

RESPONSE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTORS
TO THE QUESTION OF "DROP OUTS" AND
THE FAILURE OF STUDENTS TO ENTER
GRADE FOUR

The following information was gathered by personal interview with Primary School Inspectors by Community Education Advisors concerning the problem of "drop outs" and reasons for many students not continuing their schooling beyond grade three. PSIs were asked to list these reasons, but not necessarily in the order of importance. The least number of reasons given by any one PSI was three; the most was six.

	<u>Times mentioned</u>
No opportunity to attend grade four	20
Poverty	9
Age factor (too young or too old)	7
Children are needed at home	6
Security	5
Poor schools and administration	5
Unqualified teachers	4
Army children, orphans, families move	4
No interest in schooling	2
Other	4

Although only 10 PSIs were interviewed by CEAs, the response is some indication of the reasons which school administrators feel are important in the problem of school attendance above grade three and the problem of drop outs.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

The reason mentioned most often by the Primary School Inspectors interviewed was the lack of opportunity to attend the fourth grade. In view of this it would appear that our new emphasis on self-help school construction for grades four to six is quite justified and desirable if greater numbers of children are to move up the educational ladder to the upper grades. PSIs stated that grade four was either too far away, too crowded or there were no boarding facilities available at or near the school for students.

This study would seem to indicate that additional classrooms, qualified teachers, and a sincere interest by administration would easily increase the holding power of the schools in Laos. It would appear that about half of the children who are now lost after the third grade would continue if there were an opportunity to continue to grade four.

If the reasons given by the PSIs are correct, there will still be a high percentage of students not continuing because of poverty and the desires of their parents to keep them home to work. More than half of the PSIs interviewed gave these as reasons for many children dropping out of school after the third grade.

From these interviews it would also seem necessary to couple any additional effort for the construction of upper level classrooms with better qualified teachers, and a program of administrative and supervisory support.

The one problem was mainly that the children entering school at a very early age were too young to start a 1st grade. In many cases parents give false information about the birth date of their child so that they can enter him in school. This problem may not be so easy until laws has a better system of birth registration, kindergarten, and school readiness examinations.

Though this information was collected over a very period sampling, it appears that we should consider a much broader approach to our emphasis for grades 4, 5, and 6.

1. The village parents must participate. Participation may encourage more parents to send their children to first upper grades rather than keep them home to work.
2. School administrators and teachers must support this program, and assist in changing village attitudes towards the upper grades.
3. UIS is assisted by printing materials along the lines that George Havens was developing. Every home should receive this material in areas where new upper level classrooms are being constructed.
4. A series of meetings should be planned with participants from all villages involved. The PSI or Director of the Groupo Escolar should have a part in these meetings. The village people must know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the new school. This should be done before any construction begins.
5. The PSI should encourage the establishment of a PTA in community schools where USAID is assisting in the development of upper grade school construction.
6. The HLG officials should examine and insist on valid birth certificate information.

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