

My Vision for IRSA

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IRSA has been progressing day by day under the strong leadership of successive presidents. However, IRSA has less influential powers to African countries and some Asian countries such as Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. The regional association is not organized in Africa and ARSA is on the way to mature. Above all, there are few participants from these countries so far. In this regard, IRSA is not an 'international' association in a real meaning. The present Council of IRSA is trying to extend the spatial coverage. I think the first priority of my mission is to take over this task and to bring IRSA close to the real international association. I can contribute to progress this task, especially for Africa based on my research experience.

The second priority is to set up and strengthen a mechanism for empowering the next generation sincerely learning about rural studies. The bringing up of young researches is a fundamental condition for further and sustainable development of IRSA.

The last is to enhance rural studies in terms of 'here and now' approach, especially focusing on marginalized people or people in the weak position. Rural problems vary region by region, country by country, and person by person. However, problems have a tendency to concentrated on and amplify in socially vulnerable people. Hence, rural studies cannot help taking them up as issues to be addressed urgently. Researchers of rural studies are required to play a role of the parties concerned in actual scenes as well as an academic scientist.

I am convinced that IRSA will serve as a vehicle to help build the body of knowledge on rural studies in the world. IRSA also inspire not only the researchers of rural studies, but also other development-oriented organizations or individuals to continue the quest for sustainable development in rural societies.

The following is rough understanding on rural problems.

While some developed countries have resolved the agrarian-related issues and concerns, their rural societies are now confronted with aging and declining population. These issues bring us to the questioning of the reproducibility of rural society under the project of modernity, on the one

hand, and the beginning of a new life under the post-modern period, on the other. The recent developments such as retirement farming and citizen farming are found everywhere. Now, we have to evaluate such a new movement and consider the historical meaning as potential to bring about the change of civilization.

Meanwhile, the other rural societies, in Africa and most Asian countries, which have yet to resolve the agrarian related issues, focused their initiatives towards achieving economic development either through the conventional methods of production and enhancement of market integration, or pursuing sustainable development endeavors.

In general, rural society used to be organized along the many variants of social capital. However, social capital has diminished because of the transformation or shift from the traditional approach to more modern ways of life. Social capital in its modern variant could be tapped to solve conflicts, prevent a disease, enhance the adoption of sustainable agriculture and organic farming, manage natural resources, and many more.

Today, rural societies are confronted with a new set of socially-constructed problems such as climate change, disasters, and natural resources management. Relative to these, we have to understand how our consumptive behavior affects our renewable and non-renewable resources to ensure sustainable development. At the same time, we should reconsider the idea on relationships between humanity's actions and natural phenomena. This highlights the blurring of boundaries of the physical, biological and social sciences today.