

REVIEW OF AREA TRAINING PROGRAMS

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Prepared for  
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## I. PURPOSE

During the Area Coordinator conference on March 23-25, 1972, HRDD was assigned to visit each area and report the comments and recommendations of the ACs on how training programs "might be strengthened and improved with respect to their areas." These recommendations are to be "fully discussed with all of you" at the 1972/1973 Dry Season Review. The following is the HRDD report.

The visits to each area included familiarization with the current training programs through intensive discussions with area technical officers, CDAAs, and local employee field assistants as well as the ACs. An evaluation of the programs was not conducted, however, as time for such a major task was unavailable.

The content of this report, then, consists primarily of a summary of the comments and recommendations obtained integrated into a total picture of regional training programs, including development and support objectives, present and future directions, levels of USAID vs. RIG contributions, and relative degrees of success. This should serve to focus the issues around the question of whether area training programs "are effectively supportive of country and regional area programs.

## II. ORGANIZATION OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

Perhaps the most fundamental comment to the whole review exercise is this by Mr. Stone, "Training programs would be valuable contributions to regional objectives if they would WORK." Even with the best of intentions and usually good ideas, training programs often don't achieve the results expected. And this illustrates the tone of most of the visits. In spite of several programs with results generally agreed to be good, the ACs and others generally adopted a critical look at training programs in their areas.

Just what a training program should be to "work" led into the innumerable questions, such as:

How is success measured?

What level of results are required to call the program successful? 10%, 25%, 50% ... 100%?

What are the pre-requisites for establishing training programs?

How much time and effort is a given program worth?

Is success to be measured over long-range or short-range, or both?

The answers to these questions are extremely nebulous, providing the greatest obstacle to an objective review.

Thus, the most unanimous suggestions for improvement are directed first toward developing a format for training program approval, then toward devoting the necessary time and effort to make them work. If this commitment is not made, then training programs shouldn't be started.

### A. ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FORMAT

During discussions with ACs a new Activity Proposal structure was recommended to be used in the future to obtain approval for training programs. This consists of the following major categories, with detailed guidelines of contents below:

1. Background
2. Statement of Need
3. Objectives

4. Preparation
5. Training Content
6. Follow-up
7. Evaluation

1. Background. A statement of the relationship of the proposed program to the regional programs (objectives), its contribution, its impact, and a history of the related factors as required. The level of sophistication of the training relative to the conventional practices in the area will be of interest to concurring officers. Mr. Haffner and others felt that USAID training programs should definitely improve the quality of the product or practice over that currently employed. A general statement of the need for the program may be included here.

2. Statement of Need. Two specific items are to be included:

- a. data: Most training programs are designed to improve something in a measurable way. Statistics on pre-training conditions should be included here, such as: Rice production in Ban Nok Hang, 538 villagers, is approximately 100,000 kilo/year. No other major crops are grown. Other supporting data such as number of working adults, livestock, etc., may be included if it bears on the reason for training.
- b. trainee receptivity: knowledge of attitude and conditions of the people receiving the training cannot be overemphasized. Some statement indicating the motivation of the trainee for accepting and USING his training is highly appropriate. It may be something as short as a statement that the trainees themselves independently requested the training, or it may include a description of conditions in an area which will be changed by the training. (It was pointed out by one AC that subsistence economy villagers don't trust the market economy, thus any attempt to move a villager from one level to the other will prove difficult unless there exists a definite interest and initiative on the part of the villager.)

3. Objectives. Objectives should be stated in terms of the results at the end of the training and after the training is applied. The criteria for a good objective is follows:

Standard AP format

7. Evaluation. The method of evaluation should be specified before the program begins, and can easily be included in the Activity Proposal. Both quantitative and qualitative information should be included. If it is felt to be useful, the requirement for evaluation data could be built into the PMI system at a given date after the completion and cut-off date of the program (Chudzik).

For RLG 1. Statement signed  
Trainers 2. Must be RLG

B. THE PAPERWORK JUNGLE

Is it realistic to expect field people, already burdened with extensive paperwork, to use this AP format? Mr. Anderson attempted at one time to enforce greater planning into the training program APs. This, plus the commitment to greater effort and time input contained in the AP will certainly place a heavier burden on those responsible for administering the programs.

This question, or a variation, was asked at every post. The response can be summarized by "We've got to do something, and several elements integral to the success of training are left out of most programs. This format should be required." Mr. Young, in particular, felt that centralized guidance of training programs was lacking and is important to keep the same mistakes from being repeated in each region. A standard format is one step in this direction.

How to Reduce the Burden

1. Mr. Connick felt that local employees (CDAs, Admin. Ass'ts) can be given more responsibility. In most areas a few capable men have accepted this responsibility well. Some are writing activity plans and managing projects relatively independently. More capable local employees need to be identified and given this kind of responsibility.

A plug for local training here. The HRD/LT supervisory Management Training Program (SMT) teaches certain tasks to local employees which fit perfectly with being activity managers in the field. SMT I teaches how to write objectives and make detailed plans and schedules to reach these objectives on time. SMT II teaches and gives practice in establishing work priorities, developing standards of performance, coaching and developing subordinates, use of performance review techniques, budgeting reporting, plus decision making and problem solving techniques. With good follow-up on the job by the supervisor, local employees going through these programs could develop into good activity managers rapidly.

2. Follow-up and evaluation can consume considerable time. But without them the training program managers are only "hoping" for the successful application of their training (this was actually written into the AP objectives of a few training programs). The suggestion of giving local employees some training in survey methods, evaluation procedures, the importance of follow-up, was very appropriate, and is complementary to Item 1 above.

3. The RLG technical services are sometimes responsible for the follow-up and the evaluation. The ultimate goal is, of course, for the RLG to be able to organize and conduct training programs without our support. This is generally agreed to be some time away, however. But their personnel are and should be used to achieve the training objectives. Additional training to increase their competency, as in Item 2 above, may be necessary to help them meet the training program requirements.

ISSUE NO. I: Mr. Morgan brought out the question of how much can the results of evaluation conducted by locals be believed? This was primarily in reference to surveys conducted by the RLG, but also applicable to those by USAID local employees. The tendency is to lose objectivity as a result of unexpected conditions arising in the survey process, such as having to interpret vague answers, inaccessibility of a portion of the sample, or losing a perspective of the survey objectives when immersed in the details of procedure. Can this be remedied by training and supervision? Just how much can be delegated to local employees or RLG officials in USAID sponsored training programs?

### III. TRAINING CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the review to grasp was the contribution of training programs to regional objectives. This is because of several reasons:

1. Certain regional objectives are long-range, such as development of agricultural self-sufficiency, and others are short-range, primarily those connected with refugees resettlement.
2. The priority of regional objectives vary from area to area and frequently change. Vientiane and Xieng Khouang are 100% concerned with refugees, although a short time ago Vientiane was working on agriculture, education, and leadership development programs. Ban Houie Sai is shifting its emphasis to support of customs enforcement and narcotics control. Regional objectives are directly influenced by the latest political/military situation, which by nature changes regularly.
3. The provincial RLG governments are weak in developing comprehensive plans and projecting them into the future. The only AC who knew of a province with a planning apparatus was Mr. Huxtable, who said he has heard Mr. Cauterucci in the past talk about a development scheme of some kind for Ban Houie Sai.
4. Planning tends to be concentrated at the national level, both in the RLG and in USAID. This seems to have the effect in USAID that area personnel don't have as great a feeling of responsibility as they might have to closely evaluate progress in the light of the objectives for programs planned at the national level.

Thus it becomes very difficult to summarize general comments on the contribution of training programs to area programs. This is better handled on a case-by-case basis. Some samples are listed below:

#### A. PROGRAMS WITH SHORT-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Short-range training programs are those which in general are required to perform a certain job or show a certain result in a short period of time. The refugee resettlement program generates many of these, as training is important to help refugees make certain adjustments to new conditions.

1. PL 480: In all areas this program was necessary to help the refugees adjust to the 50-50 rice-wheat supplies which was shortly to be required fare for all refugees. All areas reported success with this program, some saying the adjustment couldn't be made without it.
2. Refugee self-sufficiency programs: In Savannakhet a program was organized to teach refugees to make a good quality charcoal. The market was available and a good instructor was found. Many refugees are now living on the income gained from making charcoal. Similarly, a livestock program in Luang Prabang is designed to



make refugees self-sufficient in swine production. These are the only kind of training programs which will be attempted in Xieng Khouang, according to Mr. Jensen.

3. Nai Ban - Tasseng programs: Although originally designed to have long-range effects, the way they're organized and conducted the Nai Ban - Tasseng training programs are essentially short-range orientation programs. They certainly have a positive effect at the time they're conducted, and probably the effect lasts for years. But no plans exist to follow-up and capitalize on the generated feelings. According to Cunningham's evaluation of the Ban Houie Sai program, only 14% of the villages were visited by the Chao Muongs after the program.

#### B. PROGRAMS WITH LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Most training programs have measurable short-time objective but the primary goals are long-range. Knowledge gained can be measured at the end of the training phase and immediate results can be demonstrated very soon after application of the training for some programs, yet the general purpose fits with a long-term development objective. For other programs measurable results will not be observed for some time.

1. CREC: Each summer the CREC teachers are advanced one step toward eventual absorption into the regular teacher cadre, the total program being four years. Failure means losing the job as a teacher. The sector goal is to improve the standards of community education. The program is very clear-cut and easy to say that it is a worth while contribution to overall regional development objectives.
2. Silk Production: Although refugees have been selected to be the participants in this program in Vientiane with the objective of becoming self-sufficient through the income derived from silk production, the sector goals are also clearly to develop the Lao silk production industry. The major effort in this program is being conducted in the environment of the participant, and so far appears highly successful in both the short-and the long-range goals (Young).
3. Village Development Councils: Each area has or had at one time village development council training by the CRA. It is done with USAID support by AP in Pakse, without it in L.P., but with national coordination. In Ban Houie Sai these councils are still functioning, apparently independently now, but in Sayaboury where they originated and where much effort was devoted to form them and help them become institutionalized, they are apparently no longer active. Much more study needs to be devoted to this program to determine general pre-requisites for success, how they can be integrated into other area programs, and what their potential contribution can be. Mr. Bayer suggested that a seminar be held in Vientiane for CRA chiefs to spell out what a complete training

program which meets its objectives consists of (i.g., the elements proposed for the training program AP format in Part II.a. in this report).

4. Skill Training Programs: The two major programs in this area are the Ban Amone Center (now turned over to the RLG) and the Phone Si Khai Skills Development Center in Pakse. Feelings were quite mixed about the results of these programs. The Ban Amone Center is now completely institutionalized and supported by the RLG, but still receives an annual USAID contribution. Mr. Anderson recommends a more thorough evaluation of the results of the Ban Amone Center training followed by a re-evaluation of USAID support to the Center.

Local employees (Khamsing) reported good results for the Pakse program, nearly 50% of the trainees using their skills as their primary means of support and many others as the occasion demanded. Americans are a bit more dubious, and Mr. Figueira said that evaluation of the results will be improved so a better determination can be made later. Yet it may still be a bit difficult to determine a specific contribution of this program to area programs. Mr. Connick suggested that the Center itself could be used in a broader sense to support training required for other projects, and that a better method of determining what skills are really needed should be employed.

5. Literacy programs: Not too much has been done previously in this area, but literacy programs seem to be attracting interest now. Summer students are being used to teach literacy to refugees this summer in L.P.; Savannakhet has had a small non-USAID literacy program for military families and may begin one for refugees soon, and Mr. Zimmerman is interested in literacy training for Pakse. The primary objective is to help people be able to communicate better with RLG, both in receiving information and understanding and preparing documentation (records) required by the RLG for administration purposes.
6. Agricultural Training: Many different agricultural training programs are and have been conducted: farmer leader tours, rice variety demonstration, crop diversification, vegetable growing, farmer leader training are conducted in several areas, and Pakse has just turned over the Km 4 Rural Development Training Center to a private enterprise. It is these programs that Mr. Stone's comment, "They'd be good if they would WORK", applies most directly. Follow-up and evaluation of these programs are weak, and suggestions for improvement are mostly covered by the new AP format. In addition, however, three other suggestions particularly for agriculture.

programs should be noted:

- a.) Programs conducted in the natural environment of the trainee have a greater chance of success. Mr. Stone and Mr. Zimmerman both felt that training through extension would be better than bringing farmers to a central location. The success of the silk weaving program is an example.
- b.) Support of the farmers after training (follow-up) with materials and equipment seemed to be a reason for expected objectives not being attained in Pakse. If support to farmers upon completion of a program is required, every effort should be made to see that it is provided.
- c.) Mr. Connick pointed out that with the present military situation, it is a bad time for agricultural training. Farmers don't trust the market economy and security prevents good follow-up in many areas. This implies that these programs should be very cautiously planned and limited to areas with very favorable conditions.

### C. TRAINING PROGRAM PLANNING

The Area Coordinators are definitely concerned about their ability to link long- and short-term objectives of their training programs together through some regional plan followed by both the RLG and USAID. Plans developed at the national level for the regions do have to have the concurrence of the ACs. The ACs do have the autonomy to develop plans for their regions. Yet the uneasiness about regional plans indicates a missing link someplace.

Mr. Connick feels that an emphasized role for the Commission of the Plan in the RLG to provide guidance for provincial planning would be of great assistance. The recent Chao Muong conferences in each area is an attempt to inspire development awareness among the Chao Muongs, but the first observations of the results were that although generating enthusiasm, they lacked "how to" guidance. Thus they become more pep rallies than training programs. Guidance from the national level in regional planning and coordination of regional programs with national programs would appear to be a valid step at this point.

ISSUE NO. 2: Given the political/military situation in Laos at this time and the supporting assistance nature of USAID, is it practical to think of devoting greater effort to regional development planning? If so, should it be initiated through the RLG, by the ACs, or both? If not, how can we truly evaluate the value of training programs with long-range objectives?

A good exercise to try might be a simplified PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) for the training programs in each area. This technique schedules the steps required to reach an objective, from beginning to end. Training programs are actually just steps to reach a broader objective. In doing this exercise, then, the steps preceding the training program would need to be listed, as well as the steps following the program on to the final result.

In listing the preceding steps, certain pre-requisites to a planned training program may be found to be left out. For example, the Village Development Council training in Pakse was attended by trainees 60% of whom were illiterate. Perhaps a literacy program should have preceded this training.

In doing a PERT exercise for all training programs in an area, very possibly it can be determined that some programs are complementary to others or mutually supportive and should be planned together. Mr. Connick's example of the Phone Si Khai center used to support other programs is an example. In Luang Prabang, the mutual coexistence of the Village Development Council program and the Nai Ban - Tasseng program with little apparent coordination between the CRA and the Khoueng office is another example. The Nai Ban - Tasseng program could announce and explain the existence of the Village Development Council program and get a reading on interest, to be followed up later. Then the Village Development Council program could do the same for the specialized technical training programs available in the area.

#### IV. FUTURE PROGRAMS

Training in general seems to be phasing down. Future programs in the planning stage by ACs were primarily those of the short-range vital need-fulfilling type. An exception is a new program being developed for L.P. in connection with recent narcotics control effort - crop substitution. This may receive more emphasis. Also, Vientiane refugees need something because their 80% highland rice crop will dwindle in a few years due to decreasing land productivity. Most of the other programs discussed above are continuing.

Another area of training which was discussed briefly was management or rural administration training. It was felt (strongly in Savannakhet) that management training for RLG Service and Bureau chiefs would be worthwhile. This was partly because of a parallel discussion during this review period on supervisory management training for USAID local employees, and partly a result of a feeling among field people that has existed for years that Lao rural administration is weak.

#### Coordinating Training Programs

This, then, brings the discussion to a point which has not yet been effectively met - what kind of coordination should there be among the various training programs? As mentioned previously, Mr. Young felt that central guidance was important so that serious training wasn't left up to the whims of each AC. Four areas of coordination are:

- a.) USAID-RLG: Most counterpart offices are well-coordinated - that's their main job. But training programs in offices which aren't counterpart, such as in the Ministry of Interior, can not be well coordinated with similar programs in USAID.
- b.) Intra-USAID: The most important aspect of this for the purpose of this report is the inter-area coordination. It appears that more should be done, as central guidance for such national programs as the Village Development Council and Nai-Ban - Tasseng seems weak. The opposite may be true in other programs, giving them central direction rather than central guidance. What is the happy compromise?
- c.) Intra-Province: Within each area there may be some lack of coordination, as pointed out in the L.P. Nai Ban - Village Development Council case.
- d.) Intra-RLG: This perhaps could be the biggest obstacle of all. Very famous in all developing countries are the inter-ministerial rivalries for development coordination leadership.

Laos could very much be the same.

It would be ideal if one training center in each area or province could coordinate all training activities for that area, and in turn receive central guidance and support from the national level. But this day doesn't seem to be too close at hand. Meanwhile, what are our priorities?

ISSUE NO. 3:

Is coordination in one or more of the above areas important enough at this time to take action on developing a coordination instrument? If so, what?

Possible alternatives:

- CRA: Pro - CRA may be able to develop the personnel and build training centers in each area with USAID guidance and support. Con - the CRA does not carry much prestige in the RLG thus may lack the respect necessary for a sensitive coordination role. Also, it would be in competition with other Ministries.
- Ministry of Interior: Pro - the MoI has a new training division headed by an able person, and has the strength of being backed by the Ministry in charge of the government of the rural areas. Con - the new training division is still inadequately staffed, with almost no staff in the provinces. Also, USAID does not have a counterpart relationship with the MoI, thus could not effectively monitor such a coordinating role in this division unless this were developed.
- Commission of the Plan, Human Resources Development Division:  
  
Pro - it is well located, in a position to know about all RLG training activities. Con - it is essentially a staff (planning) office, lacking the status or authority to conduct or coordinate training activities. This would have to be given to it, then accepted within the RLG, two almost inconceivable conditions.
- USAID: Pro - USAID can maintain control of quality and type of training offered which best meets regional needs. Con - May detract from long-term development of RLG training skills and institutions. Also, USAID would have to staff the activity.

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. Although the success of some training programs is obvious, the results of others are being challenged. It is recommended that a new Activity Proposal format be adopted which: a.) commits the resources - funds, equipment, and manpower - necessary for a successful program; and b.) requires thorough planning before approval and implementation.
2. Several local employees are presently being used to manage training programs. It is recommended that more local employees be given the training required and the responsibility to improve the management of training programs according to the new AP format.
3. Several factors make it very difficult to equate the results of training programs with regional objectives. It might be helpful to draw simplified PERT diagrams for regional programs, including training programs, which show the steps leading to the achievement of regional objectives. The question of who is responsible for initiating regional development plans continues to be an annoying one.
4. There is a general tendency to reduce the number of training programs to those essential for accomplishing short-range objectives or tasks of high priority.
5. Coordination of regional training programs hasn't been considered an important problem.