

Volunteers:

Gerald B. Skiles

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Host:

CRS – Food for Education

Laos

Assignment:

LA01

Dates:

November 28 – December 19, 2015

Days worked:

$22 \times 2 = 44$

# Introduction:

(Our understanding of the general goals of the school garden/animal husbandry)

Part of the school livelihoods curriculum

Contribute to homegrown school meals

Improve nutritional levels among primary school children in Laos

## Objectives:

Objective 1 – Analyze current school garden efforts and provide suggestions for improvement.

**Progress** - There are 310 schools involved with the Food for Education program. We visited 8 schools in 3 districts, which gave us an understanding of the various economic, social, and infrastructure constraints. I visited with administrators of the program at various levels of responsibilities.

**Expected impacts/results** – All the schools we visited had gardens of various sizes and quality. They were all accomplishing the goals stated in the above introduction, but not to the potential that the administrators of Food for Education program were hoping for or expecting. There will be improved understanding of what the expectation of the gardening efforts in regards to how much production is expected and how to accomplish that expectation.

A percentage of the schools had no gardens.

**Recommendations** – See Summary

Objective 2 – Analyze current animal husbandry project and provide suggestions for improvement.

**Progress** - There are 310 schools involved with the Food for Education program. We visited 8 schools in 3 districts which gave us an understanding of the various economic, social, and infrastructure constraints. I visited with administrators of the program at various levels of responsibilities.

**Expected impacts/results** – Of the 8 schools we visited, we saw 2 chicken houses and 2 schools with fish ponds. The chicken houses had less than 10 chickens. One fish pond had recently had the fish stolen, and the other had 1 of 4 sections of the pond being used. The activities of the efforts (when successful) were all accomplishing the goals stated in the above introduction, but not to the potential that the administrators of Food for Education program were hoping for or expecting. There should be improved understanding of what the expectation of the animal husbandry program is in regards to how much production is expected and how to accomplish that expectation.

**Recommendations** – See Summary

Objective 3 – Provide training to current CRS field staff on simple techniques to support schools in the area of school gardens and animal husbandry

**Progress** – During our visits to the schools, I had many conversations using a SWOT analysis of the activities.

**Expected impacts/results** - There will be improved understanding of what the expectation of the Food for Education programs expect by the local schools and the community monitors and how to develop a plan of activities to accomplish that.

**Recommendations** - See Summary

## Summary of Recommendations

### Begin with the End in Mind

School gardens are to contribute to school lunches

Villages are to be self-sufficient and self-sustaining in providing lunches to children at school. The question that needs to be asked is “when” this is to be accomplished.

CRS leadership should ensure Community Monitors (CM) understand clearly the goals of the Laos Government and CRS in order to share that with the community they are working with.

CM should then work with the community to define their school garden goals. Questions the CM could ask the community leaders and school leaders are: what is defined as village school lunch contribution from garden? (How much? How often?)

CMs will communicate and help implement those goals to the school leadership.

### Put 1<sup>st</sup> Things 1<sup>st</sup>

Community Monitors need to discover the goals of the village school gardens at the local level. This is to be done by meeting with the village and school leadership, who will be directly involved with mobilizing the effort.

Questions to be asked by CM:

Is the purpose of the school garden for food production? How much? Who will eat?

Is the purpose of the school garden to educate?

What new technology do they want to introduce?

What type of technology? Irrigation? Organic?, Chemical fertilizer and herbicide?, improved seeds, new varieties of seeds, composting, discipline gardening requires.....?.

Once when the goals are defined by village and school leadership, an assessment of the villages' goals needs to be made so a plan of activities can be made using the resources available to the village, CMs, and CRS. Each village will need a custom tailored plan of action based on the resources and assets available in the community.

Possible variation of factors to be made during the goal making discussion could be knowledge.

Do they have the knowledge to garden?

Do they have the time to garden?

Do they have the land to garden?

Do they have the ability to protect the garden from animals and thieves?

Do they have the water resources?

Do they have climate and soils to produce the desired goals?

Each hindrance shared needs to be noted by the CM for future reflection and solution finding.

A quick, participatory community assessment facilitated by CMs and CRS needs to be concluded to give a response to the school if solutions can be found.

Considerations during assessment – how much land, time, water, human and financial resources (from community and from school) will be invested to arrive at the goals and will the assets be available?

The most basic question is: Is the village plan obtainable in cooperation with CRS & Government?

An example of a plan of activity for the garden of 2016

- As the goals are defined they need to be put in writing.
- Have the school (students and teachers) to write expectation of productivity. (Cultivate a business plan training with the school garden)
- What size will the garden be? (example: 20m x 5 m.)
- What vegetables will be raised?
- How much space of the garden for each class?
- Who will construct the fence and when?
- Who will be responsible for the watering during the school days, during weekends, during vacations?
- When will planting start?
- Who will bring the needed inputs? (seeds, manure, fertilizer, tools, etc...)

Have all questions answered in writing to train in business/activity planning.

## Think Win-Win

In communicating to the schools and village leadership seek win-win. Understand how each individual or group is winning at doing what they are doing with CRS and the communities they serve.

Focus on harmonious goal in relationships such as:

Children's Education

Children's Health

Children's Future

Nation's Future

Village welfare and development

## Seek 1st to Understand and then to be Understood

Seek to understand what it takes to do your job with CRS or as Government employee –goals and requirements.

Seek to understand the teachers and village leaders' goals, hindrances, and limitations.

After understanding:

Use discussion to explain your position and why you need to do the job using your ideas.

Continue to work with the attitude of win-win until both parties either AGREE or choose NO DEAL



My thanks to Stephen Covey for the contribution his book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* made in producing the recommendations for this assignment.

### Number of People Trained:

(I can send an estimate but CRS Laos will have a better idea of this.)

### Gender Roles

There were enough women in roles of responsibility and authority to not make any broad assumptions that gender had influenced their opportunities.

### Value of volunteer contribution in \$

- a. Hours volunteer spent preparing for assignment -  $16 \times 2 = 32$  hours
- b. Estimated value of all material contributions volunteer contributed to host during assignment - \$25

Value of hosts' contribution in \$ (Please consult the host as well) Please contact CRS Laos for this information.)

- a. Meals
- b. Transportation
- c. Lodging
- d. Translation
- e. Other (Specify)

### Host Profile Data:

Did you obtain any data that supplements or corrects the data in the existing host information as detailed in the SOW? Please list it.

No

Recommendations for CRS: See above recommendations.

### Field Project -

The CRS field project was in the process of training government partners with school garden and nutrition training. In these opportunities that could be introduced:

New ideas for fencing and controlling animals inside the school yards

Sanitation – keep animals away from food preparation areas.

Where there is a lack of land, gardens can go up! – hanging baskets or raised beds

Encourage proven diversity of vegetables – such as: Carrots, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, and Cucumbers.

Encourage drip irrigation on small scale for advanced schools.

### Fish Ponds –

Develop plan of action – namely a business plan for Ponds.

Theft-proof (covering, lock, small holes)

Consult with an expert (governmental agent or NGO or businessman)

### Chicken Pens –

Develop plan of action

How to get chickens- feed, water and who cares for animals during vacation.

Vaccinate and medicate sick chickens.

### For future Farmer to Farmer assignments and volunteers -

The diversity of environments of the gardens and the human resources administering the gardens make a “one solution fits all” technique difficult in the technical inputs that can be applied to producing the results desired. The best F2F volunteers will cultivate creativity in the communities which blends proven principles with pragmatic assets and resources available to the people.