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**NTT has started a field trial to estimate
'TSUNAGARI Communication' which enables people
living apart to feel close to each other.**

- New communication style that brings people close together -

Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT, headquartered in Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo, Japan; President: Jun-ichiro Miyazu) and NTT West Corporation Toyama branch office started a field trial in July 2001 in the village of Yamada in Toyama Prefecture.

NTT Lifestyle and Environmental Technology Laboratory has proposed 'TSUNAGARI Communication' which enables people living apart to feel close together, thus fostering feeling of safety and happiness by continually exchanging 'cue information*'. It aims to prompt to communicate and meet together in daily life and to increase people's quality of life.

In this trial, a trial terminal 'FamilyPlanter' is put in the home of each family member. NTT will evaluate 'TSUNAGARI Communication' using social science approaches such as interviews and questionnaires, and try to uncover any problems of the system.

Background of the research

We each belong to various communities, such as our family, local community, school, and company. And our life is made up of human relationships in these communities. But the collapse of communities or human isolation is beginning to surface as a social problem because of weakening of the sense of belonging as a result of population drains or increasing the virtual relationship in the network.

Recently, it is increasingly common for families (the most basic community) to have one or more members living remotely for job, school, or other reasons. Interview results have found that people are concerned about family members living remotely, but want their privacy protected, and do not want family members living remotely to be concerned about them.

NTT has proposed a new two-way communication style 'TSUNAGARI Communication' which creates a feeling of living together by providing a continuously felt presence of family members who are living remotely even if they don't communicate actively by telephone, mail, or e-mail etc, which protecting privacy and presenting information in a natural manner.

Outline of the research

This trial is expected to last four months, starting from the end of July based in the village of Yamada in Toyama prefecture. The targets of the trial are families whose members live apart, in the village and in other places in Japan. Each family member will use the trial terminal in their daily life and participate in several interviews and fill out questionnaires. Specifically, NTT will research their feelings of safety and happiness which is affected a feeling of connection, and frequency of telephone, mail,

and e-mail communication before and after the terminal is installed, to estimate the effect of the terminal.

Sensors in the terminal detect human motion and this information is transmitted to a pre-designated terminal via the server. The terminal at the receiving side presents the received information as the rotation of optical fibers by a motor and a lit LED. This is intended to foster a feeling of connection by exchanging implicit information, such as the presence of human, naturally and constantly. Also, touching one's terminal causes the receiving terminal to emit a sound. It conveys the intent to communicate.

*Cue information: all the implicit information used in communication such as environmental information, the presence of others, social relationship, and so on.

- [Trial terminal and system](#)

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