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Special Deputy Director for Refugee Affairs 23 Sep 1954  
Chief, Agriculture & Natural Resources Division  
"Phase Two" - Refugee Problem

I am satisfied that present administration of the refugee problem is about as badly handled as it could be if the local Government had deliberately set out to "foul up" the responsibility. I can see no evidence whatsoever of inter-ministerial coordination or cooperation. This is especially true in the case of the various agricultural services. I believe it to be true in most other functional fields as well.

Initially, the people in Agriculture set out on a sound program of planning and program development directed at early implementation, I would be the first to admit they were probably not aggressive enough but there is some excuse in inexperience and lack of understanding of the magnitude and urgency of the problem. Now, the good efforts and the personnel and experience resources of the Ministry of Agriculture and the regional agricultural services are not being effectively utilized. Some two or three people are being consulted by Doi's set-up on a personal basis, but not as regards functional assignment of responsibility or organizational advice and consultation. We, in Agriculture, can work most effectively only through our more or less well established counterparts in the regular administrative services. They are best qualified to handle functional problems and their limited resources can be better expanded with poorly trained and inexperienced personnel than we can to try and work effectively with a non-cooperative and inexperienced agency.

It is my suggestion that the Mission begin to readjust its approach and assistance to the realization that Doi's organization and aid channeled thru it be limited solely to the emergency problems attendant to evacuation of refugees from the North, their initial and secondary reception in the South, emergency housing, and subsistence assistance, or to what may be termed as "Phase One", and then that that organization and Mission assistance through that media come to an end.

"Phase Two" can and should better be channeled through the established agencies of the Government of Vietnam - the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health, Social Action, Education, etc., as a supplement to their regular and emergency programs. We can better expect to coordinate our efforts than we can expect the Government of Vietnam to coordinate theirs under a "High Commissioner", who so far has demonstrated a complete unwillingness or inability to mobilize his Government to such task.

I should like to outline some thoughts we have in mind, and which seem to line up pretty well with those of the people with whom we have habitually worked in the established agencies as regards agriculture.

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Following selection of the village site, and beginning as soon as the emergency housing program has gotten under way - not completed, we would move in through the "Service to Agriculture" with a program of assistance in hand tools, seeds, simple implements, work animals, (where essential), poultry, swine, planting stock, etc., in Sub-Phase "A" of Phase Two. At the same time the Health people would come in with their village wells, sanitation and educational programs; the Education people would come in with their program of general education, etc. etc. Where the resettlement project indicated only limited possibilities of success - considering land and other resources - our efforts would be adjusted to that of a temporary installation. Where the prospects of successful implantation seemed more likely, a more permanent program of assistance would be developed with the building and development program in keeping wherewith. In the case of agriculture, we would implement sub-phase "B" of Phase two, which might well include the development of a form of cooperative organization which would engage in semi-processing and marketing of the production of the land resources of the village. To illustrate, the Co-op might undertake the construction of a simple form of charcoal kiln to semi-manufacture and market their wood production in the form of charcoal rather than in firewood. It might engage in other agricultural marketing, or it might well expand into arts and crafts and thus more usefully and gainfully employ the skills of the population. There will be continuing credit problems for raw materials and for production purposes. These could be channeled through the village cooperative, and it might as well meet the more urgent needs of its membership in such commodities as rice, salt fish, nuoc-man, salt and the simplest everyday necessities.

Personally, I am very much interested in the marketing problem which will be experienced in any of these new villages. The other day, we saw the beginnings of piles of firewood available for sale. This is the first means of cash income that these families have experienced, and there they set - the victims of shrewd "Chinese" roadside buyers and truckers. My guess is that the wood will soon be valueless to the producer adding further complications to the difficulty of trying to make a living in a marginal area under the most difficult of circumstances.

Each village undertaking will present varying difficulties and assistance problems. The experienced agencies of Government are better qualified to rationalize these into action programs and exercise the broad, general terms of reference and authority which the related STEM projects must of necessity contain. Through them, our technical assistance can be realized.

I'd like a chance to introduce discussion of the suggestions contained herein, and see what the collective thought of the personnel in the Mission might add up to.

cc: Falk  
Stelly

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