

HARVEST



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Learning From the Most Disastrous Earthquake

Prof. (Dr.) Teruo Miura, Dean



Many fishing villages were wiped away by earthquake and Tsunami

How unmerciful disasters were! Japanese people have been screaming as they have encountered a series of disasters. But we gained some learning from them.

On the 11th of March, an enormous earthquake occurred in northeastern part of Japan. It was reported that the center of the shock was the sea floor in the off-shore of Miyagi, showing "Magnitude 9" which was the biggest shock in a thousand year history in Japan. A bulk of houses, roads, railways, and buildings were destroyed by the shock. Sequentially, huge merciless Tsunami attacked the coastal areas of Pacific Ocean. More than 70,000 people were drawn to death, and a number of towns and villages were totally wiped away. Moreover, Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant has become out of control, spreading very toxic radioactivity over more than 500 km diameter away. Many of the people had to evacuate their home towns and villages and have been bound to stay in temporarily arranged places such as school buildings, sport centers, meeting halls, etc. Japanese government murmured "I do not know for sure when they are able to go back to their home." In

fact, harmful radioactivity will remain in the affected areas for few decades. It is indeed really miserable experiences for many people.

Even so, there was appreciation among people who helped and who were helped. The appreciation has generated more unity and solidarity among people. A large number of people from many corners of Japan and overseas (including India) came and helped for rescuing missing people, restoring victims' livelihood, raising fund, and so on. How wonderful it is that human-beings make such solidarity in disastrous conditions. Human-being have nature to help one another.

Do you think such human nature is God's creation? When we believe it, we will get more confidence and energy that we will work harder to make better world. Our concerns and efforts may reduce the place where people have suffered and struggled with disasters, injustice, social conflicts, and poverty.

*"Because everyone will do what is right,
there will be peace and security for ever"*
[ISAIAH: 32:17]

The Fruits of Rural Education For Rural Women

Trained Rural Women Became Teachers for Other Rural Women in Tailoring Training



Phoolmani (left) and Suman -The trained rural women who became tailoring teachers

Six-hundred sets of the uniform for the pupils of ASHA School were completed in this year. These uniforms were not made by the professional tailors, but by seven village women. Furthermore, the five village women who newly participated in the tailoring project this year acquired tailoring skills as well as foot-operated sewing machines.

The person who taught how to tailor was not teacher coming from town but the two village women who became skillful through our three-years trainings.



Pupils wearing new uniforms

ASHA Gramin College

This achievement is a bright hope as a model case of AHSA Gramin College (AGC) – a college for mainly rural youth and adult men and women (Gramin means village).

Last year, we opened four small AGCs in the villages of Allahabad. It aimed to find out the possibilities whether pragmatic learning was took place, and whether they could be learning places of those villages, where the village residents who acquired knowledge and skills could share these to other village residents. We started the trials with anxiety about unknown reaction of the village people toward the concept of school that emphasizes participation of village residents as well as its contribution for rural development.

Trained Women and Their Backgrounds

Suman and Phoolmani of Chota Kanjasa Village are women who taught tailoring as teachers. They are single.

"I completed only 7th grade and did not have any job. So, I participated in the tailoring training of MSCNE". That was three years ago, when she was 18 years old.

"I wanted to learn some skills that would be helpful for living before marriage".

They are the daughters of so-called "landless farmers" who do not own land. Their family livelihoods are fishery, grass-rope making, farm labor and sand-carrying at riverside etc.

The village was poorer compared to the neighboring villages. There were many non-enrolled and drop-out children in the village.



Uniform making in tailoring training

Expanding Women's Empowerment

However, this village became the most active village among our project areas. For example, the ASHA School has the biggest enrollment of the pupils (180) among all the ASHA Schools. The women's Self-Help Groups maintained their activities without ceasing. Furthermore, the number of women who participated in seminars and literacy classes have been increasing. The significant emergence of such women who make efforts for self-reliance promoted vitality among the village.

We wish that Chota Kanjasa Village may positively influence neighboring villages!

Securing Lives and Livelihoods: *

A Multi-Touch Approach for Healthy, Self-Reliant Village Communities

By equipping rural communities in Allahabad, India, with tools of education, information and awareness, MSCNE, Japanese NGO, Asian Sustainable Holistic Approach (ASHA), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are transforming lives of rural villages.

Chota Kanjasa is a small village amid lush green fields on the banks of the Yamuna in the Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The village, located away from the hustle-bustle of Allahabad city, is mostly inhabited by fishermen and landless farm labourers.

The place is bustling with activity as we enter. A group of women is sitting on a plastic mattress, making entries in their registers; another group is watching intently as a man demonstrates the correct way of planting seeds and covering them with leaves for protection from the wind, rain and animals; a lady addresses some women over the din caused by children and a group of elders busy talking to each other.

"The women are attending a workshop on kitchen gardens today. Since most of the people here are landless, being farm labourers or belonging to indigenous tribes, we are teaching them how to grow vegetables in bags that can be placed in small but safe spaces, even on their roofs. The focus of the workshop today is on benefits of locally grown vegetables," explains Ms. Manmeet, a health coordinator at MSCNE.

"We realised that there is hardly any awareness here on the nutritive value of food items. People eat to fill stomachs not to stay healthy. An average meal here mostly consists of potato, rice and wheat. The lack of essential nutrients has led to the widespread prevalence of a number of diseases," she elaborates. "The majority of children here, for example, suffered from chronic malnutrition."

Superstition mixed with a lack of awareness on good health practices was a potent combination that MSCNE/ASHA had to work hard to address. For instance, it was considered bad luck to acknowledge a pregnancy, so few women sought prenatal care. Few understood the benefits of immediate and exclusive breastfeeding. Families were hesitant to regularly weigh their newborns as they feared it would jinx the baby's health. It was felt that the best way to improve the health conditions was to adopt a holistic approach; that is centralizing knowledge and information sharing while addressing other quality of life issues like education and employment.

To realize this aim, ASHA with support from JICA runs two major programs in and around six villages in Allahabad. The Improvement of Rural Nutrition and Child and Mother Care Project addresses the problem of malnutrition of mothers and their infants through the identification and training of Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) and organization of regular health seminars.

The Practical Farmer's Education for Improve-

ment of Quality of Life among Small-scale Farmers in North India is synergized with ASHA School and non-formal education projects to provide critical income-generation and livelihood opportunities through micro-finance and self-help groups and training in animal husbandry and food processing.



Addressing early life health concerns

As part of the initiative, VHVs play a critical role in spreading awareness and ensuring follow-up on key health concerns. They conduct seminar and workshop on a regular basis to ensure that the right messages are continually circulated amongst the target communities. ...Thirteen VHVs circulated in six villages, offering advice and returning often to check in on the expectant mothers and the babies as they are born. ... "More than two hundred children are being monitored currently," confirms Ms. Miura.

"We record the height and weight of newborns every three months in the Mother and Child books which are provided to pregnant women and mothers who have children below the age of five. There booklets provide information about the baby's growth and vaccination status," Ms. Phoolkali, a VHV.

If the baby does not register satisfactory growth over a period of time, the VHV advises the mother on food intake and breastfeeding practices, and visits the family regularly to keep track of the child's growth. "We try to understand what kind of issues confront the family,



VHV weighing infant

why is it that the child is not receiving adequate nutrition," explains Ms. Pushpa Devi, a VHV from Kanjasa.

"Initially, the women refused to attend health gatherings; many did not believe in our programs. They have gradually started taking us seriously, after seeing some real results" says Ms. Manmeet, health coordinator.

"Challenges still remain our expectation to reach a larger number of people has not been entirely fulfilled.

Also, it takes time to bring change in people's attitudes and to ensure that the change is permanent," says Dr. Miura.



Planting seeds of security

The Practical Farmers' Education Project launched in April 2009 provides essential training in integrated sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry and poultry farming, and food processing to local farmers to expose them to varied ways of generating income.

"I was unemployed until a few years back," says Mr. Rajendra Prasad, as he tends to a batch of yellow chickens. "I heard about the animal husbandry program in MSCNE/ASHA and enrolled for training. I am a poultry farmer now. Today I earn enough to meet all the needs of my family."

Along with technical training, MSCNE/ASHA considered it critical to build the financial management capacity of the residents. The formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) played a significant role. Today the SHGs, through a system of microfinance and microcredit, enable villagers to get loans for meeting urgent expenses at affordable interest rates.

Active SHG members along with members of other youth groups go from village to village, motivating people to reap gains from micro-finance.

Availability of credit and opportunities for saving has also contributed to the empowerment of women in the community. "Initially the women were not convinced—as SHGs were not popular in the area. ASHA facilitators addressed this issue by enrolling the support of the more social and well-liked women. Once convinced, these women helped pull the other women in" explained Dr. Miura.

"Each SHG has about 10-12 members. As the women are trained in income generation activities, and are mentored to play the roles of president, vice-president and treasurer for the group, they develop confidence. Some take on bigger, leadership roles in propagating MSCNE/ASHA's work," says Ms. Namita, coordinator of microfinance at MSCNE.

Many local residents report an increase in income; average literacy rates also showed improvement. Even more importantly perhaps, a much higher number of girls now attend school. Women feel better equipped to take charge of the well being of their family, as well of their own.

ASHA is truly hopeful that it will continue to make a difference in the lives of the rural poor by leveraging the lessons learnt so far. Important among those is the need of using the right tools and offering the right incentives to affect lasting change.

***This article is extracted from the original article of One World South Asia, the international non-profit network, 22 October, 2010**

Cultivating Mushroom

Localizing Techniques



Happy to harvest mushroom

The academic year 2010-2011 for SCSA course has witnessed an encouraging result in the field of mushroom culture. The technical knowhow of mushroom cultivation, attained from various foreign sources like Thailand and Japan, were modified and improved in accordance to the available resources and the needs of the rural people. The practical applicability of the techniques has made mushroom cultivation one of the main interest and subject activities among the students hailing from different part of India and Myanmar.

The low cost and relatively simple methods and the promise of good returns attract them in wanting to take the ideas home to their rural population.

The idea is such that mushrooms, which are otherwise seasonal and endemic, are made to grow under controlled environment in season and out of season in a low cost investment. All required materials like sawdust, bamboo and housing materials are locally collected and utilized. The technique follows four simple steps.

STEP 1. Spore Production / Tissues Culture

Due to its delicate nature, which draws the need for hygienic operation, spore productions are done in the lab under sterilized environment. Tissues from fresh mushrooms are collected and inoculated in a growth media prepared from potato extract, dextrose and agar (PDA). The tools used in the operation are sterilized to avoid contamination especially the growth media which is done by the help of an autoclave.



Preparing spawn-making



Spawn is ready for use

STEP 2. Spawn Production

Spores give rise to thread like mycelium growth in the PDA, which are unstable and unpredictable in growth and for which reason they are not used for direct planting. Spawn or the planting materials are produced by growing the spores in steam-sterilized grains for which purpose we used sorghum and wheat. The whole operation of inoculation is done in a sterilized transfer box made up of cardboard and glass. UV bulbs and alcohol at 70-80% concentration are used to sterilize the same.

STEP 3. Preparing the Substrate

The growth media or substrate is prepared from a combination of 100kg sawdust, limestone(700g), rice bran(3.6kg), bone meal (500g), plaster of paris(300g), sugar(500g), and a little of Epsom salt(100g) and DAP(500g). Rice husk, straw etc can also be used instead of sawdust. The ingredients are mixed thoroughly adding 50% moisture by way of spraying and turning the substrate after which they are finally packed in plastic bags preferably of the size 6/12". The bags are then capped and plucked with cotton and a piece of plastic. They are then steam sterilized in a drum for two hours at 80⁰ Celsius and above.



Practicing inoculating spore in clean bench

STEP 4. Inoculation in Substrate

The sterile bags from the above step are left to cool before inoculation. The whole processes of planting and inoculation are done in a sterile room with utmost care to avoid any contamination from unwanted spores from the air. After planting, the bags are capped with a piece of paper and rubber band and are transferred to the mushroom house.

STEP 5. Mushroom Shed Maintenance

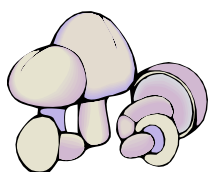
It is of utmost importance to maintain temperature and humidity of the mushroom house. Sterilization prior to usage is done by the help of steaming the room at above 80°C for about 4-6 hours by the help of a steaming device. Maintenance of temperature and humidity is done by way of spraying water with the help of pipe fittings or by manual spray. The floor of the room is filled with sand (15-20cm) to enhance temperature maintenance and to avoid muddying of the floor.



Constructing original stuffer of substrate



Mushroom harvest



STEP 6. Mushroom Harvest

The mushrooms started fruiting at about 5-6 weeks after planting or after the substrate has been fully colonized by the mycelium. At about the time when the mushroom pinheads started showing, the papers that covers the caps are removed and the bags are periodically sprayed with water to avoid drying out of the pinheads. The pinheads mature in three to four days and harvest is done according to demands. Mushrooms are also dried and stored for appreciable period without much difficulty.

Selection of Mushroom Species:

Temperature ranges suitable for mushroom growth differ from species to species. Selection of mushrooms is so done that its growth and development are suitable to the climate of the area, and monitoring of temperature and moisture can be done at the minimum cost for maximum sustainability of the project. Pleurotus ostreatus, or oyster as commonly known, grows best at a temperature range of 12-20°C and is known as a low temperature Pleurotus. However, its tolerance to the tropical temperature of Allahabad is notably strong as seen here in our school.

Congratulations for the Commencement of Their New Journey!

8 Graduates in SCSA 2010-2011



Eight graduates and Dean, Dr. Miura, after the Commencement

SCSA graduation ceremony for 2010-2011 was held on 15th April, 2011. There were 8 participants who completed whole program, while three out of eleven withdrew before the completion.

The participants of 2010-2011 was a group which embraced various differences in culture, custom, eating habit and language as they hailed from different backgrounds including Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibetan and Mongolian in India as well as from the neighboring country, Myanmar.

The concrete plan of some participants that they will work in sustainable agricultural projects back in their places made them to study more seriously.

The precious experiences of mushroom cultivation starting from culturing spawn encouraged the participants to plan the cultivation in their places after the course.

However, there were three dropouts in this year. All the three who left without completion hailed from Allahabad. One became homesick even through their homes were near-by, one was arranged for marriage by her parents during the course, and one pretended to be ill and left SCSA. Now we face challenges in taking measures how to stop dropouts and how to develop SCSA for the future.

We need to make more efforts to nurture leaders who love and feel pride in farming for rural development since more and more young people are leaving farming in this modernization-age.

We thank God for His guidance for these new graduates!

Study Tour on Breastfeeding

Gaining Confidence and Fulfillment in VHV Activities

Eleven Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) and MSCNE Health staffs visited Lalitpur District which is located in southernmost part of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) for study tour from 22 to 27 March. It was first time to conduct such big trip after the initiation of VHV project in 2008. Although the primary concern was whether the families of VHVs would allow them to participate in the trip since all of them are basically housewives, all the members declared able to participate in the trip including Mrs. Shushma who was pregnant. Four children who were below two-years-old also accompanied them in the 6-days-5-nights trip in order to practice the World Health Organization (WHO) standard of breastfeeding-practice, recommending that breastfeeding should be given to at least 2 years-old infants.

The purpose of the trip was :

- 1) to observe the district-wide activities that are delivered in order "to protect children from sickness and malnutrition through child-rearing with exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months, and after 6 months with proper and adequate complementary food with continuous breastfeeding",
- 2) to have an exchange with breastfeeding supporters of the communities, and
- 3) to strengthen the relationships among VHVs.

The First Long Trip to the Place 700km

Lalitpur District is depopulated with 1.21 million people in the populated state, U.P.. (Allahabad is the most populated district in U.P. with 5.95 million showed according to Census 2011). There are various on-going government projects as it is the least economically-performing district. This time, our health-team visited the joint project of District Government and UNICEF, directed by a professor, Dr. Kshwaha, Pediatrics, B.R.D. Medical College, Gorakhpur. The project-coordinator, Mr. Praveen was also sent from Gorakhpur.

Before the trip, the staffs of health project visited the college in Gorakhpur and listened to the explanation of the project for the past five-years. They allowed the team to observe the practice of breastfeeding support in the college hospital and a rehabilitation centre for malnourished children.

In Lalitpur, the Allahabad health-team observed the activities of government-employed health workers such as Anganwadi Workers (AWW; Mother and Child Care Worker) who were trained on breastfeeding for 3 days,



VHVs heading to the next destination in Lalipur

and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) who promoted health for pregnant women, and had an exchange.



Visit to Medical College, Gorakhpur

VHVs from Allahabad also participated in the quiz competition held once a month and received applause when they gave the correct answer.

Hint for improvements

The contents of their activities were not very different from VHV activities, while, in Lalitpur project, men and single women who have high mobility were hired in order to cover the district-wide activities. It encourages village people to cooperate because women and men work together.

These things were eye-openers for VHVs and health staffs. The team had meeting every day and reflected upon their observations.



Exchange with AWWs and VHVs

The team had planning meeting back in Allahabad in March for the next operational year. The meeting was vital in revising past activities and discussing on expansion of responsible areas and working time and appointment of new VHVs and assistants who are single women. The number of VHV leaders was also increased.

The trip showed fruitful results since VHVs learned many important things and gained pride and confidence as VHV. As well, it increased their fellowship through participation in the long trip over 700km, even though it even used to be challenge for them to participate in the trainings conducted locally at MSCNE.

There are five SCSA graduates who take important roles for project management at MSCNE. As graduates, they are good advisors for the present SCSA participants. The village youths are influenced by them through observing their work and confidence. They are expected to be skillful and active grassroots rural development workers when they go back to their respective communities and organizations. The graduates who are now staff are the manifestation of our achievements in nurturing human resources in rural development since we have watched their growth since they left their villages to come to MSCNE.

(1.Name, 2. SCSA batch-year, 3. Position, 4. Home place, 5. About present and future activities)

Five SCSA Graduates Working at MSCNE



Him (right) with Mrs. Kakuta, Dietitian from Japan

1. Him Kumari Gurun
2. 2007
3. Field Assistant, Mother and Child Health Project
4. Nepal

5. *I'm happy as I am enjoying work with village people, especially in teaching new knowledge on breastfeeding and other health-related topics. In the future, I want to make SHGs in my village in Nepal.*

1. Vijay Kumar Bind
2. 2007
3. SHG Animator and Agricultural Extension
4. Allahabad Dist., India



Vijay (left) with Mrs. Namita, Project Coordinator

5. *This year, I became in charge of agricultural extension in the project villages. I want to work with village farmers, and want to increase the number of farmers who practice sustainable agriculture.*

1. Rajendra Kumar
2. 2008
3. Field Assistant, SCSA
4. Bihar State, India

5. *When I came to work in SCSA field, I wanted to go back because field work was very hard and I needed to take responsibility. But I decided to work so that I will learn more farming skills and can teach SHGs in my village.*



Rajendra (right) with Mr. Santosh Kumar, SCSA field manager

1. Zawn Nyo
2. 2008
3. Mess assistant and Food processing
4. Kachin State, Myanmar



Nyo (right) with Mrs. Parmila, Mess in Charge

5. *I feel happy to stay with different people with different character, knowledge and skills. By sharing and working together, we can learn from each other. I want to be a teacher of agricultural school in Myanmar.*



1. Pouramthuan R. K.
2. 2010
3. Associate Coordinator, SCSA
4. Manipur State, India

5. *I feel privileged to work with people from different cultures. I'm also happy for the fact that a little thing I do here makes a difference somewhere in the lives of the rural poor. I plan to get a degree on Social Work, and want to establish an educational farm for an rural community.*

Announcement



NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Keiko has finished the Master course in University of the Philippines Los Banos and came back to our school! Him Kumari, 2007 SCSA graduate has joined us as a staff after 1 year internship in MSCNE. Jimmy was recruited as a dietician to intensify the diet program for rural health project. Pouram just graduated from SCSA last year, is assigned as SCSA assistant coordinator. *From right*

Keiko Kawaguchi Project research & development
Jimmy Chaurasia Rural Health
Him Kumari Rural Health
Pouramthuan R.K. SCSA

Visitors

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Hiroyuki Hanada ···· | RHP JICA project coordinator in Kalinpong | Kazuhiko Takamaru··· | Expert of Food Processing |
| Shonai church group · | Visitor from Japan | Shoko Okumura····· | Nutritionist, Rakuno Gakuen univ |
| Keisen univ group ···· | Visitor from Japan | Kohei Yokoyama····· | JAFS coordinator |
| Takahiro Hurusyo ···· | Organic farmer in JAPAN | Tadashi Yamazaki··· | JICA Global Plaza |
| Kiyomu Makimoto ···· | Chef, Director of organic restaurant | Takako Yamada····· | JICA Global Plaza |
| Takako Miura ········ | Expert of Mother & Child care | Kazuo Sato········· | Organic farmer in JAPAN |
| Kiyoshi Ishihara ······ | Expert of Food Processing | Kana Shimoda······· | Midwife, JOCV |



Rice transplanting in Gobar farm



With Simosato Farm at Ogawa

STAFF STUDY in JAPAN

Learning, Appreciating, and Sushi,,,

With support of Asian Sustainable Holistic Approach (ASHA) in JAPAN, our farm manager, Santosh Kumar, visited Japan for 3 months from 3rd April 2011 to 22nd June 2011. Main purpose was to learn and practice organic farming in Japan.

He stayed several places such as Aino-kai (an organic farmers' association), Tsuchi to Inochi wo Kangaerukai (the cooperative that thinks about soil and life), of which the president is Mr. Takamaru, and Gobar Meat Processing Factory where Dr. Ishihara is a president. The places of Mr. Takamaru and Dr. Ishihara were familiar with Santosh because they have been assisted in in our food processing project in India as experts. He also stayed in Ogawa Town, Saitama, where many farmers practice organic farming. Especially, Mr. Yosinori Kaneko, an organic farmer of Shimosato Farm as well as the director of a non-profit organization, National Organic Agriculture Promotion Council, took care of him.

Overall, he was warmly welcomed by all of them and experienced various organic farming practices. Santosh said at evaluation session, *" in Japan I realized importance of human relationship. The barrier of language caused communication gap. But people tried to communicate with me and encourage me a lot. The warm hearts reminded me of my family, and I understood what we, the people in India and our community, need to develop. I will not forget all of the memories in Japan, and I want to share the knowledge*