

October 1, 1973

To : Mr. Norman W. Green, Chief, Education Division
Contract Representative, USAID/Laos

From : Robert M. Martin, Chief of Party *Robert M. Martin*
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Subject: September, 1973 Monthly Report

The last month of the summer vacation period for the Fa Ngum Schools was characterized by increasing UH staff emphasis upon preparatory exercises for the October 1 opening of the schools. Telephone reports from the schools today confirm that each of the five Fa Ngum Schools did open on schedule including the new school at Pakse.

A second satisfying event was the completion and occupancy by our curriculum advisors of the new curriculum center at Fa Ngum, Vientiane. While, at this writing, electricity remains to be connected and we lack the duplicating equipment needed for production of non-textbook curriculum materials, these are on order and will be forthcoming.

Activities and Accomplishments

1. Textbook Production: Iwao Kimabe details in his report the current status of 22 texts which have been completed or are in process. Noteworthy is the completion of manuscripts in Agriculture for printing despite the absence of the advisor on home leave.
2. Curriculum Center: The Curriculum Staff elected to move into the new second floor quarters even though electricity was not yet connected. The move made it possible to use student project labor and for Director Sansak to move his office into the old UH quarters. Thus, all professional curriculum activities are now housed in one integrated center. A spacious production room at one end of the center and an equally spacious conference-library room at the other with six offices between constitute a physical setting which hopefully will stimulate a significant flow of curriculum materials to all Fa Ngum Schools as well as other secondary schools as indicated by the Ministry of Education.
3. Fa Ngum Pakse: The opening of this the fifth Fa Ngum Comprehensive Secondary School with its intake of 100 pupils at grade seven (I) is a gratifying example of cooperative efforts. Tom Liston coordinated activities between OICJ and the Contractor; the contractor cooperated in every way by assigning additional men to the job; the Ministry of Education examined student applicants and assigned basic staff and Director were appointed; and the office of the Area Coordinator assisted the UH advisor in his efforts to carry out his assignment. The UH staff is fully appreciative of this joint effort by all concerned and the result of this endeavor was the opening of the school on schedule. Ah Chong correctly points out things still to be done and certain inadequacies in the present situation, but these can and will be corrected in the future.

4. Visit to Luang Prabang and Pakse: John Rantala and I visited these two schools during the month of September. In Luang Prabang, two valuable conferences with Mr. Heng, new director, focused upon programming plans for this coming school year and ways in which the University of Hawaii advisors might give most effective in-service assistance to his staff. Mr. Yanauchi gives a steady presence to the program and it is apparent that a good relationship exists between him and Mr. Heng.

A two-day visit to Pakse was for the purpose of looking at the site with Mr. Chong Yane and getting his appraisal of the readiness of the school for its scheduled opening October 1. We quickly found that while there was much to be done, that everything was on schedule and we left with a feeling of satisfaction at Mr. Yane's progress toward our goals.

5. Social Studies Workshop: As detailed in the report of Jane Fultz, a two-week workshop with social studies teachers was held in Vientiane. Emphasis was upon the first cycle and promising written curriculum material was produced. Without doubt, there should be another workshop in this important field next summer.
6. IWS Orientation Seminar: Jane Fultz was invited by the International Volunteer Service Director to participate in their seminar in September. This cooperative experience represents a desirable and much needed direction which both the US staff and the IWS members in our Fa Ngum School must go. We look forward to this development.

Problems

1. Maintenance at Fa Ngum Schools: John Rantala has devoted most of his report to the problem of maintaining adequate preventive maintenance and repair of mechanical and electrical equipment by Lao staff after the scheduled departure of University of Hawaii SE advisors. The specific situation cited is one which is representative of problems which we can expect to encounter in all of our Fa Ngum Schools.

I would suggest that the liston might consider analyzing the components of this situation and make recommendations regarding such things as NUS staffing, inservice training, and needed maintenance guide books etc. Our SE advisors could then subordinate their daily contact efforts in these directions.

One might suspect that a factor contributing to this problem is the lack of NUS directions or policies regarding maintenance procedures. Thus, there is lacking a cadre of permanent maintenance workmen in each school who have the desire, know-how and guidance to carry out proper maintenance in the school. Maintenance workshops such as just completed cannot be fully effective unless they involve permanent staff members who understand and can carry out agreed-upon procedures. A conference involving NUS might help and the US staff should be ready to assist in any way desired.

2. Duplicating Facilities: The curriculum center cannot easily duplicate non-textbook materials until the ordered Gestetex, Gestetner, and Ditto machines arrive. In the meantime, duplicating is wedged into the time and facilities of the school machines at Vientiane with occasional jobs courtesy of M and HRD. Specifically, such needed teacher aids as resource units, demonstration guides, lesson plans, packets etc. will be invaluable when the equipment arrives.
3. Lao Counterparts: Although restatement of the problem wears, the lack of proper counterpart officials who can function on a national level in each of the basic subject matter areas limits both the operational effectiveness of our UH advisors and the prospect of a proper staff to continue the curriculum development so promisingly begun. Working with the department chairmen in Fa Ngum, Vientiane, could be accepted when it was the only school. But now that there are five schools, there must be a Lao MCE curriculum staff to which we can relate professionally. It is recognized, however, the difficulties involved in setting up this staff and that the department heads are working outside hours to conferences with us that are not part of their job in terms of authority. Conferences should be initiated toward this problem.

Recommendations

(It is stating the obvious to mention that the below are going to be tackled by the University of Hawaii staff. They are listed in this report so that future directions will be shared with the Education Division.)

1. Providing for the continued raising of the level of education of teachers of the Lao Language in Fa Ngum Schools. Locus of training, duration and content objectives must be developed.
2. Investigation of the feasibility of developing Activity Plans, both summer and Saturdays during the school year around agriculture, industrial arts, business and home economics classes. Students with developing skills can assume some of the tasks presently contracted to outsiders. In the process, they can provide campus beautification, improvement and addition to facilities over and above that expected of them as school citizens. Besides providing them with hourly income, the activities will be related to their courses of study and will guarantee supervision by their instructors as an outgrowth-of their studies.
3. Lao Language: As stated in Arthur Crisfield's report, there is need for the establishment of a structure and procedures for assessing the Lao Language curriculum, books, and teaching methods. It is expected that he will take the lead in developing this in concert with the Lao Language teaching staff and others.