

Cultivating Leadership

Raising livestock, growing corn, feeding her family. Nozuko Toli's aspirations aren't lofty, but they are important, especially in her village, Amalinda, in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Here, unemployment hovers around 80 percent. Toli, 28, from the Kei Region of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, is like many others in her area – farmers who, without additional work, cannot afford seed and fertilizers. Furthermore, the pesticides sold locally are harmful to the community and the very environment it depends on for its sustenance.

Today, however, Toli's outlook is brighter due to the Asian Rural Institute (ARI), a 15-acre working farm in northern Japan. Toli is part of ARI's nine-month training program that educates rural community leaders in sustainable organic agriculture techniques, leadership, and community development. Global Ministries, through One Great Hour of Sharing, provides financial assistance to ARI and this year's grant is paying for Toli's studies.



Photo: Toli and other community leaders trained at the Asian Rural Institute

ARI's philosophy and mission is "to build an environmentally healthy, just, and peaceful world, in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential. This mission is rooted in the love of Jesus Christ." ARI has trained more than one thousand people since it was founded in 1973, through support from many Christian organizations.

When Toli's ARI training is finished, she will return home able to help her community grow crops organically, using the resources available in the area while preserving the environment. By sharing her knowledge with others around her and through her church, Toli will be able to touch many lives by helping to put food in many stomachs.

Calling for Peace

"The military occupation also makes it difficult for non-violent advocates to travel, organize and speak openly."



Photo: Derek Duncan

Global Ministries is convinced that one way to advance peace in the Middle East is by amplifying the voices of Palestinian leaders who are promoting non-violence and increased support for basic human rights. The media and various political pressures often drown such voices out, especially Palestinian Christians. The military occupation also makes it difficult for non-violent advocates to travel, organize and speak openly.

To help, Global Ministries has worked closely with Jean Zaru, presiding clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting since the mid-1980s. For the past several years Global Ministries has assigned a person in mission to work directly with Jean. The only Palestinian Christian woman who heads a religious community, Jean offers a unique and critical voice on issues of human rights, the specific rights of women and children, and the environment, justice and religion.

Jean most recently spearheaded the rejuvenation of Palestine's Quaker presence through a new ministry. Friends International Center in Ramallah is intended to promote a culture of peace and non-violence in the wider community. It offers a safe space for Palestinians, Israelis, and international visitors to meet together to pursue their common goals of building peace and international understanding.