

## 'Towards the 21st Century' Revisited <Part 3>

### Working with communities through fireflies

I have continued efforts to deepen ties with my local communities in Miyazaki prefecture after retiring from the international agricultural development work that I had engaged in for over 30 years as a consultant.

Many of my activities in developing countries were carried out on the premise of recognizing the importance of collaboration with local residents and organizations. In retrospect, while doing this I actually had less interaction with my own local community while leading my double life in Tokyo and my hometown. I made some excuses such as "I have many things I have to do in Tokyo" or "I do not have enough time to do things in my hometown right now."

Taking my retirement as an opportunity, I returned to my hometown and began to get directly and deeply involved with the local community. In the meantime, I learned about an NPO conducting regional revitalization and environmental protection in my hometown. From my past work experience, I thought I could contribute something in the fields of agriculture and environment and that's why I joined the NPO. They conduct activities involving breeding fireflies for the purpose of environmental protection and local community development.



Members of the NPO

Let me explain about our firefly activities. Two species of fireflies, Genji-botaru (*Luciola cruciata*) and Hime-botaru (*Hotaria parvula*) are found in our town. The main focus of our work are the waterways favored by genji-botaru. We maintain water channels in a labor-intensive way weeding and litter picking, and breeding thiaridal snails (*Semisulcospira libertina*) as feed for fireflies, as well as planting sunshade trees at the sites. We also propagate fireflies at members' homes and distribute firefly information on our NPO's web site during the fireflies' season. We set a day for the field work every month, and other days are left free for other activities.

Regarding the breeding activity, adult fireflies are captured from water channels before the eggs are laid in early May. When the eggs hatch in the middle of June, we feed them on thiaridal snails to promote larval growth. Next year the larvae are released to water channels in February from where they start emerging as adults and start flying from late April. Recently we have made propagation possible by using artificially raised adults, however we can obtain only about 20 artificially hatched larvae with our inexperienced rearing skills and we are still not able to release the adult fireflies to our sites.

We hope one day we will release adult fireflies into the old moat of the ruin of the castle in town, and the site could be a soothing place for the people in town in the future. We also expect our activity to spur interest and recognition of the purpose of our NPO among the people in town.



Emergence device

Six years have passed since I returned to my hometown and while I have become familiar with the area again, however somehow it still doesn't feel comfortable. Because I had been away from my hometown for over 40 years, I feel like I cannot adapt to the strong interpersonal relationship in rural area that I took for granted before. Human relationships unique to rural areas are deeply intertwined with local economics and culture, and that forms rural communities. On the other hand, the terms "returning to the countryside" and "remote work" are often heard a lot lately and the sense of distance between the city and the countryside is decreasing. In fact, half of my domestic business was handled at my hometown for the last 10 years before leaving AAI.

I suspect that the human relationship unique to rural areas could change and the relationship between city and countryside will also change when job opportunities in rural areas are increased while people in the countryside get urban style work while staying in rural areas.