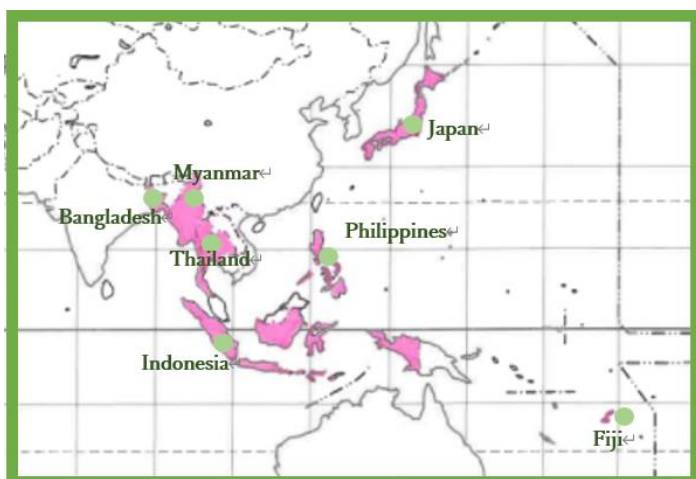


OISCA and Capacity Building of Women

As Bulletin Board No.143, June 30, 2021 edition highlighted, “capacity building” meaning human resources development has been one of the prime pillars of OISCA’s 60-year international development cooperation to developing countries and regions of the world. Target persons are youth, both male and female.

This edition deals exclusively with capacity building of women in rural communities in (1) Bangladesh (2) Fiji (3) Indonesia (4) Myanmar (5) the Philippines and (6) Thailand. Skill training in Japan for young women of these countries is introduced at the end of the edition. They are would-be instructors and would-be community leaders back in their countries.

Pre-information on forthcoming rural women’s capacity building in India comes on page 8.



BANGLADESH

As described in the Bulletin Board No.127, December 6, 2020 edition, OISCA set up a training center for rural women in 1987 in Bangladesh for the first time within the world’s Islamic society. It was done under a trilateral cooperation among the Government of Bangladesh that hosted the project, the Government of Japan that provided the grant and OISCA-International that coordinated with the two Governments and implemented on-the-job training by assigning Japanese instructors and providing preliminary training in Japan for would-be-instructors, i.e., Bangladesh young women.

The training center was built in a small village in the suburbs of metropolitan Dhaka. In 1987, This village was truly a remote community without paved access road from Dhaka. In 2021, however, the training center is surrounded by factories and residential houses. It has become a satellite community. A paved road connects the center with metropolitan Dhaka within half an hour drive. It is no longer a remote village!

It has become an established fact that the skill training for rural women at this center has dramatically contributed to reducing the poverty ratio in the country proving that women’s involvement in

agriculture and livelihood production is truly meaningful for sustainable nation building. This OISCA-initiated training for rural women became a prototype center in Bangladesh so that new training centers came into being thereafter in different parts of the country. OISCA-trained women were recruited to these new training centers as instructors. Almost all the instructors of newly opened training centers for women are OISCA graduates. OISCA is proud of this fact as well.



Involving women at the front line of agricultural production can increase food safety and decrease poverty and malnutrition



A rural woman is preparing seedling pods for the upcoming plantation season in the fields. Raw material in “*Bokashi*” consisted of locally available organic materials.

FIJI

Until joining the training course at the agricultural training center, jointly managed by the Government of Fiji and OISCA-International, Ms. Ane Tora did not know anything about MORINGA, a medicinal tree. This tree is believed to have been utilized as an all-round natural medicine in India as far back as 5,000 years ago. A Japanese OISCA volunteer brought a couple of moringa seedlings to Fiji from Papua New Guinea where he had served before being assigned to Fiji. Moringa has been experimentally grown at OISCA Fiji training center.

Ane thought that MORINGA could be used to mobilize women folk in her community to plant it as a team. Slowly, she realized that moringa products such as herbs and powders had a commercial value. (See: the wellness of moringa in the photo on page 3.)

Fortunately, she was selected by the Fiji Govt. to go to Japan for rural leadership training at OISCA training center. There are three OISCA training centers in Japan (ref: Bulletin Board No. 143, page 3, June 30, 2021). She thought that it was an additional good opportunity for her to mobilize women in her community as a community leader when she came back from Japan.

Back to her home island, she launched a MORINGA project involving housewives. Her project was rewarded as a growing number of housewives joining and gaining income. She is serving as one of the volunteers to take care of female trainees at the OISCA Fiji training center from where she graduated. Luckily, she has a time to do so, too.

When the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank took place in her country Fiji in May 2019, she was selected as a member of Team OISCA (ref:

Bulletin Board No.125, November 8,2020, page 6), to organize an OISCA project exhibition that was hosted by ADB. The Moringa seedlings that she grew were displayed there and gained attention of ADB President, senior officials, and government and NGO representatives from, in particular, India and South East Asia. Ane Tora's dream has become a reality.



Mrs. Ane Tora is second from left at the OISCA Exhibit of Asian Development Bank annual meeting held in Fiji. President of the Bank is seen second from right, May 3rd, 2019.



Moringa powder contained with various vitamins is consumed daily in many countries as a superfood to maintain a good health.



The Ambassador of Japan to Fiji at the OISCA Exhibit. Moringa plants are seen. May 4th 2019.



INDONESIA

Having been attracted by female graduates of OISCA training center, run by OISCA Indonesia in collaboration with OISCA-International, located in the outskirts of metropolis Jakarta, like-minded women around the center formed a group, just like a mini farmers' cooperative, to grow locally acceptable vegetables with organic means to ensure safety and healthy products to consumers. OISCA training center supports these women. The group is also producing processed food items utilizing organic raw materials and selling them at local markets.

Leaders are graduates of OISCA training center. They attended “would-be-leaders” training course at OISCA training centers in Japan. Just like Bangladesh, Indonesia is basically an Islamic society where life in rural communities is basically conservative. Working outside their homes has not been common in rural communities.

This initiative by female trainee graduates was able to get a grant of the Government of Japan through OISCA Japan. With this grant, core leaders of this group were able to see markets in Japan. They are advocating health consciousness to local communities, particularly among housewives.



Led by OISCA trained leader, village women are learning healthy food cooking utilizing organically produced materials, 2016.



A group of Indonesian women visited Japan on an excursion to study the good development practices.

MYANMAR

In January 1996, OISCA-International signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Government of Myanmar. With it, OISCA became among the first NGOs in the world that entered the military ruled country at the time. OISCA is not only non-governmental, but also a non-political, non-religious and non-racial movement. The memorandum of cooperation is valid in 2021.

In collaboration with the Dept. of Agriculture (DOA), Ministry of Agriculture and Livelihood, OISCA runs two training centers in Myanmar as of 2021 (ref: Bulletin Board No.130, January 14, 2021, pages 6-7). Trainees have been recruited from all over the country every year. Gender equality has been practiced from the very beginning of training in 1997, so as to ensure that half of the trainees are female.

Just like such other countries as Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, Myanmar's “would-be” instructors and “would-be” community leaders are given access to skills and leadership training in Japan at OISCA training centers.

There are food processing facilities at DOA-OISCA training centers. Guided by Japan-trained instructors, young girls are making breads, cookies and various food items, basically utilizing organically grown agricultural products and organically fed pigs and chicken eggs. Being a Buddhist country, pigs are accepted in Myanmar as an important source of nutrient. Food items made by OISCA trained women are very popular in the local markets because they are nutritious, safe and delicious.

The female graduates of the two DOA-OISCA training centers are opening food processing units in their home communities. Each unit is small. They are warmly welcomed by residents, in particular, housewives and children. They are contributing to food security. OISCA is proud to have these dedicated female graduates.



Cotton is one of the important agricultural products in Myanmar. At DOA-OISCA training center, skill training of cotton weaving has been implemented in order to equip some of the female trainees to generate income when they go back to their home communities. They can grow cotton as a crop, too, basically with organic means.



Guided by an OISCA trained instructor, trainees are making bread at one of the OISCA training centers, 2018.

PHILIPPINES

Pure silk products at OISCA Bago center on Negros Island in the central region of the country today dominates 80% share in this country, all thanks to the hard work of women. This great landmark goes back to 1988-89 as Bulletin Board No. 136, April 6, 2021 edition indicates.

Cultivation of mulberry trees, leaves of which are the feed of silk worms, and rearing of silk worms can be managed by family members including children. But, when it comes to boiling the products of silkworms and weaving them into silk yarn and the fabrication to finished products such as shirts and dress, it is the women's role. OISCA trained young women have been playing a pivotal role that has resulted in OISCA-Bago-produced silk to have the largest share in the Philippine market.

When APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) Summit was held in 2015 in the Philippines, the participating heads of states wore *barong tagalog*, a Philippine style formal shirt, to take a commemorative group photo. The raw material of the *barong tagalog*, namely, silk yarn, was an OISCA-Bago product. High quality silk yarn is produced by

OISCA trained women in the Philippines.



OISCA trained young girl is weaving silk yarn. She has become a professional weaver. Her product, raw silk, is gaining a popularity in the Philippines.

was potentially rich. Despite such a potentially rich condition, birds and animals, including small beetles, marginally existed due to the almost non-existence of trees.

With OISCA's support and Japanese volunteers' involvement, GGAT workers, consisting, of course of young girls, took initiative to encourage villagers – men, women, young, aged, housewives, school boys and girls, to plant trees on the available lands. At the beginning in 1980, almost all the trees planted, in the thousands, disappeared. GGAT workers never gave up and continued their challenge. Step by step, village people began to come forward to work with GGAT girls.

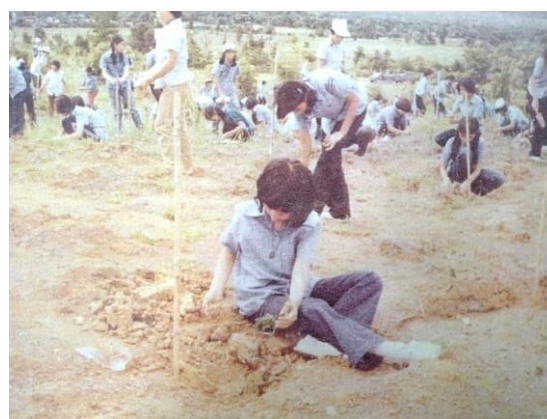
Forty years have lapsed since then. In 2021, Surin Province has become one of the richest rice granaries in the Kingdom. Animals, birds, and beetles have come back, and microorganisms under the ground have become active. Natural biodiversity has been restored. GGAT workers can be a legacy model of turning an impossible-to-possible challenge by women (girls).



barong tagalog made of the OISCA silk has revitalized the industry in Negros, once known as an island of starvation

THAILAND

Fundamentally being a Buddhist country, the important role of women in Thailand has traditionally been recognized in daily life. It was in 1975 when OISCA-International joined hands with the Girl Guides Association of Thailand (GGAT) to set up a training center in Surin Province, eastern region of Thailand. Surin was one of the least developed regions in the country then. However, soil in Surin



During early 1980's when OISCA and the Girl Guides Association of Thailand (GGAT) organized tree planting in Surin Province, no trees were around. OISCA trained GGAT staff have been taking care of the planted seedlings since then.



In 2017, planted trees have formed rich forests, making Surin the leading rice granary in the Kingdom. OISCA LOVE GREEN.



Thai Japan Friendship sign board that was built in 1981 still remains in 2021.



GGAT/OISCA collaboration won a Grand Prix in 2020 by the national government of Thailand. Elders and children showing a happy sign.

JAPAN

As the statistics on page 5 of OISCA Bulletin Board No.143, June 30,2021 edition indicates, the total

number of trainees whom OISCA accepted to train in Japan from 55 countries and territories, March 1963~May 2021, has amounted to 5,058 persons. The exact number of female trainees is not clear, however it is clear that not less than one-third are female. Of the three OISCA training centers in Japan, the one on Shikoku Island, the fourth largest islands in the country, has been giving priority in accommodating female trainees.

A 4-letter message in Japanese 温故知新, meaning learning a lesson from the past and elders, is well known in Japan. The OISCA Shikoku training center invites senior women (grandmothers) living in rural communities to interact with young female trainees. These senior women have rich experience in utilizing locally available materials to make home utensils and food. Nothing should be wasted. “*Mottai-nai*” consciousness is very much in their minds. It is up to the trainees to have “*mottai-nai*” on their consciousness into action when they become leaders in their home communities. “*Mottai-nai*” is the first step for sustainable life. It can be a key message for SDGs as well.



Female trainees from Myanmar, Mongolia and Thailand are learning cooking from an elderly Japanese woman utilizing locally available materials. “*Mottainai*” spirit is generated step by step at OISCA Shikoku Training Center, Japan, August 2020.

India awaits new challenge for rural woman

This detailed account will be in the forthcoming edition No. 151 of OISCA Bulletin Board, scheduled to be published on December 3rd 2021. Since it will be relating to capacity building of rural women, this is a brief advance information.

OISCA-International signed a memorandum of understanding with a Government of India agency in June 2017 to launch a project on River Ganga basin with special emphasis on (1) extension of organic farming, (2) capacity building of rural women and (3) tree planting.

The River Ganga flows 2,225km from the Himalayan region to the Bay of Bengal passing through north-eastern parts of India. It is regarded as a holy river for the people of India, the majority of whom are Hindus. The population of India is believed to be about 1.4 billion as of November 2021.

The issue of capacity building of women, too, urgently needs to be addressed in India. Mainly due to COVID-19, the start of the project has been postponed. It may start sometime in early 2022. Detailed information comes in Bulletin Board No.151. The map of the project sites, Sambhal and Vaaranasi, are on this page.

In fact, OISCA participated in the emergency food production campaign in India from mid-1966 to mid-1973 by assigning about 100 experienced Japanese farmers. This fact is reported in OISCA Bulletin Board No.120, August 2020 edition, pages 2-3. FOOD FIRST was the key message. OISCA will go back to India in 2022 after half a century interval as "Neo Team OISCA".

Next issue: No. 151

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