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International Voluntary Services monthly reports - memos. 1968/1970

Benson, Frederic C.

[s.l.]: [s.n.], 1968/1970

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Office Memorandum *International Voluntary Services, INC.*

TO : BOB LOVAN, COP/IVS

Sept 1968

FROM : FRITZ BENSON

SUBJECT: VILLAGE VISIT EVALUATION REPORT

A summary of my activities in Ban Pak Po:

Sept. 4-5: Harvesting high field rice
" 11-12: Fishing, teaching English
" 18-19: A bit of woman's work, teaching English,
and baj lin sou

Ban Pak Po is located several miles north of Vang Vieng. It is composed of 65 houses and is of average prosperity. Being located on the Vientiane-Luang Prabang highway, commercial opportunities are present. Local farmers possess both lowland and highland fields, the former capable of irrigation due to the presence of the Nam Po River; hence, there is a possibility of raising surplus rice crops. Building construction, the possession of luxury items by the villagers, and the apparent wealth of the local wat are more evident indicators of wealth. While most of the houses in Ban Pak Po were constructed out of bamboo and had thatched roofs, some were constructed out of wood and had tin roofs (the latter being relatively dear commodities). "Luxury" items such as watches and radios were possessed by a number of villagers (the former being much more prevalent). The local wat (which, I think, served both Ban Pak Po and the neighboring village of Ban Nam Po) seemed relatively prosperous judging by the upkeep and number of decorations. In short, while not being wealthy Ban Pak Po is not poor.

The basic institution in any Lao village is the family. In Ban Pak Po I stayed with the Thong family, which is composed of father, mother, two sons (aged four and seventeen), and one daughter (age 6). Grandparents did not live with the family, as is quite often the case. Why this is I do not know; perhaps they are deceased or live in another village. As is the case in most countries at the same stage of development as Laos family ties are close. This is the case with the Thong family, as well as with other families with which I came into contact. Cordial relationships existed between all members of the family. This cordiality even extended to me--I never once felt out of place during my three visits. The family was together during the three daily meals and in the evening (with certain exceptions such as periodic guard duty by the father who is, I believe, a member of the local ADC)--the rest of the day they went their own way performing their respective duties. As my visit coincided with harvest-time, the father and eldest son spent their time in the fields while the mother worked at home pounding the rice, etc. Of the younger members of the family, the girl attended school and the boy spent the day playing. The day began for the Thong family at about 5:30. Breakfast was usually about 8:00, and work began about 9:00. By all indications, the Thong family is not rich. Their house is average and they possess no luxury

items. However, they own two high fields as well as a water buffalo, chickens, and a pig or two. Their food is relatively simple, consisting primarily of fish and sticky rice. (The food at the house of the naiban, where I ate a couple of times, was more varied both in style and content.) In short, available evidence suggests that the Thong family is self-sufficient.

It is falsely assumed by many Westerners that life in underdeveloped countries is easy. On the contrary, life is hard (as I can now attest). However, there is ample time for recreation. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Lao recreation takes two forms: Bouns (or any festive occasions) and sitting around chit-chatting with the neighbors (including baj lin sou). Unfortunately, there were no bouns at the village during my visit. However, I did partake of a good deal of baj lin sou with the eldest of the Thong offspring, and it was a most enjoyable experience indeed.

At all times--both at work and at play--I was engaged in the teaching of English to the eldest Thong boy and his comrades. I'm not quite sure what motivates the village people to desire to learn English, especially since they will probably come into contact with few English-speaking people and generally never have an opportunity to use it. However, it reflects, I think, two things: 1) A growing interest or realization of U.S. involvement in Laos, and 2) The growing importance placed on education. Both trends, I think, are healthy.

One more point that should be mentioned: The role of Buddhism and animism in Lao life. It is impossible for me to talk on this point at present. The only direct contacts I made with Buddhism in the village was when I visited the wat and when I saw a n alter in the naiban's house. Nevertheless, it can no doubt be said that most aspects of Lao life are inextricably tied up with these two belief systems. My infamiliarity with these dominating aspects in Lao life precludes the possibility of my connecting them with the attitudes of the villagers.

All in all, my experience in the village was quite successful. It was a mutual learning experience. Although this experience was balanced in my favor, the villagers learned about America (by questioning) and an American (by observation).

FCB/fcb

Copies: IVS-4
Personal file-1

TO: MR. WILLIAM R. LOVAN , COP/IVS-RD

FROM: FREDERIC C. BENSON

SUBJECT: IVS ORIENTATION EVALUATION

WASHINGTON/HARPER'S FERRY:

I have no comments to make concerning this part of the orientation other than that it was, in my estimation, most satisfactory in all respects. The choice of outside speakers, the presence of ex-IVS volunteers, etc. all added up to a rather complete introduction to Laos.

One suggestion for possible improvement, however. Although I am well aware of the fact that there is a paucity of information on Laos (as compared to Viet-Nam), I think it would be profitable for new volunteers to be briefed more thoroughly on Lao customs and attitudes. It seems to me (if my memory serves me correctly) that Laos was short-changed when discussions were held on this subject.

LOS BAÑOS:

The Los Baños session was most beneficial to me due primarily to the fact that I had no knowledge of the material covered. However, I have two suggestions for possible improvement. 1) Concerning the curriculum as presently structured: It would be much more profitable if more field work were included. For example, when studying about insect pests it would be much more beneficial to observe them at work in the field than in a test-tube or on the screen. 2) Additions to the curriculum: Community development is almost entirely ignored. I suggest that sessions on community development theory and on the more practical aspects of community development (such as how to build a well) be included.

VIENTIANE:

The Vientiane orientation met up to my prior expectations. That is to say, in addition to language study we met the USAID and RLG officials with whom IVS-RD works. This is a necessary part of the orientation, and I have no comments to make concerning it.

FIVE-DAY FIELD TRIP:

This aspect of training is, I believe, most important for it gives the new volunteer a glimpse of what to expect in the field. I have one suggestion for improvement, however. I think that the volunteer should be sent to observe a field station on the basis of his interests. That is to say, a CD volunteer should be sent to a place where CD volunteers are working.

VANG VIENG:

As I see it, the Vang Vieng session has two general goals: 1) It offers an opportunity to gain greater proficiency in the Lao language, both through further instruction and everyday use., 2) It offers an opportunity to become familiar with the Lao peasant (if I may be permitted to use such a term) personality. Perhaps a third purpose can be added: It offers an opportunity to become more familiar with IVS and it's position in Laos. If these are the goals of the Vang Vieng session they were, in my opinion, achieved through language study, village visits and the week-end visits by IVS staff members.

I have one suggestion for improvement, however. A case study of the Vang Vieng area could be made by the trainees, with assistance from the CDA and others familiar with the area. Such a study would offer clues to the problems which face a developing country and could offer possible guidelines for more effective work in the future. In making this study field trips and informal discussions would lead to insights into the spectrum of problems facing Laos. A program such as this is, I believe, of extreme importance to all volunteers.

LANGUAGE STUDY:

I have been generally pleased with Lao language study. In studying a foreign language the student's greatest obstacle is himself; one gets out of language study only what he puts into it.

A suggestion for improvement. More emphasis should be placed on informal conversation. This affords the student an opportunity to practice the sentence patterns he has learned in the dialogue in a non-dialogue context.

FCB/fcb
9/27/68

cc: IVS/Vte-3
IVS/W-1
Personal file-1

TO: Bob Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/RD

SUBJECT: Monthly Report for October, 1968

Orientation for the IVS/RD July group came to a screeching halt on 28 September, and the volunteers who comprised this group were whisked off to their respective field stations shortly thereafter. That is, with one exception. The month of October has been a sort of "interim" period for me, a period between orientation and final assignment spent in Moung Phieng (9 October-5 November) observing the work of Mike Flanagan (i.e., how he has gone about designing the M.P. training program).

The title "sociological evaluator" has been bequeathed me, a title which is as yet somewhat nebulous. One general definition, however, which is applicable to my case is this: The study of the attitudes and customs of the Lao villager and, on the basis of this study (both structured and unstructured), evaluate various development projects using sociological methodology, the end product being recommendations as to how to improve the techniques employed in the carrying out of these projects.

The type of work that Mike has been doing is similar in three respects to the type of work I will be doing. Firstly, as Mike had no prior experience in setting up leader training programs, I have had no experience in evaluation work. Like Mike, I will be spending the first several months at my post (Ban Thalat) researching available material relating to evaluation and attitude measurement. Secondly, our experiences will be similar in that Mike has not been, and I will not be involved in the distribution of commodities. While the advantages of being separated from commodity support are obvious, I think there may be an attendant disadvantage: Perchance villagers will be somewhat suspicious of a farang who is unable to provide them with material goods and who is wandering around for no logical (in village eyes) reason. Thirdly, Mike is presently involved in establishing criteria with which to measure the attitudes of the villagers toward his program. That is to say, he intends to collect relevant data relating to the objectives of the training program and, on the basis of this information, evaluate the effectiveness of the program. As this is similar to the type of work I will be doing my stay in Moung Phieng has been most instructive in this respect. On the basis of reading that I have done here dealing with evaluation techniques and observations of the training program I have been assisting Mike design the aforementioned evaluation program.

If becoming more aware of the frame of reference in which I will be working is the first reason for my coming to Moung Phieng, the second is that a month

here has enabled me to become more acquainted with Lao customs (as well as the customs of ethnic minority groups such as the Yao and Meo) and the Lao language. Proficiency in the latter will be of great importance to me in my work in that the study of, and understanding of the attitudes of the Lao will necessitate my having a rather good command of the language.

Insofar as these are the purposes for my being in Moung Phieng during the month of October, I regard my visit a great success.

Distribution: IVS-3
Personal file-1

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Frederic C. Benson, IVS-Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: Monthly Report for November, 1968

The first half of November was spent concluding my visit to Moung Phiang (9 October-12 November). My activities during this stay in Moung Phiang were outlined in my monthly report for October and need no further elaboration. Suffice it to say that while there I observed the mechanics of the M.P. training program, became familiar with evaluation techniques and assisted Mike Flanagan design measures with which to evaluate his program. In short, my Moung Phiang venture was a preview of what was in store for me in my role as "sociological evaluator" in Ban Thalaat.

I arrived in Ban Thalaat on 15 November and have spent most of my time thus far surveying the area and getting settled in. For the time being (i.e., until I find my own house) I am residing in the guest house at the USAID-RLG training center. The training center, a conglomeration of variously styled buildings, is presently the home of various and sundry persons including forty Japanese engineers who are engaged in the construction of the Nam Ngum dam, an uncertain number of Lao employed by USAID and the aforementioned Japanese, and last, but not least, CDAA North Nam Ngum (hereafter referred to as N.N.N.) Loring Waggoner and family. In addition to serving as the Ban Thalaat Intercontinental, the training center is the seat of USAID operations for the N.N.N. and, as the name implies, the training center is a training center.

Founded during the early months of this year, the Ban Thalaat training center is directed by Mr. Waggoner and the CDA of Phone Hong (Douangpanya). To date there have been several training programs held here, and a naiban-tasseng program is projected for January or February. The trainees are drawn from the N.N.N. area and are housed, trained and fed on the premises. The training center, incidentally, was constructed as a work camp by the Danish firm that built the Nam Ngum bridge, an expansive structure which spans the Nam Ngum River at Ban Thalaat.

The area in which I am working--the North Nam Ngum--is comprised of three "sub-areas": Phone Hong, Ban Keun and Phanthaboun. Each of these areas is managed by a Lao CDA, their activities being coordinated by the CDAA of the N.N.N., Mr. Waggoner. For the next several weeks I plan to spend time in these areas so as to get a general picture of the prevailing conditions in each.

Although I have not begun to do any sociological evaluation work as yet, I have spent a good deal of time conjuring up various possible projects. As there have been, and will continue to be a number of training programs at the training center, I think that in addition to evaluating individual programs it would be valuable to get an overall picture of attitudes toward training held by those who have participated and those who will participate in the training programs. Such a study could take into consideration many factors which might affect these attitudes and could possibly provide useful

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

FROM: Frederic G. Benson, IVS-Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: Monthly Report for November, 1968

***** PAGE 2 *****

information which could serve as general guidelines in the planning of future training programs.

In addition to getting "settled in", I have been spending a good deal of time each day studying Lao. Although my efforts are paying off in that my vocabulary is ever increasing, I am still having difficulty incorporating this vocabulary into sentence form. This problem is rapidly being solved, however, with the able assistance of the local medic and a couple of village maidens. The balance of my waking hours have been spent reading various materials which deal with sociological aspects of Southeast Asia in general and Laos in particular.

Ban Thalaat and the surrounding area is probably one of the most dynamic areas in Laos today. In addition to the progressive nature of USAID and RLG programs in the area, this dynamicism is due in no small part to the construction of the Nam Ngum dam, a thirty million dollar project which will immeasurably affect the economic and social development not only of the N.N.N. area but of all Laos as well. Evidence of this change is already noticeable in Ban Thalaat, a small "boom" town in which the tempo of life is increasing daily.

In short, all factors considered, this is an extremely exciting time to be in Ban Thalaat, especially so since I will be able to observe and measure the changes which will occur during my stay here.

FCB/fcb
11/28/68

Distribution: IVS-3
AC/Vte-1
CDAA/NNN-1
ADRD-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Moung/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: WILLIAM R. LOVAN, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: ART STILLMAN, ACOP

FROM: FREDERIC C. BENSON, IVS-BAN THALAAT

SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT FOR DECEMBER, 1968

The month of December has been devoted to becoming better acquainted with the area in which I am working, the North Nam Ngum (comprised of M. Phone Hong, M. Ban Keun and M. Phantaboun). I travelled to Mounng Ban Keun and Mounng Phantaboun for brief visits (Thalaat is in M. Phone Hong) and became acquainted with mounng officials, the two Lao ODAs who manage USAID operations in the respective areas, and the prevailing conditions in each. Unfortunately, I was unable to spend an extended amount of time with the ODAs of Ban Keun and Phantaboun--as planned last month--due primarily to security reasons.

Security has been somewhat tenuous all month. On 1 December Pathet Lao forces came too close for comfort and the Waggoners and myself were evacuated to Vientiane. We returned, however, on 5 December, but enemy pressure has continued, particularly in the area behind the Nam Ngum dam site.

One long-smoldering problem which was brought to the fore during the recent P.L. incursions behind the dam site concerns the villagers who lived in the area. Numbering some 3000 in all, these people have been faced with the alternative of moving to other areas or drowning, for the villages are located in the basin which will form the Nam Ngum reservoir. The vast majority of these people had not begun to move to the designated resettlement area near Ban Keun until fighting erupted when the P.L. moved into the area in which they were living. At this juncture a mass exodus began as the villagers moved out of the battle zone. Not all of these people went downstream to Ban Keun; approximately one-third of their number "chose" to go with the P.L. The problems attendant to this mass migration downstream have been many and varied, not least of them being the fact that the villagers fled leaving their newly-harvested rice lying in the fields.

Aside from keeping a close watch on the security and refugee situations (which included several helicopter rides over the tri-mounng area, thus enabling me to get an aerial survey of the region), I have had ample opportunity to come to some conclusions concerning the nature of my work here. My interests are being drawn more and more toward the Ban Thalaat training center (more correctly, the North Nam Ngum Development Center). A joint USAID-CRA undertaking, the NNND C will serve as the seat of a proposed tri-mounng council in addition to serving as a training center for local leaders (naibans and tassangs). Training programs have already been held here for the naibans and tassangs of Mounng Phone Hong and Mounng Ban Keun. A third program will be held in the latter part of February for the local leaders of Mounng Phantaboun. Although present training efforts are directed toward the training of leaders in the tri-mounng area, it is hoped that eventually the NNND C will develop into a national training center where local leaders from all over Laos can be trained.

My work with the training program would be to assist in the designing of a training curriculum which would take into consideration the history, traditions and existing

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Art Stillman, ACOOP

FROM: Frederic C. Benson, IVS-Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: Monthly Report for December, 1968

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conditions of the mounq from which trainees would be drawn (this is assuming that training will continue to be on a mounq by mounq basis. If trainees are drawn from a number of different mounqs a slightly different approach will have to be taken). In short, a curriculum would be developed which would be custom designed to utilize the existing patterns of tradition. For example, certain attitudes held by local leaders might be related to the age of the village and its resulting conservatism. Perhaps it would be possible to modify such a conservative stance by somehow utilizing in a training program certain factors which help contribute to this conservatism.

As this type of approach to curriculum planning would require a good deal of time in that information would have to be gathered from many different sources (including the local leaders themselves) and then analyzed, it is not probable that such an approach will be possible for the February session (the approach to training which will be used at this time will be similar to that used in the last two programs). Nevertheless, I am in the process of gathering as much information as possible about M. Phantaboun (this will include a planned two-week fact-finding mission to Phantaboun in early February). The process of collecting and analyzing this information will be an instructive exercise which will pay large dividends, especially since I will be able to test and improve upon my ideas by observing the February training session.

FCB/fcb
12/31/68

Distribution: IVS-3
CDAA/NNN-1
ADRD-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Mounq/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

Art Stillman, ACOF

14 January 1969

Fritz Benson, IVS Ban Thalaat

Follow-up on matters discussed in Vte.

- 1) Housing: I have presented proof-of-ownership papers to the widow, and am awaiting the arrival of papers concerning leasing matters (I understand that their are certain documents to this effect must be signed by the landlord). Hopefully I will be able to make the big movement next week (provided bed, etc. arrive). I have decided to dispense with the services of the butler I had previously considered; the Madame agreed to perform similar services (between stitches) for a considerably lower fee. Nevertheless, there are certain utensils which I would like to request:

Coleman pressure lantern (1)
Large pan for washing dishes, clothes (1)
Frying pan (1)
Coffee pot (1)
Mixing bowl (1)
Pots (for cooking soup, etc.) (2)
Glasses (6)
Plates (6)
Knives, spoons, forks (6 each)
Coffee cups, saucers (6 each)
Bowls (6)

- 2) Jeep: I believe that I discussed with you about the possibilities of procuring a jeep when you came to Thalaat. I also discussed the matter with Bob Lovan when I was in Vte., and we concluded that perhaps it would be best to give the motorcycle a fair trial before condemning it. However, I understand that Loring W. telephoned Bob (this was not my doing) and requested that a jeep be given me (primarily for reasons of safety and weather). I also understand that this request was granted (if this is the case, I shan't argue). As the details of this case are rather vague to me, perhaps you can bring me up to date.
- 3) Books: Enclosed is the bill for the first of three books which I ordered concerning evaluation and research. I will send this book to IVS/Vte. as soon as I finish paging through it.
- 4) Civic Action: The Civic Action program in M. Phone Hong is beginning to come into blossom. Pressure is coming from Vte. to get on with the construction of a new civic action school at Na Long Khun (the village where I'm living) and to beef-up the six-man civic action team which is presently at work in M. Phone Hong. Each team member specializes in a certain field, agriculture, education, sanitation, etc. Although this team is presently doing a fairly good job, it is hoped that they can become even more effective if trained further in propaganda skills-and techniques and technical skills. The team would then be sent into various forward areas located in the Mounq. In connection with this we in Thalaat have decided that it would be good to establish Village development committees (which would be similar to those established by Mike Flanagan). Although these committees will be formed with the aid of civilian

Art Stillman

From Fritz Benson

***** 2 *****

authorities, each civic action soldier will train a VDC member in his respective field. Committee members will also be brought to the Thalaat training center and receive training along the lines I discussed in my monthly report for December. Incorporated into the latter will be concepts which Mike Flanagan will be teaching (i.e., how to identify and solve a village development problem). Any comments or suggestions??

- 5) Annual Meeting: In connection with #4 I would like to request permission to come to Vte. on Tuesday, January 21 (two days before the Meeting is scheduled to commence)--Mike Flanagan will be arriving in Vte. on this date (I have had radio contact with him), and I would like to spend these two days discussing training techniques with him. I would come to Vte. via the Milk-run. Is this request formal enough?

With regards to the Annual Meeting I have received to date a communique stating that if housing is ~~not~~ available for the individual he should contact Al Best; that is to say, if housing is not needed. Is there any other information that I have not received concerning the meeting? For the record, I do not have housing; that is to say, I need housing.

- 6) IVS Assistant: Although this matter is not pressing at present, this is as good a time as any to bring it up again. At present I am thinking more and more that it would be quite good if I have an assistant (IVS). As I think the reasons for my having an assistant are obvious (~~I think~~) they need no elaboration at this point. If IVS concurs with regards to this matter, I am thinking now that perhaps mid-March would be a good time for the assistant to come here. By that time I should be pretty well squared away and ready to get down to the real work. Perhaps you know of some IVS assistant who would be available at this time and who would be eager and willing to pursue this line of work? I am thinking that an individual well versed in training techniques would be a valuable asset to CRA (that is, assuming that this assistant would transfer over to the CRA at some point). We can talk about all this later.

TO: WILLIAM R. LOVAN, COP-IVS/RD
THRU: ART STILLMAN, ACOP
FROM: FREDERIC C. BENSON, IVS-BAN THALAAT
SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT FOR JANUARY, 1969

If my tour of duty in Laos can be divided into three phases, orientation, planning, and implementation, January has been a month of transition between phases one and two. That is to say, I have overcome the basic difficulties which one encounters in adjusting to a new way of life and am now ready to begin devoting full time to my work, the planning and implementation of a training program. The planning stage of this venture will probably last for a period of three or four months. During this time I intend to design a training program for villagers and local leaders, and a briefing course for the instructors.

During the course of the month I have had ample time to begin thinking about what the goals of training in the North Nam Ngum context should be, how to go about structuring a training program, and some of the problems which will be encountered. The program which we would like to implement will not be so much concerned with the training of skills as with the bringing forward of new ideas and concepts (e.g. the stressing of the importance of planning for the future). As concepts such as this are foreign to the Asian way of thinking, much time will have to be spent in the coming months carefully considering the implications of such matters and how to go about implementing these new ideas in a training program.

FCB/fcb
1/31/69

Distribution: IVS-3
ODAA/NNN-1
ADRD-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Moung/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: Al Best, ACOP/Admin

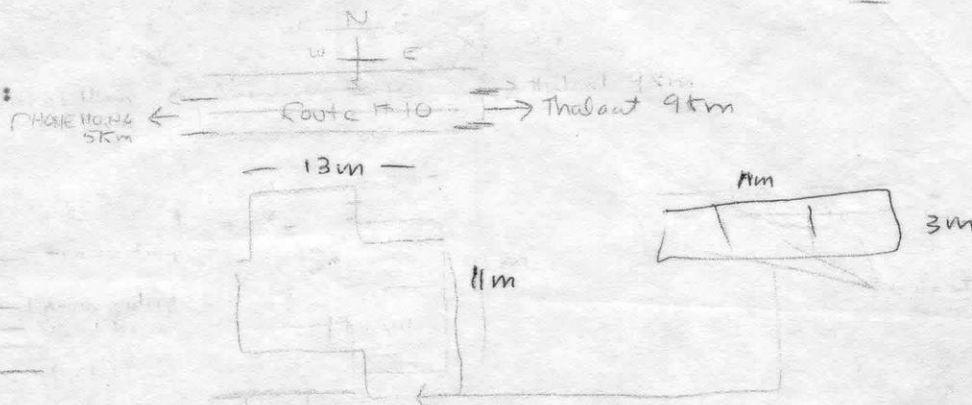
FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: Housing

Drawings not to scale

1) Drawing of house:

(Print Profile)



Measurements of the tract of land owned by the landlord and names of owners of adjacent land:

Land owned by Mr. Bong

Land owned by Mr. Vong

Working Coop.

49m

Landlord's house

Land owned by Mr. Wan

My house

rent 30,000

2) List of improvements to be made by landlord:

- Deepening of well and installment of well rings.
- Upkeep of house.

upkeep house

3) List of materials needed:

None

refrigerator
1 fan (floor)
3 table lamps
3 rattan and table

3 1 floor mat

4) List of other terms of rent:

None

I have already presented to Art Stillman a list of the furniture I need (a month and a half ago) and signed proof-of-ownership papers (two weeks ago) and, as far as I know these documents have been sent to the proper USAID offices.

However, neither the furniture nor the lease has shown up here as of yet. I would appreciate it if you would check on these matters for me. Also, I would like to know the at which stage the processing of my housing application is at present.

cc: Art Stillman, ACOP/IVS

concur: Loring Waggoner, CDAA/NNN

2/8/69

Handwritten signature and date: 2/8/69

TO: Art Stillman, ACOP/IVS/RD

DATE: 12 February 1969

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: PL Attack on Na Long Khun--follow-up on radio conversation

The report I gave you over the radio concerning the attack on Na Long Khun was rather sketchy; I will now elaborate.

At 10:10 pm on the evening of 9 February between fifteen and twenty PL staged a commando raid on Na Long Khun, the village where my home-to-be is located. The PL remained in the village for approximately thirty minutes. As I think you already know, Na Long Khun is the site of a civic action school. Although the motives of the PL attack are uncertain, perhaps it is an indication that civic action efforts are having a positive effect. While in the village, the PL surrounded and fired into the house of the man in charge of the school, a first lieutenant. They also fired two B-40 rockets into the lieutenant's office, situated about 200 meters from his house. The only resistance which the PL met came from two Lao soldiers. There were no casualties on either side. My house was untouched.

As I told you over the radio, Loring thinks that it is still alright to move into the house. The landlord, Madame Mawk has no objections, either. And for that matter, nor do I. Nevertheless I have a couple of doubts concerning living in Na Long Khun. For one thing, living in this village may identify me with civic action even though at present I intend to disassociate myself as much as possible from civic action activities. Also, the fact that the PL remained in Na Long Khun for thirty minutes with a minimum amount of resistance indicates that the fact that there are soldiers in the village means little with respect to the relative security of the village. However, perhaps the attack will prompt the positioning of a larger military force in the village.

What do you think about all this? Again, I have no strong objections to living in Na Long Khun, but the above two points are, I think, worthy of a certain amount of thought. At present my main desire is to move into a house that I can call my home.

TO: William R. Lovam, COP-IVS/RD
THRU: Arthur Stillman, ACOP
FROM: Frederic C. Benson, IVS/Ban Thalaat
SUBJECT: Monthly Report for February, 1969

Poor security precluded the carrying out of plans to have a training program for the naibans and tassengs of Moung Phanthaboun. Hence, the last of a series of three training programs designed to inform naibans and tassengs in the tri-moung area about the workings of the RLG has been postponed indefinitely. As far as I am concerned this delay has not been entirely detrimental to training efforts here. We now have time to consider more realistically the implications of training and the best ways to go about designing and implementing a training program given our available resources.

During the course of the month I have begun to diversify my activities somewhat. In addition to working with training I am becoming involved in the planning of an information program for Moung Phone Hong. In doing this I will be working quite closely with the information officer who is on the USAID staff here. For all practical purposes the information program will center on the Thalaat information center which will be built in the near future. This center will have basically two functions: 1) Information will be available to villagers and tourists concerning development work in this area as well as in all of Laos, and 2) The center will serve as the "cluster" library. The operating arm of the information center will be a mobile information team which will visit the villages of Moung Phone Hong.

I am hoping that once they get underway the information and the training programs will be able to complement one another.

FCB/fcb
2/28/69

Distribution: IVS-3
CDAA/NNN-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Moung/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

Mr. Al Best, ACOP/Admin

29 March 1969

THRU:

Mr Art Stillman, ACOP

Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalaat

Request to come to Vientiane; request for leave

I would like to come to Vientiane on April 1 to take care of matters concerning our upcoming naiban-tasseng training program. I will come to Vientiane with Loring Waggoner; ETA will be approximately 10:00 am Tuesday, April 1. I intend to depart Vientiane on April 3 or April 4 with Mr Waggoner.

I would also like to take three or four days of annual leave next month (April). I intend to go to Bangkok on the evening of April 13 (Sunday) for the purpose of meeting my parents and accompanying them to Laos. I will probably return to Vientiane on April 18 (Friday).

TO: WILLIAM R. LOVAN, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: ARTHUR STILLMAN, ACOP

FROM: FRITZ BENSON, IVS/Ban Thalaat

SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT FOR MARCH, 1969

March has been devoted primarily to the designing of an information program for the tassengs, naibans and village elders of Tasseng Phone Si and Tasseng Thin Keo, the two northernmost tassengs in Muong Phone Hong. The principle aim of the information program--which will consist of 4 seven-day sessions during May--is to help the local leaders gain a better understanding of the social, economic and political forces presently at work in their nation and locality.

The curriculum of the program will focus primarily on the phenomenon of change--change in a developing society inevitably has an affect on the nature of the forces which are at work in the society. Muong Phone Hong, specifically the Ban Thalaat area, is, as a result of the construction of the Nam Ngum dam, undergoing a period of dynamic change heretofore unequalled in the history of Laos. The impact which this change is having is already noticeable, socially, economically and politically, and will become even greater with the passing of time. The villager is the victim of the impact of change because he does not understand the new forces at work and is therefore unable to cope with them. Thus uncertain about what is going on around him, the villager is ripe for exploitation by opportunists.

While the difficulties which accompany change cannot be completely averted, their effects can be mitigated somewhat if villagers are helped to understand the forces at work and helped to establish for themselves a frame of reference in a changing society.

This information program is intended to be the first of a number of similarly designed programs for the naibans, tassengs and village elders of Muong Phone Hong, Muong Thourakom and Muong Phanthaboun.

FCB/fcb
3/31/69

Distribution: IVS-3
AC/Vte-1
CDAA/NNN-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Muong/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Arthur Stillman, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalot

SUBJECT: Monthly report for April, 1969

The bulk of the month of April was spent laying the organizational groundwork of the forthcoming naiban-tasseng information program to be held in Ban Thalot during May (cf monthly report for March). Efforts to this end were directed primarily toward working out the details of the curriculum. The two main sections of the curriculum correspond with the two immediate objectives to be pursued: 1) To foster a sense of national identity amongst a group of people long isolated from the mainstream of Lao national life, but always subject to its twists and turns, and 2) To inform the local leaders about a phenomenon which will radically affect the future course of their lives, the construction of the Nam Ngum and Nam Lik dams.

The section on national identification will deal with various aspects of the Lao national character--geographical setting, population, cultural heritage and historical background. Instructors who will speak on these matters have for the most part been recruited locally. In addition, USIS has agreed to provide a mohlam team and a representative from their radio section who will talk on Lao history. Section two, which deals with the Mekong Development Scheme and how it will affect Laos, will be handled almost exclusively by representatives from the RLG. The Lao National Mekong Committee will give a briefing on the Mekong Development Scheme, and a representative from the Nam Ngum dam project will explain to the participants the function of the dam and conduct a guided tour of the site. These presentations will be followed up by talks by local officials and representatives from the Ministry of Plan and the Commission for Rural Affairs on the social, economic and political aspects of the Mekong project. A field trip to Vientiane has also been planned.

Instruction in the classroom will be patterned after the seminar. A talk, usually preceded by the showing of a relevant film, will be given by the instructor, and then discussed by the participants under the guidance of the instructor.

The program is scheduled to begin on 17 May. There will be 3 one-week sessions.

FCB/fcb
30/4/69

Distribution: IVS-3
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Chao Khoueng/Vte-1

Chao Muong/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Arthur Stillman, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalal

SUBJECT: Monthly report for May, 1969

My monthly report for May will consist of an appraisal of the naiban-tasseng information program presently underway at Ban Thalal (two of the three 4-day sessions have been completed).

This program is not a training program. The participants are not being trained to perform their duties as local leaders more effectively or efficiently; the administrative machinery at the local level is generally a smoothly functioning apparatus, stable in structure and flexible enough to adopt to new situations which might confront it. Although not in need of leadership training per se, village leaders, in order to perform their functions more effectively, should be made aware of the various forces--social, economic and political--which will play a significant role in the future life of the village, and thus affect their administrative responsibilities. To do this has been the function of this information program.

The means which has been employed for presenting this information has been the seminar, "a meeting for giving and discussing information."

Thus far, however, the seminar approach has met with only limited success, the reasons for this being three: 1) The instructors that we have are, for the most part, unfamiliar with utilizing the seminar as a medium of instruction; 2) Villagers, who regard the information program as a training program (oblom), are somewhat taken aback when deviations are made from the standard classroom procedure, and do not know what is expected of them in a seminar type of situation; and, 3) The interest of the villager often does not extend to matters which are peripheral to his immediate concerns--which are almost exclusively local in scope--, thus making it difficult to discuss these matters with him.

Whether or not it is possible to create a real seminar atmosphere is questionable. Perhaps success in this respect could be better realized if we had at our disposal instructors especially trained in the technique of motivation. Also, the concept of the seminar should be made clearer to the participants of the course.

An important factor in the success of an information program is visual aids. Thus far, both films and charts have been employed to supplement most talks. On the basis of observation I have concluded that films are of dubious value in trying to get across a point. Firstly, a number of the villagers who have participated in the program have never before seen a movie and are thus too entranced by the movie itself, its motion, etc., to comprehend the point which is being made. Secondly, even those people who have seen movies in the past seem to fail to understand the major themes which are presented by a sequence of scenes; they view each scene apart from the whole, and are unable to link

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Arthur Stillman, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalut

***** 2 *****

a series of scenes together. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that they are primarily concerned with the picture itself, and pay little or no attention to the commentary. As for maps and charts, villagers are often unable to make sense out of a conglomeration of lines. I intend to study this matter of visual aids further.

Another factor which must be considered in a seminar type of classroom situation is the seating arrangement. During the first session the seats were arranged in rows. This proved to be quite unsatisfactory due to the fact that the people sitting in the back rows--that is, away from the instructor--were less apt to ask questions and discuss matters than the people sitting near the instructor. During the second session the tables were arranged in a U-shaped pattern with the naibans and tassengs sitting on the outer side facing inward. The instructor then walked around inside the "U" while speaking. Such a set-up allows each person to be in the front row, as it were, and the results were correspondingly more positive. Experimentation with the seating arrangement will continue, however. Possibilities are several circular shaped tables, or no tables at all.

Have the objectives of the information program been met?

1) TO FOSTER A SENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY AND PRIDE AMONG LOCAL LEADERS.

By and large this objective has not been met. Although the villagers are aware of the fact that Laos is a national entity, the center of their universe continues to be the village and not the nation. That this is the case is evidenced by the type of questions that were asked by the villagers; not once was a question asked about the nation, they were limited exclusively to the local sphere. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the villagers have no interest whatsoever in the wellbeing of the nation; it means, rather, that the nation, a known yet not understood entity, takes second place. And there is little evidence that there is a feeling of national pride amongst the villagers, pride in the history of their country, its culture and traditions, to the point where feelings of nationalism are existent. Such a situation is indeed not uncommon in developing countries; it is less surprising that such a situation exists in Laos, a land which, as a result of its geographical setting and history, is a land of diversity rather than unity. If efforts to create a sense of national identity amongst the Lao are to continue, the standard instruction in geography, history, etc., which are largely abstractions to the villager, should be supplemented by something which is more within the realm of his understanding, such as comparing the nation to the family.

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalot

***** 3 *****

2) TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL LEADERS OF THE PROCESS OF CHANGE AND HOW IT RELATES TO THEM.

In meeting this objective I believe that we have been relatively successful. The changes which have been brought about throughout Muong Phone Hong as a result of the work of the Lao Government and USAID, and how they have affected the muong, were satisfactorily, though not adequately, explained. Concerning the Nam Ngum dam project, villagers have been so astounded by the size of the project and the changes which it will bring about that I wonder if they can really comprehend the degree to which they themselves will be affected by it, although all this was quite adequately explained.

3) TO OFFER TO LOCAL LEADERS THE PROCEDURE WHEREBY LOCAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO CHANGE CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND ACTED UPON.

Actually, very few of the villagers present at the first two sessions have been subjected to problems arising from change. The major exception to this is Ban Thalot where change has brought many problems to the village and much economic profit to the naiban. Efforts are presently underway to form a special committee in Ban Thalot to act upon these problems. The matter of identifying and solving problems has not been dealt with in this program due primarily to the fact that it is not necessary to do so at this point. The biggest problem to be solved at present is that of helping the villagers understand what is in store for them in the future.

4) TO PROVIDE LOCAL LEADERS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND SPEAK WITH MUONG OFFICIALS ON AN INFORMAL BASIS.

The basic problem here is the degree of informality which can be present in the relationship between a muong official and the village leader. The type of relationship which can exist between the villager and functionaire has been quite clearly defined by tradition. This already established relationship, in addition to the personal and professional qualities of the official, determines the final nature of the relationship between the local leader and government official. In this respect, the sessions which the villagers had with the muong officials--chao muong, police chief and military commander--were about as informal in each case as one could expect. The officials encouraged the villagers to express their problems, which, although reluctant at times, they did. The greatest value in bringing together muong officials and villagers is that it offers the villagers an opportunity to see, listen and speak with them, an opportunity which seldom presents itself.

TO: William R. Lovan, COP-IVS/RD

THRU: Arthur Stillman, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalat

***** 4 *****

As far as meeting the ultimate objective--to give the local leaders a better understanding of the social, economic and political forces at work in their country and locality--is concerned, I would say that we have been moderately successful. Many improvements will have to be made along the lines indicated above before the next program can be started, probably for the people who formerly resided in the area behind the Nam Ngum dam site.

Perhaps the most valuable result of the present program has been that it has given me and the USAID staff here an opportunity to better understand the problems of the local villagers and their attitudes toward numerous matters. This information will be extremely helpful in carrying out further development projects in the area as well as in the designing of future information programs.

FCB/fcb
31/5/69

Distribution: IVS-3
AC/Vte-1
CDAA/NNN-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Chao Muong/Phone Hong-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

17 Thurs 7:30 AOA

Thompson BLIATOUT

VIA CHALEUNRAT

2210

modum

potato's

11-17

I. May 14 May 10	x Na Muong-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	x Sene Saat-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	x Na Some-----3	(Phone Sy)	Road
	x Phone Phia-----3	(Phone Sy)	Well
	x Ban Nhouat-----3	(Phone Sy)	Road
		15	

18-24

II. May 14 May 19	x Na Kham-----3	(Phone Sy)	School, road
	x Sene Soum-----4	(Phone Sy)	Group Sch, vill sch,
	x Phone Sy-----3	(Phone Sy)	Well well
	x Nong Tao-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	- Phone Keo-----3	(Phone Sy)	School
	Phone Nguen-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	Hin Heup-----3	(Phone Sy)	School
	Ban Kam	22	
		(40)	

25-31

III. May 14 May 24	Nam Poth-----3	(Thin Keo)	
	- Long Khene-----4	(Thin Keo)	School
	- Phu Quo Kham-----3	(Thin Keo)	
	- Ban Thalaat-----5	(Phone Mi)	
	- Phone Peng-----3	(Thin Keo)	
	- Phone Nheng-----3	(Thin Keo)	
	- Phone Muong-----3	(Thin Keo)	Road
		24	

1-7

IV. May 25 May 31	Had Deua-----3	(Thin Keo)	School
	Som Dy-----3	(Thin Keo)	Well
	Kam Xang-----3	(Thin Keo)	
	Na Pho Phalad-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	Na Se-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	Na Yao-----3	(Phone Sy)	
	Kok Kieng-----3	(Thin Keo)	School, irrigation
	Ban Kam	-3 21	

TOTAL: 82

TO: Walt Johnson, COP/IVS

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalot

SUBJECT: Monthly report for June, 1969

June has been a month devoted to the planning of future information programs. Tentatively scheduled for August is an additional naiban-tasseng-village elder information program which is similar in design to the May program. Present will be the forty-seven local leaders from Tasseng Na Kheua and Tasseng Na Luang, Muong Thourakom. The situation of these people is rather unique in that they are displaced persons from the twenty-five sq. km. area immediately behind the Nam Ngum dam site. The residents of these two tassengs are presently scattered between Ban Thalot and Ban Keun. The ultimate objective of the proposed program is to inform the local leaders about the social and economic forces at work in their nation and locality. Special emphasis will be placed on their unique situation as displaced persons, why they were displaced from their old homes and what is in store for them in the future.

Also underway are negotiations with USIS concerning the expansion of the information program in Thalot to include the following:

- 1) Radio transmitter to broadcast programs to the North Nam Ngum area.
- 2) Newspaper
- 3) Mobile information team

The primary purpose of the above will be to disseminate information about matters related to the Nam Ngum dam project.

The information center which is being built here is nearly completed. It will house a library and the radio transmitter, and will generally serve as the center of the North Nam Ngum information program.

FCB/fcb
24-6-69

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CDAA/NNN-1
Chao Khoueng/Vte-1
Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: Walt Johnson, COP/IVS

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Ban Thalal

SUBJECT: Monthly report for July, 1969

After returning from vacation on 9 July I proceeded to take action on the plans made last month with respect to the Ban Thalal information program.

Firstly, final arrangements were made for the naiban-tasseng-village elder training/information program scheduled to begin on 3 August. Secondly, negotiations with USIS continued concerning the radio transmitter and local newspaper to disseminate information throughout the North Nam Ngum area. The services of a radio reporter and a newspaper reporter were requested from USIS on a TDY basis to assist in laying the groundwork for the radio station and newspaper. Their initial assignment would be to cover the programs presently on the books, the training/information program and the work of the mobile information team. The mobile information team which is operating in the Phone Hong area is composed of Lao summer students, a mohlam team and the RDD/information officer who is permanently stationed in Thalal.

The future of the Ban Thalal information program was seriously jeopardized, however, when, during the early hours of 24 July, enemy forces attacked Ban Thalal. This unfortunate turn of events forced the evacuation of myself, the CDA/Phone Hong and the CDAA/NNN from Ban Thalal, and therefore the suspension of the information program for an indefinite length of time. At the present time we are commuting back and forth between Vientiane and Ban Thalal.

The next couple of weeks will be given to reviewing the state of affairs in Ban Thalal and carefully considering the future of my work ~~INXEM~~ there, if there is any.

FCB/fcb
31-7-69

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Director CRA-1
Personal file-1

TO: Walt Johnson, COP/IVS

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

3 September 1969

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/RD

SUBJECT: Monthly report for August, 1969

August has been spent travelling throughout Laos--to Luang Prabang and to the South--for the purpose of getting a better idea of the nature of the IVS and USAID programs. I focused my attention on the types of information and leadership training programs which have been held in the past in these areas, and those which are presently underway or scheduled to begin in the near future.

My reasons for doing this were two: 1) To investigate the possibilities of working on programs of this nature in provincial capitals, and 2) to see what work is being done along these lines and to get an idea of what new approaches to training could be taken if and when I again become involved with this type of work.

Although several CDAA's indicated to me that they could use IVSers to assist in implementing their respective naiban-tasseng orientation/training programs, it is questionable as to whether or not the IVSer would be able to do much more than just that. That is to say, with one possible exception it seems doubtful that the IVSer would have much latitude in applying his personal ideas regarding training to programs which are designed by and under the direction of others. I would find this type of situation quite unsatisfactory.

In any case, the prospects for working with information/training programs in the near future are slim--none of the programs presently on the slate will begin before November.

In addition to investigating the types of training programs in Laos, I reviewed the work of the CRA in the various areas which I visited, and assisted Walt Haney in evaluating the summer student project when I was in the South.

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Walt Johnson, COP/IVS

Fritz Benson, IVS/Vientiane

Monthly report for September, 1969

September was spent searching for a new work position (in vain) and vacationing for ten days in Thailand and Burma.

FCB/fcb
14/10/69

Distribution: IVS-3
Personal file-1

TO: Mr Walt Johnson, COP-IVS

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Vientiane

SUBJECT: Monthly report for October, 1969

After nearly three months I have finally secured a new work position. As of early October I have been working with USAID Refugee Relief and RLG Social Welfare on a training-information program for refugees. The proposed program is similar to most training programs of this nature (such as naiben-tasseng programs) insofar as its primary objective is to explain to villagers (in this case, refugees) the responsibilities of the RLG (especially RLG Social Welfare) to them, on the one hand, and their responsibilities to the RLG, on the other.

My job will be to assist RLG Social Welfare design and implement the program. The curriculum will be designed jointly with Social Welfare and Refugee Relief. The trainees will be selected villagers from refugee areas chosen on the basis of interviews. Instructors will be selected locally in a similar manner. Instruction techniques to be employed will be the non-directive method of instruction, supplemented by lectures, visual aids, simple drama performances and role playing.

The duty of the trainees after they return to their respective villages will be to inform villagers about the Social Welfare assistance program and the reciprocal responsibilities of the Villagers and the RLG. By doing this it is hoped that the mutual relations and understanding between the RLG and refugees will be improved. ~~and result.~~

FCB/fcb
11/10/69

Distribution: IVS-3
Chief, Refugee Relief-1
Personal file-1

Office Memorandum International Voluntary Services, INC.

TO : Fredrick Benson, IVS/Vientiane
THRU : William R. Loran, Chief-of-Party, IVS/HB
FROM : JAC Malin, Associate Chief-of-Party, IVS/HB

November 22, 1960

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Understanding for Fredrick Benson

There is at present a great need to find out more about the Lao people and their culture. This knowledge is valuable in terms of evaluating past programs, being able to better conduct future work and from an academic view point. As a means to find out some of this information, IVS is establishing the position of a Sociological Evaluator. Ban Thalat will be the area for this new venture.

For this position IVS is assigning Fredrick Benson. Fritz is a past student of Southeast Asia. He plans to use his IVS experience as a basis on which to continue his schooling in the field of Southeast Asian Studies. Fritz received his BA degree in History and Southeast Asian Studies from St. Olaf's college in Minnesota. While studying for his degree, he spent one term at the University of Oslo and one term at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

What Fritz lacks in experience he makes up for by hard work and a willingness to learn. He should make a good beginning to what is hoped will be a strong and viable program.

Fritz will be responsible for the following:

- 1) To continue to improve his knowledge of the Lao language, the local people, their customs, their needs, their problems, their abilities, and their resources. As Fritz works to set aside local suspicions, develop friendships and discern the "ways" of how the local people think and live, he will be better able to offer advice concerning ways to better help the Lao people as well as be a source of information on these people.
- 2) To collect data relevant to the development of a research design and then to carry out this design.
- 3) To periodically submit reports, in addition to monthly reports, summarizing his findings and laying out new directions in which to pursue his work.
- 4) To submit Monthly Narrative Reports addressed to the IVS Chief of Party and distributed as follows: to IVS (3 copies), to the Chief of Party of Ban Hong (1 copy), to the Chief of Party of Vientiane (1 copy), to the Director of the Commission of Rural Affairs (1 copy), to the UN/Vientiane (1 copy), and to the UN/North Ban Hong (1 copy).

The Royal Lao Government will be responsible for the following:

- 1) To assist in ways which can be of help to Fritz or facilitate his work.

USAID will be responsible for the following: (USAID/RDD)

- 1) To provide a vehicle for the volunteer. At present a motorcycle is sufficient and has already been assigned.
- 2) To provide general policy direction.

IVS will be responsible for the following:

- 1) The program direction of and the administration of the volunteer and his activities in the field.
- 2) The movement of the volunteer into and out of his area of assignment which includes giving permission for travel and the manifesting of his return to field post.
- 3) Obtain housing for the volunteer. Fritz will be able to select a house which is to his liking.

Concur

Mr. Souk Upravan, Secretary of State for Rural Affairs.

Concur

Eugene N. Babb 12/8/68
Mr. Eugene N. Babb, Acting Chief of CD branch/RDD.

JMalis:bk

11/22/68

cc: Souk Upravan, Secretary of State for Rural Affairs Royal Lao Government
Vongsavanh Bounsavath, Commissioner of Rural Affairs.
Thongsavath Vongsavanthong, Governor, Vientiane
Douang Panya, CO Director North Nam Ngum Training Center
Souphanh Khanaliku, Chao Muong, Phou Hong
Dr. Howard Thomas, AD/RDD
Eugene N. Babb, Acting Chief of CD branch/RDD
Loring Waggoner, CDMA/North Nam Ngum
IVS File (2)

TO: Walt Johnson, COP-IVS

THRU: Jim Malia, ACOP

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Vientiane

SUBJECT: Monthly report for November, 1969

November has been spent further clarifying the objectives of the training/information program with which I am working. These ideas will be presented, and other ideas will be solicited at the forthcoming meeting of the participating agencies of the RLG and the US to be held on 10 December. This meeting will serve to formalize the commitment of the participants and to establish a working plan as to how to proceed in designing and implementing the program.

On 15 December I will visit the CD Training Center near Udorn in order to receive a briefing on the non-directive approach as a method of instruction. The non-directive approach will be utilized in the training/information program.

FCB/fcb
9/12/69

Distribution: IVS-3
Chief, Refugee Relief-1
Personal file-1

TO: Jim Malia, ACOP/IVS

23 December 1969

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Vientiane

SUBJECT: Job description

The attached proposal, which was composed on the basis of informal meetings with RIG officials, was presented to and agreed upon by the program's participants at a meeting presided over by the Director General of Social Welfare held on 10 December. It was proposed that a working committee be established in order to work on the details of the program, such as curriculum and logistics. This working committee will meet on a weekly basis until the program has been finalized. The chairman of the committee is the Social Welfare Director of Refugee Resettlement, and the committee members are representatives of the participating technical agencies.

My work with this program has been to frequently meet with the representatives of the participating agencies on an individual basis, as well as with outsiders not directly involved in the program, in order to discuss with them different aspects of the program. On the basis of these discussions, my past experience in working with training/information programs and research on various aspects of social and political development in Laos and Southeast Asia, as well as on training techniques and aids, my contribution to the program has been to offer fresh insights into the problems which may be encountered and new approaches which could be taken in the planning and implementation of the program.

OBJECTIVES:

To explain the social welfare program to selected refugees, and to make these refugees more aware of their responsibilities to the RLG, on the one hand, and the RLG's responsibilities to them, on the other, which stem from both the giving and receiving of social welfare assistance.

- 1) To create a more politically and socially responsible population in selected areas. To encourage refugees to take the initiative in their dealings with the government instead of depending totally on government initiative and then criticizing the government when it fails to respond to the villagers' needs or when it responds in a manner which is less than satisfactory.
- 2) To strengthen the commitment of refugees to the RLG in terms of an increased political involvement at the local and district levels. To engender a feeling in the people of being an equal partner in working together with the government in obtaining common objectives which will be of benefit to both.

PROPOSAL:

To fulfill the above objectives it has been proposed that RLG Social Welfare draw on certain technical skills and resources as appropriate from various information disseminating agencies such as Lao Information Service, Royal Lao Army Information Service, U.S. Information Service and USAID, and thereby draw up a program where refugees be selected, trained and sent back to their areas to explain the nature of RLG involvement in the area and to make clear to the local inhabitants the nature of their responsibilities to the RLG. Below is a preliminary outline of the general structure of the program.

PROPOSED COURSE STRUCTURE:

The objectives of the training session per se is to further develop the capabilities of selected key villagers in such a way that they will be better able to achieve the above objectives in an organized and effective manner.

- 1) Course material--The material which will be presented must be relevant in light of the overall objectives of the program and the objective of the training session. The curriculum will be divided into three general categories:
 - a) National objectives--An explanation of the social welfare program and its importance vis-a-vis the overall national effort of the RLG.
 - b) Techniques of communication--A survey of various techniques which can be utilized in presenting information to villagers, such as dramatic presentations, the mohlam, etc.
 - c) Field responsibilities--Discussions concerning how to feed back information by means of written progress reports and follow-up studies, and how to conduct surveys, such

as attitude surveys.

- 2) Instruction techniques--A variety of teaching techniques will be utilized. For example, in addition to presenting material in lecture form, the non-directive approach could be utilized in discussing the material. That is to say, after a lecture is given the instructor and the selected villagers would sit together informally and discuss the information presented in a thorough manner in which each participant would put forth new ideas on a given topic on the basis of his experiences and observations. In such a discussion period the function of the instructor would be to guide the course of the conversation. Employment of the non-directive method would be an enriching experience for everyone involved, especially in the sense that it will help the participants become better organized and effective speakers.
- 3) Size of group and length of session--To be effective the number of participants should be limited to 15-20 per session. The length of the session will be 2-3 weeks depending on the progress of the group. With regards to the latter, the degree to which points #1 and #2 are effectively planned and carried out is directly proportional to the amount of time which need be spent in the orientation center.
- 4) Trainees--Drawn from the areas in which they will be working, the trainees will serve as the backbone of the program. These individuals must possess the qualities of perception and articulation and must be capable of refining these qualities to the extent that they will be in tune with the exigencies of the given situation in which each of them will be working. As the trainees will hopefully have a permanent status in their respective work areas, it is imperative that they are individuals capable of generating the respect and trust of the local inhabitants and are motivated to the degree that they will willingly sacrifice their time and effort in seeking to work toward the achievement of the stated program objectives.
- 5) Instructors--As the success of the program hinges completely on the quality of the instructors in that they alone will have the ability to motivate the trainees to the degree that they will be willing to make sacrifices in order to achieve the program's objectives, it is imperative that exceptionally capable instructors be found, individuals with wide experience in Laos, a perceptive understanding of Laos and an ability to dynamically articulate this understanding in a meaningful fashion.

TO: Jim Malia, Director, IVS

22 April 1970

FROM: Fritz Benson, IVS/Vientiane

SUBJECT: Monthly reports, December 1969-April 1970

December:

Continuance of negotiations with RIG Ministry of Social Welfare concerning proposed "training" program for selected refugees. Finalization of program set up.

January:

Travel to Houei Sai, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang Provinces for the purpose of selecting key refugees to participate in the proposed program.

Due to incomplete state of RIG training center, and due to RIG involvement in planning for movement of Plain of Jars refugees, program postponed.

Decision to informally meet with small group of refugees from above areas for purpose of "discussing and testing thoughts and ideas together". Briefing of discussion leaders. Meeting of seven refugees for one week, proposed.

February:

Meeting of selected key refugees from Houei Sai, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang and Vientiane provinces, February 6-February 11. Purpose of informal meeting to determine aspects of value system, i.e. research into regional variances, problems of refugees, etc.

Follow-up meetings with discussion leaders.

March:

Travel to Houei Sai and Luang Prabang for purpose of meeting with refugees present at February meeting, selection of candidates for future meeting, and research on certain matters brought up in February session.

Series of meetings with discussion leaders to determine plan of action for next meeting with refugees.

Selection of refugees from Plain of Jars and discussion meeting March 27-March 30. Six participants.

April:

Follow-up on March session. Writing of comprehensive report on findings during past months.

TO: Jim Malia

FROM: Fritz Benson

SUBJECT: Monthly reports, Dec-April

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Preparations to reopen negotiations with Social Welfare concerning refugee program. Training center nearly completed, and program will commence as soon as completed.

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4/22/70