Thank you in every possible way for your prayers, donations, and services rendered towards the training program. I want to keep ARI’s spirit burning, even in my little village, amid the God-given greens and the abundant vegetation. I want to continue to pass it on to all the nine communities in my local neighborhood. Please allow me to convey my message that I am a living testimony of ARI’s existence. The unique programs of ARI should go to all the parts of the world—so that we may live together! God bless you all, dearest supporters!



**Ikumi Kanamori**

*Food Education and Sustainable Table Coordinator (FEAST)*

“I believe meals are the key to happiness and peace in human life.”



**Terra LoPresti**

*Domestic Fundraising, Public Relations and supporter activities*

“Through my work at ARI I want to help share the hope and joy being discovered everyday here with our supporters. I want them to know there are many possibilities and opportunities right within their reach.”

PARTICIPANT PORTRAIT

## For the Love of Work and Love for God

Agustinus Adil trains farmers to raise porang for export; his trees bring water to his village.

Agus comes from a family of farmers. He lives and works in Mbata, a mountain province in Southeast Indonesia. He started farming at the age of fourteen. His mother passed on early, but his father is still alive and working. When he first started farming, Agus worked for himself on his father's land, growing coffee. Later he became interested in raising *porang*, a tuber best known as an ingredient in making cognac and is an excellent export crop. When asked if he had ever thought of an occupation other than farming, Agus says, "I never had another idea. I had no choice because I had no education past primary school."

### 14,000 water-retaining trees

As time went on, Agus' interests turned to trees. He loved to climb them and enjoyed resting in their cool branches on hot days. In 2003, he started planting trees with no knowledge about what he was doing except that he liked them! Later, when he happened to see a television program on climate change, deforestation, and degradation of the environment, he began to understand the importance of his trees. The moderator of the program advocated taking action to reverse environmental destruction in any way possible—including reforestation.

Agus knew that "so many people are destroying nature. God gave us nature and we need to nurture and respect it." He continued planting trees, specializing in water-retaining varieties, such as the Southeast Asian *segon* tree (*Falcataria moluccana*), which is easy to grow in Indonesia. Now, seventeen years later, his trees number over 14,000, and they provide shade and beauty to the hillsides.

An unexpected bonus from his trees is water. Because the trees are located on the hillsides, they not only hold water and prevent erosion, but they also release water naturally. Agus first noticed that small trickles of water were running down the hills from some of the older trees, "like a spring." This water he channeled into a stream, which now runs through the village.



Agus during Foodlife Work in the goat house

The supply relieves women and children of the daily chore of hauling water for everyday use from other places.

### For the love of work and leadership

Even though Agus has only an elementary school education, he has become a leader in his community. At first, a few farmers came to him because they were from the same tribe, but soon many others joined him to grow *porang*, the root of which has many uses. By the time he left for ARI, Agus had helped over 3,000 farmers begin to grow this plant.

Agus first learned of ARI through Father Bernard, the priest of his Catholic Church, and a Japanese sister who served in Indonesia for many years. He was attracted to ARI because of his interest in natural farming and fertil-

izer from animal manure. He was fascinated by the notion of clean, healthy agriculture. When asked what his passion is, Agus immediately replied, "My energy to work comes from God." He lives his passion for work, every day.

And what about after ARI? Agus is clear that he wants to teach the farmers in his area about sustainable, organic farming, and about respecting and restoring nature. The Parish Church of St. Theresa, Agus' Sending Body, awaits his return as a leader in his community.



Judy Carl  
Volunteer  
(Bethren Volunteer Service)



## PARTICIPANT PORTRAIT

# Haunted by Genocide, Saved by the Land

Saidath Murorunkwere survived the horrors of genocide and found her strength in farming.

Sailove is from a farming family of 18 brothers and sisters (her father had two wives). Of the children, Sailove and two siblings completed secondary school. Her life, as are the lives of all Rwandans, is scarred by the genocide of 1994. In 100 days, Hutu killers slaughtered more than 1,000,000 Tutsis. Of Sailove's extended family of nearly 200, only two aunts and a few of her siblings survived.

"The killers were our neighbors and family friends with whom we lived together." Sailove and other family members "hid in the forests, bushes, sorghum fields or in homes of families of those who were not targeted." Many deaths were unspeakably cruel, including those of her father, six brothers and three sisters. Sailove remarks, "IT IS UNFORGETTABLE."

When the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) forces finally stopped the genocide, Sailove, her mother, and her

remaining siblings had to start over with absolutely nothing. Everything was either burned or stolen, including their 42 cows and other livestock.

### Working her way up

During the early years following the genocide, the family continued to suffer greatly. Her mother began to sell charcoal by the side of the road. Sailove, at the age of 14, took a job as a bus driver's assistant, called a "conductor," for \$.05 a day. Her job was to open and close the bus doors and collect the fees. She used part of her earnings to buy pens and paper for school but gave most to her mother.

Throughout secondary school, Sailove rose every day at 5 am to study, then went to school. After school, she worked as a conductor from 3 to 7 pm. Many days there was no food available

at home. In 2004 she finished secondary school, and due to her typing skills she became a secretary, then a newspaper journalist. By 2008 she began working as a broadcaster and started studying at the University of Rwanda, where she earned a degree in journalism.

### The value of working to eat

Due to low pay, Sailove left journalism in 2013 and became a farmer. She feels strongly about the importance of working hard on the land to be able to eat and to support her family.

Before coming to ARI, Sailove worked for her Sending Body, Dufatanye Organization, three days a week. Dufatanye is an NGO that works to fight HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, and poverty while promoting organic agricultural practices. Sailove worked with 60 farming families to build kitchen gardens.

Her goal after the ARI Rural Leaders Training Program is to continue her current project. "At ARI, I am going to learn new farming skills: *bokashi* making, soil preparation, food preservation, and protection of the environment. The knowledge acquired at ARI will benefit our agricultural projects, most especially the projects to fight malnutrition." Sailove works with many cooperatives in her community, and she needs to be able to convince them to work together in order to become food self-sufficient and to generate more income. She wants to form more cooperatives in the community, and to do that she needs to have good communication skills. These skills will be enhanced during her ARI leadership training. When she returns to Rwanda, she will be able to work full time for Dufatanye. She also has a personal dream: to become a rice farmer in the future.



Sailove helping with the community rice transplanting



Judy Carl  
Volunteer  
(Bethren Volunteer Service)



## SUPPORTER JOURNEY

# Big Turn

A year of volunteering at ARI changed the course of Leander Rust's life and career.

*Leander came to ARI in 2008 through our German volunteer partner Sozialer Friedensdienst Kassel, e.V. and served in the admissions section until the summer of '09.*



After graduating from high school in the summer of 2008, I couldn't wait to make use of my newly acquired freedom. Most of my friends continued their education by enrolling at university right away, but I felt it was time to explore the world!

It was a hot and humid day in August when I landed at Narita Airport. Shortly afterwards, my German co-volunteer and I boarded the transfer bus with tinted windows towards Ueno Station. While roaming the outskirts of Tokyo, the vital and overgrown grassy vegetation slowly gave way to seemingly endless rows of concrete buildings with Tetris-like structures.

When we finally arrived in Nishinasuno, a good-humored Steven Cutting picked us up in a rundown but functional van. The doors were covered in cute drawings that showed signs of the van's previous use as a kindergarten vehicle.

### Learning to connect

The following twelve months at ARI taught me many things; I picked two which turned out to be particularly significant.

First was the importance of having a 'connection' to the world surrounding oneself. While this might sound a bit esoteric, I can't think of a better description. Daily sessions of weeding, tilling, sowing, feeding, milking, harvesting, butchering and cooking made me feel as if I was part of a system in which I had rarely interacted with before. After a while, the structured daily schedule with clean air, two hours of manual work and simple yet freshly prepared food made me feel at peace with the world.

The second thing is the skill of building and contributing to a community. Working and living together with people from over twenty different countries comes with all kinds of challenges. The

language barrier was easier to overcome than differences in cultural or personal characteristics. Some fellow community members were extremely skilled in engaging others to communicate or share experiences. Seeing these interactions leading to a caring, harmonious and interesting community was very inspiring. These skills helped me a lot in later jobs when I was working for the exchange student office at university or when putting together teams as a product manager.

### Changing direction

When I graduated from high school, I considered studying philosophy, but the experiences at ARI made me change my mind, and I chose to study renewable energy engineering instead. In addition to that, since ARI is inextricably linked with Japan, it also influenced my decision to return for an exchange term at Tokyo Institute of Technology in 2013 where I met great people who became some of my best friends over the years.

I'm now 31 years old and work as an engineer for a wind turbine manufacturer. The products we construct are up to 250 meters tall and harvest energy from the wind, which is in a sense an 'organic way' of producing energy. I have a vision that we can change the world and that our energy system will be completely sustainable at some point. There are still many challenges ahead but the progress in the last years gives reason to be optimistic.

I haven't settled yet, but I can say that I've seen the world and I know what I want in life. From all my experiences in the past ten years, the time at ARI was among the most interesting and pivotal for everything that happened afterward. When I meet people that are struggling with their situation or environment, I tend to think they could benefit from spending some weeks at ARI.



Now and then: Engineer Leander high up on a wind turbine in Germany (1); and as an ARI volunteer in 2008 (2).