

ミャンマーの農村の人々と共に

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愛には偽りがあってはなりません。悪を憎み、善から離れず、兄弟愛をもって互いに愛し、尊敬をもって互いに相手を優れた者と思いなさい。怠らず励み、霊に燃えて、主に仕えなさい。希望をもって喜び、苦難を耐え忍び、たゆまず祈りなさい。聖なる者たちの貧しさを自分のものとして彼らを助け、旅人をもてなすよう努めなさい。あなたがたを迫害する者のために祝福を祈りなさい。祝福を祈るのであって、呪ってはなりません。

(ローマの信徒への手紙 12 章 9-14節)

My name is Thi Thi Win and I come from Myanmar, which is also known as Burma. I have four brothers and three sisters, and I am the fifth of nine children among my siblings. I live with my parents who are at home now. I come from a farmer's family. I am not only a farmer but also social worker in my community. I have experience with farming. My family mainly produced crops and vegetables and fruits.

In Myanmar where I come from, there are seven states and seven regions, and one hundred and fifty ethnic groups. I live in Monywa which is situated in the central part of Myanmar. It is also known as 'Neem City' because many of the city's streets are lined with neem trees and, it is the cultural hub of Myanmar. Buddhists, who make up 92.2% of the population form the largest religious community in Myanmar.

I am from the Burmese ethnic group. I am Buddhist but also a learner of other religions. My hobbies are traveling, cooking and agriculture. My goal is to help rural people and especially Buddhist youth get involved in community development.

I graduated in 2014 from ARI's Rural Leaders Training Program and learned so many things, but the most useful for my community and for myself were servant leadership and organic farming.

Before coming to ARI, I thought of a leader as someone who gives directives and watches other people execute his orders. Now I know there is a process of servant leadership where you have to guide the people and encourage them in making their own

decisions, especially about their development and any problems they are facing. I also learned that a true servant leader should be able to give others the opportunity to lead as well.

It was hard when I was at ARI as a leader, but not only with people from other countries. I said there are 150 ethnic groups in my country. When I was at ARI, I worked with other Myanmar ethnic groups, and I had a hard time with one Kachin person, another ethnic group in Myanmar. He told me he hated all of my ethnic group because of his experiences. Many times I had to hear hard things about my people, but I tried to listen and engage with him so that he could know that I as a Burmese care about his struggles. Actually in Myanmar, I never really knew the experiences and thoughts of people from other ethnic groups. But at ARI, I was able to encounter, learn and even become friends with other people. At the end I was shocked that we became friends, me and this Kachin participant, and after going back to Myanmar we encouraged one another in our work with young rural farmers.

This is why I say organic farming is an important learning because along with the new friends I made, I see it as the easiest way of helping our people meet their needs and helping them to be happy. Organic farming can be done by everyone and is easy for poor people who have no money. The average monthly income in Myanmar is 8000 yen per month, or even less now because of the conflict.

So, after I returned home, I worked with young farmer leaders to advocate for and train them as a project coordinator. I also volunteered as a network coordinator for a Buddhist youth group nationwide working in the field of sustainable agriculture for food safety and sovereignty.

This year, I came back to ARI to share with new friends what I learned from ARI and my experiences over the past nine years after graduating in 2014, and also to learn more. I especially wanted to learn about how ARI makes the best use of their local resources and engages in the local community to provide them with a good product, which will build relationships as we gain profit. I intend to use this knowledge to help the women and youth groups I was helping before coming back to ARI and to see their lives become better in the midst of struggle.

With Social Enterprise working with young women, I want to help them earn profit and learn how to share the work using local resources, and include management of food to get more value for our products.