

On the occasion of the publication of the *AAINews* No. 60

AAINews was first published on October 1, 1995. We, the AAI staff, are very happy to publish the 60th issue of the *AAINews* this month 12 years and one month after the first publication. Simultaneously, we are extremely grateful for your understanding and support for our work over all these years.

As we wrote in our launching remarks for the first *AAINews*, if one combines the abbreviation “AAI” from our company’s English name “Appropriate Agriculture International” with “N” for “Newsletter”, it becomes “AAIN”. AAIN means “spring” or “eye” in Arabic and it is a word that conjures up the image of an oasis which holds water, the most important resource in arid areas and a place which offers peace and comfort. Literally, the AAIN issues have been offering an oasis for our company for the last 12 years, providing a platform for exchanging information and opinions for the AAI staff members who are frequently away from Japan on various assignments. Moreover, we believe that the AAIN has been functioning as a “spring” for our thinking and it has served as an “eye” to see your reactions. We would like to continue to send out people’s voices from our fields of work and voices from we who keep on exploring how international cooperation can have the best impact on peoples’ lives. We extend our sincere regards to you for your continued support of the AAI and our work.

Commemorating the publication of the *AAINews* 60th volume, we would like to introduce you to what each AAI staff has recently been working on.



Hiroyasu Onuma: Since 2000, I have been participating in irrigation related projects such as the Tanzania’s National Irrigation Master Plan and Syria’s Water Saving Irrigation Agriculture Extension Plan. In the project in Syria, I have been trying to make use of the experiences I gained when I was in Syria’s extension department as a JICA expert, as well as my experiences gained through training activities in JICA Tsukuba. On the ground, I have been working on extension activities of modern irrigation technologies involving extension staff working in villages, while aiming to establish a system for offering training courses to the extension staff.



Hiroshi Ono: Since 2001, I have been involved in the Irrigation and Expansion Plan of Sri Lanka. More specifically, I worked on a study on the socio-economic situation of the newly settled areas and a situation study of sugar cane farmers. I also was involved in the creation of model vegetable cultivation plots in the new settlement area. At JICA Tsukuba, I was in charge of the Training Course on Vegetable and Upland Crops Cultivation Technique for Southern African Countries and for South Africa. Currently, I am in charge of the Vegetable Cultivation Technique II Course. Through our Muscat Fund, we worked with a local NGO in Zimbabwe to increase farmers’ incomes, and conducted a follow up investigation into the activities of Botswana participants after they returned to their country. I would like to work on a program that involves ex-participants in their native countries.



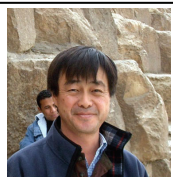
Naoki Koga: Since joining the AAI in 2003, I had chances to get involved in the Regional Agricultural and Livestock Husbandry System Improvement Plan of Mongolia, the Syrian Water Saving Irrigation Extension Plan, and the River Basin Management Plan of East Timor. Although target resources are different in the above projects – ranging from forests, grassland, water to soil - the undercurrent of all the projects was “resource management”. An important angle here is how to draw out cooperation from local residents, which is easier said than done. Although it is challenging, this has made me motivated, too. In future, I would like to regularly visit certain places over a long period and find long-term counterparts. Perhaps in Africa?



Nobuki Kojima: Since joining the AAI last year in 2006, I have been involved in various projects dealing with the NERICA rice, such as working as an instructor for the JICA Tsukuba’s training course on rice variety selection techniques and working in Uganda as a short-term NERICA adaptation planning specialist. It seems my technical field has shifted from wet rice cultivation of pre-AAI time to upland rice cultivation. However, there are challenges that are in common between the two distinct rice varieties, and I can apply my past experiences to my current and future work. Some of these challenges are the improvement in seed production and variety selection techniques, and extension and training. In order to promote NERICA in Africa, I would like to make an effective use of ex-participants of the upland variety selection technique course, who have returned to their countries.



Akira Koto: In recent years, I have been working in Syria as a JICA expert and as part of JICA technical cooperation projects, in particular the Water Saving Irrigation Agriculture Extension Plan. During these assignments, I have also been involved in capacity building of extension workers through training activities. I would like to make use of these experiences in other future projects and training course assignments at JICA Tsukuba. I am also increasingly interested in issues surrounding Japan’s agriculture and farming villages, such as the increasing number of abandoned farmlands and the drop in Japan’s food self sufficiency rate.



Yoshihisa Zaitzu: Until this year, I participated in the oasis development survey in Mauritania. Presently, I am working on a support program for Iraq in the field of irrigation agriculture. My specialty originally was soil science. Soil science took me to land use issues, which in turn led me to cultivation related work and from there to agricultural development work. I have also dipped into satellite image analysis and GIS. It takes quite a lot of time and effort to publish *AAINews* regularly. However I am using *AAINews* for enhancing my own learning and as a forum for AAI staff in different countries to exchange information and views.



Shigeya Hasegawa: I started teaching vegetable cultivation techniques training courses at the Tsukuba International Center in 2000, and I have taught nearly 90 participants. At the beginning of a training course, participants who are new to Japan and instructors from Japan need to explore and understand each other. However, by the end of a training course, when participants present their final training report, there is always a sense of unity among the participants and instructors, which is very satisfying for me. Likewise, I think it is our challenge to establish training methods to increase participants’ sense of achievements. Moreover, it is my next assignment to collate my experiences in a cultivation technique instructor’s manual. I am also thinking it is about time to provide follow-up support to the ex-participants who have returned to their countries.