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“In this world you will have troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Reading through this issue of ECHO News, the words courage and hope kept coming to my mind. Individually, courage and hope are motivations that can strengthen and sustain us in the midst of difficulty and hardship. Together, they are powerful forces that can propel us forward. Courage enables us to acknowledge the risk in a situation and act in spite of the risk. Hope fuels our confidence that something better is possible. **Courage gives legs to hope and hope gives purpose to courage.**

Whether it is farming in Guatemala, gardening in Southwest Florida, promoting new practices in East Africa/West Africa/Asia/Central America or making the decision to commit 14 months of one’s life to training as an ECHO Intern; all require courage and hope. These are the stories you’ll find in this ECHO News.

One of ECHO’s great privileges is to share knowledge about plants, practices, animals and technologies that is proven and practical. It still takes courage for farmers to break with historical and cultural norms – to do something new and different – but the fact that the changes are proven and practical helps fuel hope that the risk is worth taking.

Because the small-scale farming family is still taking a risk, it is incumbent on us to know what we are taking about and to minimize the risk that we are asking them to take. We can’t simply promote good ideas, we need to test and validate those ideas and know when/where/how they can best be applied. And this requires that we not only have knowledge and experience but that we keep learning!

Wendy Andrew's life gave extraordinary witness to courage, hope, practical knowledge, and a love of learning. Professionally, Wendy was Manager of Horticulture for Walt Disney World's Animal Kingdom. She brought her knowledge and passions to her service on ECHO's Board of Directors. Wendy's love of life and of Jesus continued to animate her through her years-long contest with cancer. Her courage was astounding, and through round-after-round of this contest she continued to live fully and hope boldly. Where her hope for this life ended, her hope for eternity began its fulfillment. We will miss Wendy!

Jesus himself said, “In this world you will have troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33). Some troubles can be overcome now, some will not be overcome fully until the life to come.

Thank you for partnering with us to help millions of courageous and hopeful people around the world overcome some of their troubles and know the goodness of God’s provision for their lives, families, and communities.

Take heart!
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edited by Danielle Flood

Please share your comments about ECHO News. Write: 17391 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, Florida, 33917, e-mail: info@echonet.org, or call: 239-543-3246.

ECHO is a global Christian organization that equips people with agricultural resources and skills to reduce hunger and improve the lives of the poor.

cover photo: Witchunee Porkham, in Lahu traditional dress, is weeding a vegetable bed at ECHO Asia Seed Bank’s demonstration farm. photo by Ethan Berger

in this issue

a country of contrasts

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plastic yarn project

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in their own words...

“One thing that has stood out to me the most in its impact on daily life in the village would be the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration technique of preserving woodland areas. By managing the new growth off felled trees, the farmers have access to “kuni” or firewood without further damaging the habitat. My village has a heavy dependence on firewood and managing resources well would really make an impact. In the same way, biogas and biochar are other important methods of stewarding the land. Showing responsibility in the way we heat and cook is one huge step in helping stop the deforestation in Tanzania.”

Travis Silveus (second from left) is spending his third year as a Peace Corps Volunteer learning as an intern at ECHO’s East Africa Impact Center.
Guatemala: A Country of Contrasts

by Amy Wiggins

Surely the scale was wrong. Or perhaps the birthdate was recorded incorrectly. How could this baby be almost a year old, yet only weigh eight pounds – less than my own son weighed at birth? Holding this boy in my arms, feeling the fragility of a life threatened by malnourishment, I had many questions.

How is hunger a major concern in Guatemala? On the drive to the clinic where I was working during a short-term mission trip to Guatemala, I saw vast, fertile farmland. Bananas and broccoli exported from Guatemala fill the produce aisles of American grocery stores. Yet, why are half of the children in Guatemala under five suffering from chronic malnourishment?

A look into the causes of malnutrition in Guatemala reveals a country of contrasts.

While the majestic mountains and scenic volcanic lakes beckon vacationers to enjoy the beauty of Guatemala, the complex topography makes life hard for many who depend on farming to survive. “Guatemala is mountainous and the poorest farmers are forced onto very marginal land,” explains Brad Ward, ECHO’s Central America and Caribbean Regional Impact Team Coordinator.

“How could this baby be almost a year old, yet only weigh eight pounds – less than my own son weighed at birth?”

The wealthy own the expansive, lush farms and reap the rewards of international export. The poor, who make up half of Guatemala’s population, are often
indigenous people living in rural villages. Their farming plots are small, steep, and rocky.

**Big Challenges to Small-Scale Agriculture**

Subsistence farmers work hard against difficult conditions to produce enough food to feed their families. Erosion quickly removes productive topsoil. Nutritionist Jimena Galindo describes the plight of rural life for the family of an eight-month-old admitted to the clinic where she works. There’s no water or electricity. The father works as a day laborer at a small garden. The family can’t move to find better work because communities are in resistance, protesting against the mining operations that threaten to pollute their water and land.

Even when small-scale farmers in remote villages produce a surplus beyond their family’s needs, poor market access is another obstacle. Without the reliable transportation and paved roads of modernized areas like Guatemala City, getting a valuable crop to market is difficult. Imagine a small field’s worth of cabbage, packed in grain sacks and strapped to a horse for hauling. The three-hour trek down a bumpy trail will damage about half of the produce, almost to the point of having no value.

**Longer Dry Spells Create Shorter Growing Seasons**

Often called the “The Land of the Eternal Spring,” parts of Guatemala boast year-round temperatures in the 70’s where vibrant blooms match the boldly colored traditional clothes the descendants of Mayan cultures still wear. However, the constant, pleasant weather and springtime blossoms implied by the nickname contrast with the recent reality of changing climate conditions.

Historically, Guatemala’s weather was divided into a rainy season from May to October, and a dry spell from November to April. But in recent years, a longer dry season has caused many tropical forest plants to shrivel, threatening the livelihoods of those who harvest them. In the southern, arid areas of Guatemala, according to the International Business Times, limited rainfall caused family plots of corn and beans to shrink by 80 percent in 2015.

In June of this year, The New York Times reported that drought is heightening food insecurity for much of Guatemala’s indigenous population. A later rainy season means that, for many families, the previous harvest will run out before the next crop produces, creating what’s called “seasonal hunger” from June to September. During this

“In the southern, arid areas of Guatemala, according to the International Business Times, limited rainfall caused family plots of corn and beans to shrink by 80 percent in 2015.”
time, experts estimate that, in a country that always faces food scarcity, an additional one million people will need food assistance before the next harvest.

Hidden Hunger Looks Different

Malnourished children in Guatemala don’t always have the heartbreaking, visible physical symptoms associated with hunger. In fact, when asked about malnutrition, many Guatemalan parents will say it’s a problem – but only in other families. They don’t recognize what is often referred to as “hidden hunger” because their children get enough calories from corn tortillas, a staple often eaten three times a day. However, their diets are severely lacking in the protein and vitamins needed for healthy body and brain development.

Leafy green vegetables don’t make it from the expansive, countryside farms to the tables of the rural poor. Protein-rich beans and eggs are a luxury. In the impoverished western highlands of Guatemala, almost every child is chronically malnourished and stunted.

ECHO Increases Impact

ECHO’s longtime partner, Miracles in Action, is working hard to change those statistics by promoting Chaya with hands-on cooking demonstrations and nutrition trainings throughout villages in Guatemala. ECHO has provided Miracles in Action with many consultations on growing practices for Chaya, a nutrient-rich, leafy green vegetable. “This is a great example of how ECHO works in the background to help others increase their impact,” explains Brad Ward.

Increasing impact is about helping more people – like the precious boy I held years ago in Guatemala. That is the face I still see when I think of ECHO’s work to reduce hunger. Maybe his mother has discovered how growing and cooking Chaya can improve her family’s health. Perhaps a missionary or community development worker has trained his father in how drip irrigation can maximize limited water supply. I hope life-saving opportunities like these are helping his family win the fight against hunger and poverty. I hope this summer he has the opportunity to celebrate his 8th birthday! 🎉

“The future looks brighter for children as their families learn how cooking with chaya and other nutritious plants provides key nutrients for healthy development.
Changing Lives Through Hope
‘Gardens of Hope’ inspired by ECHO in Southwest Florida

As we focus on global hunger solutions, we have also heard the call to be present to the local Fort Myers community. ECHO’s support to a local non-profit, Hope Clubhouse, has helped transform a parking lot median into a verdant community garden.

The core mission of Hope Clubhouse is to be a community of support for adults living with a mental illness. Within this unique community, opportunities are created when members engage in meaningful work. For example - they work together to prepare, serve, and enjoy a daily meal. That work now includes planting and harvesting the “Gardens of Hope.”

In 2015, Executive Director James Wineinger developed his vision for a garden at Hope Clubhouse and was encouraged to visit ECHO. At the end of the tour, James met ECHO’s community garden intern, Roz Barminski, and her advisor, Brad Ward. This started a dialogue about how the two organizations could partner. Shortly after that meeting, Roz and Brad visited Hope Clubhouse and began the consultation process that would result in what is now an edible landscape and mini food forest surrounding the Clubhouse facility.

This partnership took the next step in December when, at the end of her internship, Roz accepted a position on staff with Hope Clubhouse to develop the horticulture program. Most recently, Roz invited the current class of ECHO interns and Intern Manager Brian Flanagan for a tour and lunch with Hope Clubhouse staff and members. After lunch, ECHO interns engaged in volunteer opportunities in the Gardens of Hope.

Thank you ECHO donors!

The interns, Brian, Brad, and many others at ECHO have helped Hope Clubhouse create an amazing garden where members have the opportunity to learn about gardening and cook fresh food. The healing touch of a garden is experienced daily in the Gardens of Hope.

Top: Hope Clubhouse member, Nicky Sparks, preparing Gardens of Hope collard greens; Center: Trees from ECHO nursery found a home at the Gardens of Hope. Bottom: In April, the current group of ECHO interns and Intern Manager Brian Flanagan visited Hope Clubhouse to see ECHO’s assistance in practice.
ECHO Asia produced a new video! This ONE DOLLAR SOLUTION can help small-scale farmers store seeds more reliably, improving seed viability, and reducing loss. Find it on www.facebook.com/ECHOfightshunger

Technical Advisor Emmalee Allen and Intern Jimson Mbwiga produced new signs for the demonstration garden plots in East Africa.

Follow us on Instagram for pictures of ECHO’s work all around the world. #echofightshunger

Syringe Vacuum Pump: Low Cost Seed Saving
Moses Mafie and his wife are leaders in their village in East Africa. ECHO staff members were able to visit their farm in early June to learn from their success and connect them to the ECHO Network. Moses has big plans for his community. He shared with us that his vision for the village is that they would become an educated community, living in a well-conserved environment, with the ability to provide for their children. ECHO relies on partners like Moses, and we look forward to both sharing with and learning from Moses and his community!

From Thailand to Laos

Mennonite Central Committee’s Lao staff spent a half day at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank, touring the facilities and checking out ongoing research projects. They learned about basic seed saving techniques and also visited partner farms to deepen their understanding of sustainable agriculture techniques.

Asia Team Meets Goal

Praise the Lord with us that generous donors helped the ECHO Asia team replace their aging truck.

Urban Garden Training

On the 10th and 11th of June, 2016 ECHO West Africa hosted an urban garden training in Ouagadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso. Topics included Foundations for Farming, principles of agricultural farm management and also best practices in urban vegetable gardening. We look forward to hearing how these participants put what they’ve learned into practice.
Time is really odd. It crawls when you're a kid waiting for Christmas. It flies when you're having fun or trying to get work done by a deadline. We go through life knowing that we each have limited time to live, but most of us live day by day, preparing for college, working our careers, taking care of family, and saving for retirement.

I met Wendy Andrew in October 2007 at Disney's Animal Kingdom. I was a new ECHO board member and Stan Doerr, then CEO, had a working relationship with Wendy, Horticulture Manager for the Animal Kingdom. In addition to other ways she helped ECHO, Wendy was very generous with personal, guided tours. Stan thought my husband Chris and I would enjoy both an Animal Kingdom tour and getting to know Wendy and her husband, Michael. He was right. They became our close friends.

Shortly after our first meeting I learned Wendy was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer. My observation over the ensuing years was that Wendy was able to (1) live each day to the fullest, as if it might actually be her last day, and yet simultaneously (2) act as if she would live forever and continue to plan and work for a better future. I don't know how, but it was like she was aware that she lived on two different timelines.

May I refer you to her blog "wendymaysadventurejournal.blogspot.com" for a partial list of her adventures? I can't list them all here, but can summarize that while she was actively and aggressively fighting the cancer in her body, she started training and competing in triathlons, traveled the world on various missions, maintained personal and working relationships around the globe, agreed to serve on ECHO's board and attended and supported the Regional Impact Centers in Asia and Africa. This was in addition to continuing to work full-time at Disney. Friends and family have written more eloquently about Wendy, her character, and her accomplishments on her blog than I can. She never gave up, never gave in! ECHO is a better place because of Wendy Andrew.

When I go through life’s rough waters I hope I will remember the T-shirt she wore as she headed into yet another chemo session, her T-shirt that said “Suck It Up Cupcake,” and try to live up to her example of living each day as if it may be my last, but also as if I can make a difference for the future. I am a better person for knowing Wendy Andrew.

Thoughts of Wendy Andrew
March 28, 1962 - June 8, 2016

by Gayle Bundschu, Former Board Treasurer
Improving the lives of the poor is a broad imperative in ECHO’s vision, and working together with others dedicated to the task is our primary model. That is why the partnership of ECHO staff and students from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is working so well in Tanzania.

It started rather simply. A group of young people came together in Arusha to identify community problems and propose innovative, simple solutions. The youth identified the large numbers of plastic bags littering the fields and roadsides as unsightly, and a health risk to the community. Discarded bags can clog drains and increase instances of flooding during heavy seasonal rain. The plastic can also accumulate water, creating an environment for mosquitoes to breed and spread disease. Burning the plastic in open fires produces toxic emissions and particulate matter which leads to poor air quality.

The team of young people decided to turn the ubiquitous plastic bag into a valued resource for making useful products. They realized that the bags could be cut into strips called plastic yarn, or “plarn,” and then crocheted into products such as wallets, purses, and durable shopping bags.

At this point various community partners became involved. ECHO staff members facilitated the travel and on-site details of an MIT student group who traveled to Arusha to assist with the implementation of the project. The Arushan youth and American students worked together establishing a steady source of plastic bags, engaging both trash pickers and recyclers to become involved, as well as training 16 women who were already part of a local cooperative. Since January, one member of the MIT group has stayed on in Arusha to help the fledgling project become successful.

ECHO is committed to partnerships with those working on innovative solutions to make life better for marginalized people.

In Tanzania, that commitment is lived out in Arusha where this project is improving the lives of people in three ways:

- The project reduces the amount of waste plastic bags and increases environmental awareness by emphasizing the potential usefulness of “waste products.”
- The project provides economic opportunities for a group of people who make their living by picking through and recycling trash from open dumpsites, as well as for the artisans who crochet useful products from the resultant plastic yarn.
- The project provides customers with quality, environmentally-friendly products such as reusable grocery bags.

“ECHO is committed to partnerships with those working on innovative solutions to make life better for marginalized people.”
From Interns to East Africa

Alyssa Barrett and Emmalee Allen put their internships into practice

Past ECHO Intern, Alyssa Barrett, began serving as a Technical Advisor at the ECHO East Africa Regional Impact Center in April 2016. Emmalee Allen began serving as a Technical Advisor in February 2016. For more information on the East Africa Impact Center, visit our facebook page: facebook.com/ECHOEastAfrica

These past few weeks have been wonderful! Tanzania is so beautiful; from the people and their culture to the stunning mountains that surround us on all sides. This place is also prime land for agriculture to flourish. ECHO and many other NGOs are working to help farmers to develop their land over the long-term. There are so many simple techniques we tend to overlook in this day of commercial agriculture that are very useful for the smallholder farmer.

One way we are able to get the word out about these techniques is to discuss them with other NGOs, Ministry of Agriculture personnel, researchers, extension agents, and local farmers. At the end of April, we had one such meeting at Twende, an agricultural innovation organization, to discuss various topics such as: cassava diseases and prevention, noxious and invasive weeds, and introduce nutritional plants such as Chaya and how to propagate and cook it.

Emmalee Allen, another ECHO intern turned technical advisor, gave a presentation on a noxious weed called *Parthenium hysterophorous* that has allelopathic properties and is quickly spreading across Tanzania. Allelopathic means it exudes chemicals into the ground which inhibits the growth and germination of surrounding plants. This weed can be fatal to animals if a certain percentage is consumed and taints the milk and meat, decreasing the animal’s value. *Parthenium* also causes skin dermatitis and asthma in humans. As a result, one of Emmalee’s projects is to bring awareness to local farmers, NGOs, agriculturalists, and pastoralists to find a way to combat this weed.

In early May, several staff and interns set up a booth with other agricultural organizations at AVRDC or the World Vegetable Center. We brought Chaya cuttings and Moringa seeds for farmers, free of charge. We also had informational books about nutritional properties of plants. It was a blessing to be able to share with farmers the importance of incorporating nutritional plants into their diet and a staff member cooked a meal made of Chaya leaves as well as one of cassava leaves for farmers to taste. We also brought seedlings of other plants such as Katuk, Moringa, and Cassava. Although many farmers are familiar with and/or grow cassava, there is a different variety that can be used just for eating the leaves and not the tubers. Talking with other organizations gave us the chance to share with and learn from their practices, their challenges, and how we could best assist them.

We have so many stories from local farmers about how the changes they’ve made have been so successful and now they’re teaching their neighbors!
I’ve been really excited about the work we’ve been doing here. We have so many stories from local farmers about how the changes they’ve made have been so successful and now they’re teaching their neighbors! It’s such a blessing to be involved with a wonderful organization that is making a difference in East Africa. I have started writing a training curriculum for primary and secondary school students when they come to ECHO. I’m wanting to incorporate modules with activities to keep them engaged and interested in learning about agriculture and farming.

I’ve also helped the staff in the establishment of their own urban garden demonstration area. It’s a lot of fun to teach different ideas and techniques of using few resources in small spaces. Right now we are using tires, bricks, sacks, and a trellis.

I’m hoping to acquire some carpet and show a couple of carpet gardens in front of the office.

We are also involved in teaching groups outside of our office. In May, we participated in a regional Peace Corps training where we led discussions about agriculture, handed out cuttings of Chaya and Moringa seeds, and involved ourselves in other topics such as sustainable agriculture, agroforestry, parthenium, and rural development options.

Thank you, Alyssa and Emmalee, for investing your time over the past year to learn from ECHO Florida, and for sharing your passion with so many in Tanzania. May God continue to bless your work, the work of so many other interns that have gone before you, and that of others who will follow in your footsteps.

Naples Garden Club Honors ECHO

Planting Community Gardens Together

When you think of Naples, Florida, what comes to mind? Is it beautiful homes and well-manicured lawns, or after-school clubs where children are excited to plant, nurture, and harvest their own vegetables? Can food forests coexist with Fifth Avenue? Naples Garden Club has been working for over sixty years to foster appreciation and understanding of horticulture, design, and the environment by providing opportunities for learning and sharing. This is most evident in the many educational programs and grants that they provide for their community.

Naples Garden Club recently awarded ECHO a $10,000 grant to help fund the Community Garden program and internship. This grant equips the ECHO Community Garden Intern to share knowledge and prepare people with skills needed to manage community gardens in Lee and Collier Counties.

In April, intern Alex Sindorf was invited to be a guest speaker at the Garden Club’s monthly meeting. She shared about ECHO’s overall mission and her role working with the local community. Her work with amazing garden partners such as Pine Manor Community Garden, Avalon Elementary School Garden, and St. Matthew’s House inspired and informed Garden Club members!

Thank you, Naples Garden Club, for making a local impact, training interns at ECHO, and multiplying the lessons learned through schools, after school clubs, churches, and nonprofits throughout our community.
My name is Alex Sindorf, and I am the Community Garden intern. I started my internship in September 2015, and I’ll finish it this November. I came to ECHO after studying Urban Community Development at Warner Pacific College in Portland, Oregon.

Going into college, I knew I wanted to be involved in development work with marginalized communities as an extension of my faith. During college, I started to learn and care about food systems and food access, which prompted me to get involved in community farming initiatives, both in Portland and during a semester in Uganda. While I studied in Uganda, I heard about ECHO, which offered me a way to bridge my desire to work among marginalized people with my growing interest in hunger alleviation.

Since arriving, I’ve been amazed at how much I’ve learned, how helpful the staff and interns are in teaching me, and how much there still is to learn. It seems like every day on the farm I have a world of opportunities open to me—books to read, underutilized plants and seeds to care for, people to share stories with, tools to try using, fruits to sample, mistakes to learn from, and ideas to test. I find myself wishing there were more time to absorb it all.

As the Community Garden intern, I also get the unique opportunity to work with local school, church, and community gardens. The site visits and conversations I’ve had with local gardeners and with my staff adviser, Brad Ward, have been some of the most challenging and enriching moments of my internship. They continually remind me that our work is only as good as the quality of love we have for the people we seek to serve. I hope to better understand and practice love as I prepare for development work.

I’m incredibly grateful to be an intern at ECHO. I’m excited to continue to learn about agriculture and development for the last five months of my internship. As I pray about next steps, I know the relationships I’ve made and the knowledge and skills I’ve gained will be fruitful wherever God leads me.
By God’s grace, YOU make it possible! We are thankful for all those who entrust charitable giving toward the mission of ECHO -- reducing hunger, improving resiliency, and helping generations thrive.

Some people appreciate making planned gifts as a tax-wise way for more of their social capital to benefit missions they are passionate about. There are planned gifts that could currently benefit you and your favorite non-profit organization, like ECHO, while there are other types that are set-up to be a blessing in the future.

**Gifts of Property and Securities**
Transfers can be made of resources that you own, such as personal property or real estate. Gifts of personal property can be carried out by transfer of titles or deeds, after completing the proper appraisals and forms. You can receive an income tax deduction equal to the appraised fair market value of the property, with no capital gains tax due on the transfer to ECHO. Property transfers can also initiate at a later date or through a will.

If securities are a way you choose to give, you can authorize your broker to send shares by electronic transfer, or by paper certificates that have been properly endorsed, to ECHO. After the transfer, you qualify for a charitable deduction at the appreciated fair market value of the property, with no capital gains tax due on the transfer to ECHO. Property transfers can also initiate at a later date or through a will.

We are available to share opportunities ECHO has to equip and resource people working with small-scale farmers worldwide. As you assess your desires and needs, we are happy to answer questions you or your advisors may have. For more information, please contact Ali Diaz, Donor Services Manager, at adiaz@echonet.org or 239-567-3309.

Thank you for considering ways to make a strategic impact through ECHO with the resources God has provided.

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**Surinam Cherry**, *Eugenia uniflora*, is a beautiful ornamental tree, usually growing to about 15 feet, but can be grown to 30 feet under favorable conditions. It can withstand short periods of freezing. It has white flowers and normally blooms from March to May. The fruit matures in April to June. When ripe, the fruit has a thin, tender, dark red skin, is firm in texture, and has a wonderful flavor. The fruit is high in vitamin C and a source of vitamin A.

The Surinam Cherry tree could also be a pleasant addition to your yard. It has slender, spreading branches and aromatic foliage. When pruned, it will serve as a large evergreen shrub, but can also grow into a small tree. The tree originated in Surinam, Guyana, and French Guiana to southern Brazil. It enjoys full sun, and it can grow in almost any type of soil. The fruits can be eaten directly off the tree or can be prepared for table use by slitting them open, removing the seeds, sprinkling with sugar, and allowing to sit in the refrigerator for several hours. They are an excellent addition to fruit cups or ice cream, or made into pie, jam, or jelly.
Best Practices in Rice Cultivation

A two-day System of Rice Intensification (SRI) Workshop, conducted by ECHO Asia in Chiang Rai province in June 2016, was successfully implemented with more than 40 participants from five countries; Thailand, Laos, Singapore, India, and USA. This number included 15 farmer representatives from northeastern provinces of Thailand, who are participants in the SRI Lower Mekong River Basin project being implemented by the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok.

This event was successfully organized and implemented through successful collaboration from all stakeholders. More than 40 people joined the workshop, and provided good feedback. ECHO Asia will stay in touch about future SRI advances and techniques with ECHOcommunity and ECHO Asia publications. Another workshop is being prepared in the near future which will include other interesting topics related to SRI, including the use of the SRI techniques for other crops besides rice.