

July 31, 1967

TO: Chester Brown, IVS/COP/VTE
THRU: Dwane E. Harner, AAC/LP *RA*
FROM: John F. Parmenter, I/S/LP
SUBJECT: Monthly Operations Report, June-July, 1967

I General: I arrived in Luang Prabang on June 13, 1967 and spent most of the rest of the month househunting, moving household effects from Vientiane to Luang Prabang and trying to get a general idea of the refugee relief program as it functions in Northern Laos. Robert Dakan, my immediate superior, was very helpful in orientating me to the job and has encouraged a great deal in the work I have been doing since I arrived.

II Refugee Relief Program: In this field my efforts have been largely confined to supplementing and assisting Mr. Dakan whenever possible, e.g., meeting and unloading or loading incoming and outgoing aircraft carrying refugee supplies, helping to keep an eye on inventories of refugee supplies stored in Luang Prabang warehouses, and assisting the Lao Social Welfare Department in distribution of supplies to new and old refugees. More specifically, I have taken over the management of the refugee tool program and during the month of July collected and paid for 1500 "wacks" (a highland rice implement) produced by the villagers of Ban Don. These people will also be supplying coupe-coupes, sickles, siams, etc. as rapidly as they can. On July 10 with Dong Sananikhone, Mr. Dakan's assistant, I went to a small Mee village about 14 kms. from town to check up on some problems they were having with their highland rice. Grasshoppers and some variety of small worms were eating the recently planted crop. Mr. Scott, USAID agriculturalist here, recommended treatments of Malathion which we gave to the villagers. I've not yet had the opportunity to follow up on the results. On July 25 Dong Sananikhone and I went on a rice distribution trip by boat down the Mekong. 15 one-hundred kilo bags of rice were distributed to new Mee refugees at one village and 24 one-hundred kilo bags were given to a leper colony somewhat further down the river. I had the opportunity to observe this small leper colony and was very impressed by the cleanliness and organization of the village. I understand that they are visited regularly by Colombo Plan doctors from Luang Prabang. I was somewhat dismayed to see children in the village, but was informed that there are no facilities to care for the children if they are removed from their families. Having seen the leper colony at Kalaupapa, Kalaikai the presence of children in the village bothered me.

III Handicrafts Program: I have been attempting to duplicate in the Luang Prabang area the program set up with the Thaidiek refugees by Randy and Liz Candica with some extra frills. Last month crafts were taken on a consignment basis from seven villages in the Luang Prabang area and sent to Vientiane to be sold in the American Women's Club Thrift Shop with an eventual eye to placing them in an independent shop dealing exclusively in Lao crafts. The response from the village people has been overwhelming and my office has been flooded with people trying to give me things to sell. Unfortunately, sales have not been all that I expected but this has been largely due to some quality problems that I hope to iron out little by little. Sales, although lagging, were nevertheless good and about \$150 U.S. was taken in during the month of July. In an effort to organize this varied collection of contributors, I have begun to set up a framework for a cooperative association among the villages concerned, secure photographs of the merchandise and the producers, keep records of individual sales and individual talents, and produce a number of samples, etc. for the Vientiane Handicrafts staff. The entire operation is presently functioning, but still somewhat confused since I don't yet have any really efficient procedures for handling all the bookkeeping and merchandise passing through my hands. I hope to report more progress on this next month. News of people buying Lao handicrafts has been spreading from mouth to mouth and almost daily new people come in with things to send to Vientiane. While consignment is the safest way to handle craft sales sooner or later some system of cash-on-the-spot sales will be needed. Otherwise, upgrading and control of quality in merchandise is almost impossible to handle. By levying a small markup on each item I handle I am gradually (or was rather) developing a small fund for working capital. The fund was snatched from my desk last Monday, so I'm having to begin all over again at some personal loss to myself. If anyone in Vientiane has any elementary knowledge or information about coop management I would appreciate reading it since I'm working from complete ignorance right now. Some other problems arising are tagging and packaging crafts in a more practical and attractive manner. Does anyone know of box or tag manufacturers in Thailand?

IV Sericulture: This is an area that I think could yield a great deal for both my refugees and the Laotian economy in general. I am told that Thailand and Japan both are looking for a source of raw silk, which currently sells for some 3,000 - 9,000 Kip per kilo in Vientiane and even more in Luang Prabang. I have right now groups of people in two refugee villages that know how to raise silkworms and produce raw silk but who have no mulberry trees, silkworms, or equipment. I have discussed silksaving with them and they are all willing to begin as soon as they can. Dr. Yoshio Yamashiro in

Vientiane has said that he can help me obtain mulberry seedlings and silkworm eggs and so I am presently surveying space to plant the seedlings. I hope to get this underway during the next two or three weeks so that the new seedlings will have sufficient rain to get them started well. I am told that two crops a year can be raised and about 90 kilos of silk can be produced from one hectare of mulberry bushes. One village woman can handle about 200 bushes by herself and sufficient worms to consume the leaves from that amount of mulberry. The small amount of land needed for a mulberry garden is quite important to the land poor refugees in and around Luang Prabang. On any of the above projects I welcome all criticism, advice, and help anyone can offer.

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