

Sarajeon Rossitto

Nonprofit NGO Consultant – Asian Rural Institute,  
e-mail: Sarajeon.ari@gmail.com  
tel: +81 287 36 3111

## Training for Transformation\*

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**Summary.** Training can relay more than knowledge and skills but also influence values bringing about more than increased yields. This article focuses on how The Asian Rural Institute's (ARI) rural leaders training influences participants, by looking at learnings and individual changes connected to the program's core values of Servant Leadership, Community Building, and Sustainable Agriculture. This also determined the roles the diverse environment, training methods used and principles play. Based on a qualitative research with the 2013 participants, 31 individuals from 16 countries, original goals and motivations, related to leadership and technical training, and subsequent values learned were identified. Individual accounts illustrate the relationship between the transformations experienced and how the core values are incorporated into the program. This will introduce some of the changes described, how they understand their transformation through the program, and how they plan to implement this gained experience in their home communities. Conclusions include commentary on connections between these values and their relevance in an era of globalization.

**Key words:** transformation, servant leadership, community, international development, rural training.

### 1. Introduction

Training can relay more than knowledge and skills but also influence values bringing about more than increased skills, knowledge or yields. This study focuses on

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The Asian Rural Institute's (ARI) rural leaders training program, and its influence on its training participants. It primarily identified the participants' motivation and learnings, then subsequently reviewed and analyzed the individual changes reported in connection to the program's core values of Servant Leadership, Community Building, and Sustainable Agriculture.

Targeting the class of the 2013 participants, 31 individuals from 16 countries, this also determined the roles the diverse community environment, training methods and sustainable agriculture principles play in such value transformation. Based on the series of interviews, participants initially described their goals and motivations for joining the training, largely in terms of leadership and technical training skills development. Subsequent interviews revealed their learnings and personal changes in terms of values as the year progressed.

Individual participant interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle and end of the program. Findings illustrate the relationship between the transformation experienced and how the core values are incorporated into the program. Also, some of the commonly reported changes were described, together with how they understand their transformation through the program, and the planned implement of the gained experiences in their home communities. Conclusions will include commentary connecting these values and today's context, in an era of globalization.

### **1.1. The Asian Rural Institute (ARI)**

Between 1973 and 2013, the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) has invited more than 1100 grassroots leaders from 56 countries to rural Japan for a 9-month intensive rural leader training program. ARI strives to create an environment in which each participant gains not only knowledge and skills, but also engages in personal reflection and transformation that will transform their values and understanding of many issues in order to make connections between issues faced at the local and global levels.

ARI started as an international organisation training leaders who engaged in rural development in developing countries, to satisfy the demand for training by Christian churches and groups that had already taken part in rural development in Southeast Asian countries<sup>1</sup>.

ARI is an organisation committed to social justice; women, racial, ethnic and religious minority groups are targeted for program participation. Participants join the training program as representations from churches, orphanages, grassroots NGO, community-based organisations, or educational institutions at ARI these are referred to as Sending Bodies (SBs). Many come from remote or marginalized communities with limited travel or international experience. Thus, the personal

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<sup>1</sup> Asian Rural Institute Website: [www.ari-edu.org/en/our-training/](http://www.ari-edu.org/en/our-training/) [12.09.2014].

development and empowerment provides inspiration to apply these new values and skills for the good of the people in their own communities.

The ARI community includes Directors, staff, participants, volunteers and guests as well as and community supporters. At any one time, there may be 50 people from 20 or more different nations actively engaged in the institute. Nonetheless, there are frequent visitors from universities and overseas who join the ARI community for a weekend or month to learn through being part of the ARI community experience.

## 1.2. The questions for the program assessment

As the Asian Rural Institute approached its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it recognized that data and information had never been systematically compiled on curriculum, the elements of the program most meaningful for participants and/or which learnings were most suitable upon their return. Based on previous experience, ARI staff generally assumed there was an impact; however data on participants and graduates had only been compiled on an ad hoc basis. The purpose of this investigation is to assess the program, gather feedback from various sources, assess how it contributes to developing more peaceful communities and then draw up a list of recommendations for future program development.

For this article, it mainly addresses two overarching questions: *How can the training program change values of participants? What are the elements or factors that lead to value change?*

The more specific questions focus on ARI's three core values:

- A. *How does the environment of the training influence participants? What is the influence or how does it change them?*
- B. *How does utilizing the servant leadership methods as part of the training affect the participants? What is the influence or how does it change them?*
- C. *How does the use of sustainable organic farming impact participants? What is the influence or how does it change them?*

## 1.3. The data sources and methodology

The research covered the period from Spring 2013 to Spring 2014. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the research team gathered data from more than 200 people from 37 nations in the forms of interviews, surveys and visits. Specific to this article, a series of in-depth interviews with the 31 Participants from 16 countries of the 2013 class were sources of detailed reports of learnings and transformation.

Each year ARI brings together a diverse group of grassroots leaders for a 9-month intensive training. According to *Rev. Dr. Takami, the Founder of ARI*, “We are investing in persons who will dedicate their whole life to sustain life for the future. I think it’s a valid investment, and a lasting investment, in persons who will work as leaders for the people”<sup>2</sup>.

At the beginning of this assessment various methods were reviewed to ascertain what would best meet the organisation’s and donor’s goals. Ideas from Kirkpatrick’s “Evaluating Training Programs”<sup>3</sup> proved to provide useful insight. The four-level training evaluation model for the purpose of finding out about the reactions, learnings, behaviors and results influenced how questions were developed and data was compiled.

A chart of Key Themes were organized to address both hard and soft skills, and all of which are related to ARI values. “Hard” skills refer to more specific technical training, while “soft” skills refer to value oriented themes. The relationship between these, with an increasing emphasis on learning the latter through the former, appeared in many interviews.

Three trips were made to ARI to conduct interviews, at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the training in April, in the middle of the training in July and then in the last weeks of the training in November. First interviews were introductory and the midterm or July interviews focused on learnings, gains, and usefulness of the training based on key themes. Final interviews in late November focused on the changes the participants found in themselves.

## 2. About the ARI rural leaders training program

ARI’s motto “that we may live together” is found in all aspects of the program including the methods used. At ARI all work side by side, organisation leaders work alongside participants and volunteers engaging in field work, cleaning, scheduling, and programming. The training program involves a 360-degree experience of creating a new community in which distinctions between religions, ethnic and linguistic groups, educational background, caste, sex and gender, positions in community or organisation are replaced by a flat hierarchical structure that promotes equity. It therefore focuses not just on skills and knowledge enhancement but on values, which are influenced by this unusual opportunity.

The core values of community building, servant leadership and sustainable agriculture are built upon the foundational values of love of the soil, love of neigh-

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<sup>2</sup> Asian Rural Institute Website: [www.ari-edu.org/en/our-training/](http://www.ari-edu.org/en/our-training/) [12.09.2014].

<sup>3</sup> D.L. Kirkpatrick, J.D. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2009.

bors and love for God. The related social justice themes of community betterment, self-sufficiency, gender equality, local ownership, and empowerment are all present. The contents of the ARI curriculum has evolved over the past 40 years but the values have remained consistent.

## **2.1. Core values**

While there are many trainings that focus on community development, agricultural skills or leadership development; it is the conscious fusion of these differing training foci that make it distinctive. Descriptions of these three core values from the ARI handbook, promotional materials and website has been summarized below.

### **2.1.1. Community building**

Community building is different than academically oriented community development. The Foundation for Community Encouragement refers to Community building as “a group process that leads to deeper more authentic communication [...] experiential in nature, Community building us an adventure in human interaction based on a set of guidelines and principles rather than an agenda or particular procedure”<sup>4</sup>. Coming from diverse backgrounds, ARI community member engage in an adventure over the course of the year sharing everything together. It is more than studying together, they live, eat, and work together each day and every day, sharing many joys and sorrows along the way. Through regular sharing not just of knowledge but experience and ideas they attempt to help each become more effective leaders.

### **2.1.2. Servant leadership**

Servant leadership, an idea introduced in 1970 by Robert K Greenland, has recently come into more common use in the nonprofit sector beyond faith-based organizations but this concept of leading by serving ones' community is one of the core values behind the ARI training program since its inception. They learn through the experience of the director, management staff and volunteers modeling servant leadership on a daily basis. In the classroom, there is learning about models of leadership, for example Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and skills needed. Within the duration of the program, there are two opportunities for each participant to lead a field work team for two weeks. Besides these opportunities, they are also invited to take the lead on committees for community programs and events.

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<sup>4</sup> The Foundation for Community Encouragement <http://fce-community.org/what-is-cb/> [12.09.2014].

### 2.1.3. Foodlife

A term developed at ARI to show that food and life cannot be separated; *Foodlife* explicitly and implicitly shows that the two depend upon each other. This places emphasis on the production of healthy local food using natural methods. Value is placed on the whole cycle of food from taking care of the soil, sowing, harvesting, preparing meals, washing up afterwards, reusing leftover food and food sales and processing for income generation. Farmers and rural communities are looked up to, as the providers of life rather than looked down upon which is the case in many communities.

The essential parts of the curriculum include experiential learning (learning by doing), through day to day work in the fields (field management), classroom learning (introducing a variety of issues and skills) running community events as well as taking care of daily needs. External exposure complements learning through study tours to community organisations and organic farms, and regular visits by volunteers, guest speakers and supporters from a wide array of backgrounds enhance the ARI experience for participants.

It is the conscious fusion of these values using agriculture and leadership training as a means rather than simply a goal that makes the ARI program stand out. There is an intensive investment in individual and value-oriented transformation alongside the skills and knowledge development. This has the potential to empower them to influence their communities and community-based organisations to find new solutions to local problems.

## 2.2. About the 2013 participants

The 31 individuals who made up the 2013 class were from 16 countries. Table 1 summarises the demographics of the 2013 Participants. This diversity is similar to other years assessed. Close to half of the participants came from NGOs, community based, local or national organisations, while 39% were from faith-based institutions and a few were from educational organisations. Japanese participants join as individuals and as such do not have what ARI calls Sending Bodies (SBs). The gender balance was 42% women and 58% men; and more than half of the participants were in their 20's at the commencement of the program.

### 2.2.1. Motivation for participation

The motivation for participation is an important starting point before reviewing the learnings and transformation. Of the 31 Participants interviewed, 29 shared



Table 1. Demographics of the 2013 participants ( $N = 31$ ), Interviewed April, July and November

<b>I. Sex</b>			
Male	18(58%)	Female	13 (42%)
<b>II. Sending organisation (by Type of organisation)</b>			
Nonprofit NGOs (Local, & domestic)			14 (45%)
Educational institutions			2 (6%)
Faith based or religious			12 (39%)
Other			0
None			3 (10%)
<b>III. Age (at the start of the program)</b>			
20s			16 (52%)
30s			11 (35%)
40s			4 (13%)
<b>IV. Country of Origin</b>			
Brazil	1	Myanmar	4
Cameroon	1	Nepal	3
Ecuador	1	Philippines	2
India	3	Sri Lanka	1
Indonesia	3	Tanzania	2
Japan	3	Thailand	1
Kenya	1	Uganda	1
Malawi	3	Zambia	1
<b>V. Total Number of Countries</b>			16
<b>VII. Total Number of 2013 Participants</b>			31

Source: Author's own research.

their motivation for joining the ARI training. While there is no one simple answer, the motivation for joining the ARI training can be broken into 2 categories: 1) hard skills and 2) values based reasons.

Six of these participants' key motivation was to learn leadership from ARI that can be appropriate to their organisation's needs. Twelve of them were essentially interested in learning the technical skills specifically organic farming as something they hoped to apply in their community. Participant 14 explained: "I am from rural area, remote area. We needed many skill for many course – leadership, agricultural develop. We want to know for our community. ARI is a good training institute for agricultural leadership. Everything for me. Good for our community."

### 2.2.2. Learnings

The 2013 Participants were asked at the beginning, middle and end of the training what they wanted to learn and what they had learned. Most reported learning not only what they expected but also much more than they had anticipated. A majority still commented on the skill areas of organic farming, agriculture techniques and leadership skills development. The soft skill and value related learning areas are deeper and more closely related to the personal transformation that happens to participants through the training process. Other ideas that surfaced included those directly connected to the values ARI emphasizes, many of which might be hard to understand upon application to the program. However, over the course of the experience they come to understand the meaning of the training more fully. This includes the value of rural life, empowering women and children, and servant leadership.

This study focused on qualitative and descriptive data collection, but some quantifiable data was also tracked. For the final interviews, skills, knowledge or values they found useful, important or meaningful were tracked. The list of themes was developed by the research team through review of training materials and in discussion with ARI staff. The following chart (Table 2) tracks the themes mentioned by the 2013 participants. This combined the key program training themes, the frequency of direct or indirect mention of terms, and the percentage of participants. During the interview, the reason for the similar yet different questions was mainly due to the gaps in English language and communication skills.

Table 2. Reported Learnings in Final Interviews with 2013 participants,  $N = 31$ , question: *Which learnings did you find important/useful/meaningful?*

Specification	Number of 2013 Participants Mentioning this theme	Percentage of 2013 Participants
<b>1. Technical skills</b>		
Organic Farming Skills	31	100
Livestock	19	61.30
Use of Local Resources	17	54.84
Food self-sufficiency	17	54.84
Fruit and Vegetable Farming	16	51.62
Integrated farming	15	48.39
Appropriate Technology	11	35.49
<b>2. Servant leadership</b>		
Learning by doing	29	93.55
Leading by Serving Others	27	87.10
Community building	22	70.97
Community participation in decision making	18	58.07
Developing the abilities of others	14	45.17



Tab. 1. – cont.

Specification	Number of 2013 Participants Mentioning this theme	Percentage of 2013 Participants
<b>3. Practical skills and information</b>		
People Management	24	77.42
Observation tours, Study tours, visits around Japan	21	67.75
Communication Skills	19	61.30
Planning Skills	16	51.62
Environment and sustainable development	16	51.62
Learning about Japan, society, customs, values	16	51.62
Gender & Women's' Issues	10	32.26
English Language Skills	9	29.04
Health Issues	8	25.81
Water and Sanitation	5	16.13
Presentation Skills	4	12.91
Visits to ARI by guests	3	9.68
<b>4. Training program core values</b>		
Personal change	27	87.10
Living in a diverse environment	23	74.20
Community change	23	74.20
Accepting and respecting differences	22	70.97
Serving the marginalized	21	67.75
Foodlife	19	61.30
Dignity of Labour	17	54.84
The value of Rural life	15	48.39
Living in Harmony with Nature	13	41.94
Social justice	12	38.71
Tolerance	12	38.71
Love and Understanding	11	35.49
Compassion	11	35.49
Learning from Conflict	11	35.49
Patience	10	32.26
Spirituality	8	25.81
Understanding other religions	7	22.59
Forgiveness	7	22.59
Sacrifice	6	19.36

- – those represent the top themes mentioned, mentioned by more than 70% in the final interviews  
■ – those were mentioned by 50-69% of the participants

Source: Author's own research.

Since contexts, needs and experiences are diverse, this was useful only to track general trends. However, even if one was only to reflect upon those aspects of the training where more than 70% of participants mentioned, then the results would still include many of the key values ARI focuses on in the training program including the following (in order from highest): 1) Organic Farming Skills, 2) Learning by doing, 3) Leading by Serving Others, 4) Personal change, 5) People Management, 6) Living in a diverse environment, 7) Community change, 8) Community building, and 9) Accepting and respecting differences.

This information may not be meaningful on its own. But when coupled with more details of the interviews, we can see how these come together with the information on how the training can influence the participants. Beyond knowledge and skills transfer, the reported changes in themselves closely overlap with the learnings they mention, as listed above.

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. Main questions: How can a training program influence the values of participants? What are the elements or factors that lead to this value change?

In the final interviews in late November, all Participants were asked if, since their arrival in April, they felt they had changed. Thirty of the 31 Participants acknowledged they changed since participating in the training program. One person was not clear about the meaning of the question.

For those who responded: *Yes they had changed*, they were asked how they had changed their ways of thinking, ways of seeing, or ways of behav-

Table 3. Summary of Reported Individual Change Related to ARI Core Values (From final interviews with 2013 participants), exact questions: *In what way did you change? Did you change your ways of thinking or behaving? How did you grow or change? What made you change?*

<i>N</i> = 31	Reported Frequency	Percentage
Affirmative responses – Do you feel you changed?	30	97
Responses related to the diverse environment and community building	17	55
Responses related to servant leadership methods used.	27	87
Responses related to sustainable agriculture and foodlife	10	32

Source: Author's own research.

ing. When possible, Participants were asked to describe the ways they felt they had actually changed. Participants reported on many different themes and changes based on their experiences both on campus and from outside visits. Some started with personal changes including becoming more confident, calmer, more open to others, more patient, more humble and changing their world and a few specifically mentioned gaining a new philosophy of life or mission. Most mentioned ideas and values more generally that they came to appreciate over time.

Table 3 shows the number reporting changes in relationship to each of the core values. these are explained in more details below.

### **3.2. Core value related changes**

Connected to the questions about each of the core values, below are summaries of reported changes together with specific insights and reflections from Participants final interviews. While each person's experience is different, the outline below attempts to highlight common threads. An attempt was made to select diverse comments from participant but as it is impossible to include all comments; an effort was made to include comments from each part of the world and from different types of organisations, both male and female representatives of all ages.

#### **3.2.1. How does the environment of the training influence participants? What is the influence or how does it change them?**

While 74% and 70% reported learnings related to the diverse environment and community building, in the final interviews, out of the 31 participants from 2013, 17 persons or 55% reported more specific personal changes based on the diverse ARI environment. Common themes include recounting the importance of understanding each other, how the training taught them to be more patient and accepting of others. Several mentioned they recognized that each comes with different ideas based on their backgrounds. The differences which were a big challenge early in the training, were overcome through dialogue, acceptance, and tolerance.

Understanding difference involves becoming patient and open to others as evidenced by comments from Participant 34 who told us that "My opinion changed. I want to receive other person and their opinions. Example, when transplanting in the field, we discuss for the best idea." and Participant 26 who showed their change by telling us, "I became more calm, listen to more things."

Participant 10 explained to us their experience recognizing that the training had allowed them to become more understanding and accepting of others:

Before I came I considered myself open minded but maybe here I learned to be more tolerant, more patient [...] and also to be critical in a good sense to others but also to my myself. to think about myself. It was really a great experience to do this somehow I don't feel the same.

Participant 5 explained their changes in attitudes from working in a diverse group:

Be patience. My weakness, easily get angry and to hesitate and to ask please do like this. If I see bad attitudes I get angry. I really change approach to others in a good way. not get angry. understanding their attitudes how teach different people. each person is different. to be sensitive to each person. be close to each other to understand them.

This also included persons from different religious backgrounds which has not only meaning for ARI, but in light of current global affairs is particularly poignant, as Participant 16 explained:

it has changed me. Especially, religious background. Sometimes, back home (it is) difficult to approach someone Hindu, Muslim, without knowing. ARI institution embraces all. No boundary. It changed my life. I come to understand every faith. I shouldn't despise other people from other faith. Maybe if we are together, they have a fellowship in interfaith. That challenged me. that. If I go I have the chance to approach different religion, different faith. (it) helped in community development.

By understanding the differences and accepting them, they discover they learn more as they become open to new ideas, ways and change their world view. As Participant 15 reported, "learning for me to respect each member, More responsible of our doing. I learn to respect each other."

In addition they learn to understand boundaries and tolerance, as evidenced by Participant 29:

How to have relations with people with differences, and how to accept difference. Or how to make distance with people – comfortable distance. It's really invisible; how to understand difference, it's something nobody can tell me [...] I guess we do not have to like everything. There are many ways to solve issues without stress.

The active listening aspect of communication and direct engagement enable them to share and understand each other. Negotiation, nonviolent communication and conflict resolution skills taught at ARI also help when living in a community with persons from more than 20 diverse backgrounds. Participant 9 shared their experience and possible future benefits this way:

(here at ARI) We try to understand each other. Even in the community we have different feelings and view of life. Believe my learning here (will help me) how to organize with differences and different ideas. Even in field management we have an argument. In spite of the argument we come up with a good plan and good implementation. Sometimes I am very afraid in the church. We are Christian. I am afraid to have an argument. But I will allow people to have the argument so they can express that. They can realize deeply how people feel. Even in this institution we have problems. We have ego, pride. Some are realizing their point is different and the points are different. Even if they see other (ways or ideas it is) better they argue than they hold on. We become much closer.

The direct experience leaves a deep impression on them and lessons become embedded in them as Participant 4 explained: “I learn many things in theory in (my country) and I do many trainings in theory but here I can learn practically and different attitudes at ARI. [...] I need to accept others so and we are all human beings just one things I know the style and attitudes. So I can accept more types of the people when I work.”

Overcoming distinctions as basis of conflict and instead as a resource, require participants to rethink many of what they previously thought of to be truths. Through the community they build together at ARI they are able redefine themselves though new awareness and values of the surrounding environment community and each other.

### **3.2.2. How does utilizing the servant leadership methods as part of the training affect the participants?**

In discussing how the training program changed them, the Servant leadership methods, skills, and style were reported by 87% of the 2013 Participants. This closely overlaps with the reported learnings of learning by doing and leading by serving; which were reported by 93% and 87% of the participants, respectively. Many 2013 Participants reported the evolution of their understanding of what makes a person a leader through what they learned by doing and the modeling of servant leadership practiced at ARI.

From these stories, it is clear that the practice of servant leadership influences them not only as evidenced by the use of ARI terminology, learning by doing, leading by serving and serving as an example; but also by the specific examples they shared.

These values are directly connected to developing interpersonal skills and cooperative action more effectively. Together with this is the understanding that collaborative spirit and recognizing the importance of every member of a team or community go hand in hand. Participant 3 explained how he felt moved to make

changes in his work and in himself:

I want to change my behavior. I am not myself. I see was wrong. I also did like a dictator [...] I am founding member of my organisation. My organisation started and I am secretary. Sometimes before I think I know many things. I have experience. I have been working 15 years. I say, "You do not know." "You need to ask me what to do." I feel now what I do was wrong. Now, I know I need to ask many people. I was to not speak more and listen. Make groups and every person can think their responsible. I want to change myself behavior [...] now I am practicing ARI way. I look here many ARI staff, director they are working together. Every time give participants the chance to share. Give leadership. We do leadership. Every person doing together. Cleaning I want to share, I want to change myself my behaviors more.

Participant 7 also chose to share a before and after story this way:

Let me start about who I was before, before ARI I studied a lot, a lot of training and workshops and they helped me to become to a better leader. About the class work I learned practical. (Here) it is more learning by doing. By doing is how we learn. When I think about the leader, the leader is someone more respected. The main duty is to direct others and give duties. But here the Leader should be in the forefront and doing and with others doing together. Here I was very shocked to see people doing things [...] like dishwashing and cleaning the toilet. But it was so strange to me. If the director does, why I can't do the same? The way they see me in my community will be how I felt. Servant Leader is a certain type of Leader, which is unique. So why not (me too?)

These, together with other similar comments show this changed view of a what a leader is and/or how a leader behaves. These persons mention the evolution of seeing a leader from someone who orders others from a comfortable position, to a leader who is serves and leads by example. According to Participant 30: "A leader is not a commander but serve the people [...] I have got a great challenge and lesson from ARI on the role of servant leadership which completely changed my attitude of leadership." This same person, in the mid-term interview was highly critical of the methods used at ARI, but in the final interview continued talking at length about the influence of the training on their understanding of what makes one a leader:

Here at ARI the servant leadership completely changed me. [...] The staff always practicing servant leadership that is why. All the participants also. Always follow them. Not just learnt but practice every day. Meals. Every people are equal. No discrimination. Never learned before. I know servant leadership the word but not in the community. I know servant leadership as a Christian. But from ARI I really know it.

Every participant comes to ARI as leaders from different communities. But experiencing this situation where different leaders with unique styles actually learn to lead by demonstration, and learn through example without being too au-



thoritative, presents the opportunity to see servant leadership not just in theory but in practice. They learn to recognize the skills, vision and direction needed; as well as the importance of humility, good listening and the positive attitude to help others.

The training methods reflect the importance of community members and the need for leading by working directly with the people in the community and focusing on the needs of the people. Participant 4 explained:

Leaders must come down to the grass root people as the servant and good leadership. Leader should sacrifice everything to get the new result, to reach the goal, which depends on vision. As for a servant leader, must be ready to serve in community. I had learned different types of leadership style, different roles of leadership style in theory before. Now, here in ARI, I had learned more practically leading roles and styles in many different ways.

Servant leadership at ARI is manifested in the mundane and this also offers learning experiences, as Participant 22 described; “Cleaning – in my country, (I do) no cleaning. But in ARI, president cleaning, dishwashing. In my country, no dishwashing. I am official, no cleaning no dishwashing- very different.”

Learning through daily practice of servant leadership is something most 2013 participants want to apply when they return to their communities. Participant 14 shared their ideas saying

before we have project village, I go to visit them [...] they their duty, I do nothing. I just sit down. I don't do. They cook, [...] I realize if I go back to my country, (I will) do everything with them. Not top down, share it together, this is my thinking now, I change.

A primary concern for the participants once they go back to their communities is the implementation of the things they learn at ARI. For them to lead and create change, they understood that it should start from them, to put the learning – skills, knowledge and values – into practice. Depicting more examples of the changes from experiences, are comments from Participant 9:

It's because sometimes our community have stereotype of thinking. Persons in the high positions must be in the office. It changed my attitude and my thinking about working with people as a servant leader. Not just giving instruction. But working with people. Most of the leader in society that they think they know everything. They think they know everyone. Impose what they think is best. (But they know nothing about the people.)

A servant leader develops the community by working directly with and in the community instead of telling people what to do from someplace else. As Participant 18 illustrated: “my way of thinking changed a lot. At first I just think – this

is a leader. A person given the authority, directive, the leader there to guide and walk together with people. For us, leader give the command; here we have to participate, we have to do it.” The servant leader is with the community, listening to people in the community, actually asking their needs and wants, and responding based on active interaction.

### **3.2.3. How does the use of sustainable organic farming impact participants?**

Sustainable organic farming was the most discussed learned farming skill. However such learnings were not directly connected to the personal changes experienced. This may be because ARI employs natural sustainable farming techniques as a conduit for value development.

They realize the value of the food they eat as they take part in every step – from the growing to the harvesting of the food, until it reaches their table. While 100% mentioned organic farming in their learnings, it is not as highly mentioned in discussions about their value change. Only 32% mention Foodlife and farming directly as part of the main changes they experienced. This may be because many of them were already engaged in agriculture or because it is the bigger values than made a deeper impression upon them. However this may be seen as a success, since sustainable farming is the not endpoint but part of the entire training process.

The use of local resources in contrast to dependence on outside resources or unhealthy practices was mentioned by Participant 26: “ Now we start to think of sacred life. About being self-sufficient in all things, living without dependence on outside things. Community being self-sufficient about all the things, electricity, social needs.”

Developing more sustainable, self-sufficient communities are also ARI aims. Viewing the community from the starting point of what they actually have is significant for many who had previously only viewed their communities in terms of what they lacked. This is eye-opening for many who used to rely on outside support. Participant 17 portrayed this clearly:

Ask everybody, they say: we are poor, but we are rich, we have good soil, there is land. The problem is spending time in games; [...] Many time not used to develop self. From morning. Why our community say we are poor but we do this to time. [...] Leadership skills and organic farming through sustainable agriculture. If people can understand this thing, this can develop.

Reflecting on these comments, it can be said that even though the sustainable agriculture is not as highly mentioned as the personal transformation agent such as diverse environment and the servant leadership training approaches; Foodlife too does influence participants’ values. It may change them more in terms of skills

development, but the focus on self-sufficiency and understanding the wealth of community resources is no small matter. Also, the reuse and recycle of resources is not just good for the planet, but makes economic sense. Overall, 2013 participants gained an appreciation of Foodlife as part of their daily experience together and a significant aspect of their training.

### **3.3. Others: Knowledge-based and Issue-based Learnings**

Participants also reported developing an understanding of global and local issues through lectures, workshops and visits to different parts of Japan. The observation trips, homestays and study tours give exposure to homelessness, mercury poisoning, environmental impact of mining, and many other issues including suicide and the aging society issues. Seeing the challenges of development bring is often eye opening, as Participant 7 recalled with great surprise the difficulties faced in Japan:

We have also observed challenges people in Japan face. I saw with my own eyes the homeless. The study tour in western Japan we saw patients with leprosy, minamata disease [mercury poisoning illness] we saw the root of the disease. Those are some of the challenges here in Japan. And also patients of leprosy how they were treated. I was shocked to see how they were treated.

The next level for them will be to develop a deeper understanding about the connections between global and local issues. But few Participants discussed this as it may well be a recent experience for them. For some, the focus is at the level of how organic farming and agriculture are connected to the environment and hunger. For others it expands to the level of agriculture policy. Such experiences compounded with talking to other participants enhancing's their learning about the impacts of globalization and development in their societies. Seeing that the root causes and implications extend way beyond their communities enhances their worldview and way of thinking.

### **3.4. Expected use**

In the final interviews many participants expressed concern about what they will implement upon return to their communities; and 29 of the 31 Participants shared at least one example of actions they would like to take upon return. Using or sharing organic farming techniques, developing food processing, including participatory approaches, making use of local resources, serving the marginalized, and

raising awareness about the dangers of chemicals as well as gender and women issues were among the themes shared. While overlapping in values and skills, three general themes were identified: education programs, agricultural programs and community development programs.

Nine participants responded with interest in developing training programs to spread the learning gained. Five (5) participants would like to create agricultural trainings for their organisation and their community. Six (6) would like to develop trainings for vulnerable populations including women and vulnerable families. Two (2) participants showed interest in providing training to youth about sustainable agriculture. Ten Participants (10) mentioned implementing technical skills in organic or natural farming and three (3) would like to create a demonstration farm to encourage members of their community to engage in organic farming. Below are just a few representative cases of what 2013 Graduated plans were as they finished their training.

Four (4) participants would like to focus on developing their community once they return. Participant 2 specifically shared the desire to reduce hunger in their community through organic farming but also mentioned many of the other key themes covered in the ARI training:

My plan is I want to follow my dream because my dream is to reduce hunger. In an organic way from here. After reporting to my organisation, I want to start. The dangers of chemicals and about gender. Some I need to convince. Training helps you in how to change your mind --- how to change is very difficult but my best way is to explain very well. To understand then start practicing so they can see. If it's doing fine? If I am not doing fine I need to continue and not give up. As a leader I need to explain.

A good number of Participants were very focused using the learnings on solving local problems using the local issues they face, as Participant 22 explained in their explanation about how they would like to enhance the capacity of through the use of organic farming skills, trainings and even a credit union:

Gender and women issues, also big problem. My women, all have rape cases, many rape cases. [...] and maybe husband and wife fighting. This also problem. [...] Maybe also, men drinking, big problem. in Japan, man and women in early morning wakeup, in working – many hardworking women also. My community, women only housewives, no working outside. [...] Serving the marginalized – my community also, very poor. [...] (So I think I will try to) Make a credit union!

Participant 5 was primarily interested in helping the farmers build a sustainable community where they can be self-reliant in food:

My dream is build a sustainable community where people live self-reliance. [...] I live with farmers who struggle day by day, but they cannot uplift their livelihood. They want to live without depending on others – be self-sufficient. Almost all the

farmers' produce but the middlemen get the benefits. My dream is how to convince farmers to not buy fertilizer (but to) to make (it) at home, good for economy. And show own food processing. No need to be dependent on others. [...] First I want to practice myself. Little by little they will get interest(ed) and get what they want. I want to encourage them. I want to change this attitude (of getting something from, depending on others.)

As one last example, Participant 19 shared the commitment to return to enhance the capacity of the Sending Body and the community members,

My step one (is) think about my church vision. We have vision – Church is center to learning from community. [...] I can prepare (a translation of materials from English to my) language (and) makes interest (in this) knowledge of people in the country. Second thing, after that we have teamwork in church. I want to share all actions, experience, and some ideas with my team, how they think with me how they want to make plan together like that. [...] I want to continue my farm, but many things are new. [...] I want to learn in my farm before I teach my members. To teach the [...] new generation, younger ones.

While there were other examples of plans for return those here represent a snapshot of the different needs, communities and plans. However, in education, skills and knowledge development and other community programming many of the previous mentioned values of community building, servant leadership and food life are raised.

#### **4. Commentary and conclusions**

This attempted to ask if Asian Rural Institute's rural leaders training program can affect participating individuals' values and how the diverse environment, servant leadership approach and sustainable agriculture skills influenced them. The goal was to understand what value changes were reported as they reflected on the program, reported their individual changes and their implementation plans.

Almost all 2013 Participants reported some type of personal transformation and had expectations to bring the program learning's back to their home communities. What is also learned from the Participant interviews is there is an overlap between the reporting of what they learned and how they personally changed, and that the value base of the training program is what influences them. The diverse community setting, the participatory flat organisational structure and Foodlife aspects all contribute to changes in values, skills and knowledge. These changes also inspire them to implement not just skills-based programs but also to actively share new values in the form of servant leadership approaches, namely leading by serving their communities.



ARI invests time, effort, skills, patience and funding in each individual who is then expected to come out of the program with new knowledge and skills. With these are the development of a deeper understanding of complex ideas, global issues and formation of new values and ways of seeing others that changes their worldview. These participants who become graduates bring not only the knowledge and skills back but also these changed perceptions to their personal and professional lives.

For a training solely focused on the development of agricultural skills or learning about global issues, a three-month training program may be sufficient. But ARI aims are much higher and multi-dimensional. In order to transform values, and to also go from tolerating personal differences to the level of respecting and accepting differences requires a certain “deprogramming.” This is particularly true when it comes to servant leadership, an approach that is generally outside the purview of how most think of what makes one a leader. More than skill, and knowledge transfer it is the value-based change which move community leaders to become more equalitarian and inclusive by working directly in the community with the people they serve rather than ordering from above.

So what does this mean for their communities’ futures, and dealing with the effects of globalization? At face value, some of the participants’ plans may be seen as the simple use of agriculture skills and knowledge. But upon review of their stories, the values and sustainability aspect as well as the commitment to work with different marginalized populations, reflect the core values of ARI. In many villages around the world, becoming more effective at feeding the local population nutritious food while not becoming dependent on INGO or government seed, GMO, or chemical fertilizer programs done with the backing of multi-national corporations is no small feat. At the local community level, hunger and disasters, both natural and human made, take their toll disrupting communities ties and resilience. As consumption and access to resources become less balanced; and as competition brings more precarious consequences, it is clear that there is a need for value-based training and training not solely based on increased economic development or field outputs.

ARI was founded based on the reality that our failure to accept and understand each other causes many problems in the world, and 40 years later this is no less true. While some policies and global campaigns aim to end hunger or curb the influence of extremism by starting from the top down; they do not necessarily take into consideration the human issues involved – the lack of trust and understanding between people on the ground where people live. ARI starts at the individual human level by first creating a uniquely diverse community based on social justice values. Participants develop by coming to know others so different from themselves and living in peace through sharing and building a community strong in their diversity. The development of grassroots leadership is enhanced through the



sharing of low technology skills and knowledge that may also assist in bringing about positive concrete changes from the bottom up; which when coupled with the values may in the long-term bring about yet more nuanced social changes and/or harmony.

While these interviews cannot prove a direct link between the training program and major changes in communities; it does show that the training program itself has a strong influence over individuals who in turn are motivated to bring about change.

In order to discover more about their actual implementation, future follow-up interviews would be needed to assess to what degree they are able to follow through, what challenges they face and how ARI might assist future participants to overcome difficulties.

The overarching purpose of the Rural Leaders Training Program is to discover the meaning of the ARI motto “That We May Live Together” and should the 2013 participants be able to follow through on a fraction of what they anticipate, they would surely be living up to ARI’s expectations and empower others to also better themselves.

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## Szkolenie dla przemian

**Streszczenie.** Szkolenie może przekazywać coś więcej niż tylko wiedzę i umiejętności – może także oddziaływać poprzez wartości, przynosząc korzyści wykraczające poza wzrost plonów czy zysków. Niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na pokazaniu, jak specjalne szkolenia prowadzone przez Azjatycki Instytut Wiejski (Asian Rural Institute – ARI) wpływają na ukształtowanie wiejskich liderów, wskazując na rolę, jaką w tej mierze odgrywają fundamentalne wartości, na których zasada się program: służebne przywództwo, budowanie wspólnoty i zrównoważone rolnictwo. Definiuje się przy tym znaczenie poszczególnych elementów: zróżnicowanego środowiska, stosowanych metod szkoleniowych oraz wpajanych zasad. Na podstawie jakościowych badań 31 osób z 16 krajów

będących uczestnikami omawianych szkoleń w 2013 r. określono pierwotne oczekiwania i motywacje związane ze szkoleniem umiejętności przywódczych i umiejętności technicznych, a następnie przyswajane w trakcie szkolenia wartości. Indywidualne narracje ilustrują zależności między przeobrażeniami, jakich uczestnicy doświadczyli, a sposobem wbudowania kluczowych wartości w program szkoleniowy. Z tej perspektywy ukazuje się niektóre z opisywanych przemian, jakie zaszły w uczestnikach, ich świadomość własnej transformacji oraz ich plany względem wdrożenia nowych doświadczeń w ich macierzystej wspólnotie. W konkluzji zamieszczono komentarz na temat wzajemnych związków między wartościami zaszczepianymi przez program oraz na temat ich znaczenia w erze globalizacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transformacja, przywództwo służebne, wspólnota, rozwój międzynarodowy, szkolenie wiejskich liderów