

UNITED STATES AID MISSION TO LAOS

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

November 9, 1970

TO : Mr. Charles A. Mann, Director

FROM : Norman W. Green, Chief, Education Division *NW Green*

SUBJECT: Education Division Monthly Report for October 1970

Problems

The division is bringing two problems to the attention of the Public Administration Advisor:

1. The difficulties experienced by the Ministry of Education in getting paper procedures between ministries accomplished in time to have teachers assigned in post for the opening of the school year (see Dr. Collins' report, Page 2.)
2. The difficulties reported at some urban self-help school construction projects in getting Ministry of Finance action to pay for government commitments funded under the Plan Cadre.

Refugee School Programs

Larry Woodson's detailed report shows that almost 5,000 refugee children are now in school in refugee villages on the Vientiane Plateau. Work is in progress to furnish more classrooms for some schools suffering from over-crowding and double sessions.

We do not yet have firm information about school-age refugee children in Pakse City, but it is recognized that there are many there who are not in school. Four urban self-help school construction projects presently underway in Pakse will eventually help to relieve the problem but it seems probable that some temporary measures will need to be taken. Harvey Fitzgerald and Mr. Bountheng, Deputy Director of Primary Education, met with the three PSIs now located in Pakse, but results of the meeting were inconclusive because of lack of information. As stated in

Mr. Fitzgerald's report, the PSI/Sedone promised to have the required information available by November 13 for follow-up action this month. Meanwhile, plans have been made to take care of refugee school needs in Sedone Province outside of Pakse City.

CEAs Des Brisay and Costantino are collecting comprehensive information about refugee school children in the north and in Savanakheth. A good report has already been received from Honei Sai which should help all concerned resolve some of the problems in that area.

At the secondary school level, refugee students of the Sam Thong College are finding some advantages to their relocation to the Fa Ngum Vientiane School. They are now getting course work in Mechanical Drawing and Home Economics from Lao teachers, and English instruction from IVSers.

An activity proposal has been prepared to reprint math and geography books for use by refugee pupils and to add to the reading books which have already been distributed. Plans have also been made for printing over 200,000 notebooks for use by refugee pupils next year. Community Education is also working out plans for special training for 144 refugee school teachers next July at four locations.

Community Education

Plans for in-service training programs for elementary school teachers are well in hand for this fiscal year. Activity Plans have been prepared for courses for 280 regular teachers at four centers and for 600 CREC teachers at eleven centers. In addition, workshops will be held for school administration and supervising school maintenance, and elementary mathematics curriculum development.

As reported by Miss Eagles, five Lao officials from the Department of Primary Education will go to Bangkok in November to confer with Thai counterparts concerning the final examination for elementary education in particular and elementary testing programs in general. The Lao officials are members of the committee charged with making recommendations for the reform of the sixth grade (CEP) examination at the Primary School Inspectors' annual conference in January.

The whole complex subject of textbooks for elementary schools, including especially the Ministry's plans to sell books in urban areas, needs attention and clarification. Unfortunately, the Ministry officials

responsible for policy decisions in this area have been out of the country. We expect to work on the problems with them after the Thai Luang holidays.

Teacher Training

Dan Cox reports an enrollment of about 3260 students in nine Teacher Training schools this year.

We profited from Morris Williams' visit by putting the finishing touches on a PIO/T providing for advisory services for the development of the College of Education. Dr. Williams was given a full briefing on the type of person we require for this position.

A "little library" of Lao books for teacher training continues to grow. The eighth title in the current series came off the press this month, with five more in the offing.

Reports from many sources confirm a big improvement has taken place in the appearance of the Dong Dak campus. However, as Dan Cox and Myron Thomas indicate, the maintenance systems which have been established will need a great deal of nourishment and support before they can be considered self-sufficient. Property management for this project has also improved a great deal recently, but here, too, further work is needed.

Secondary Education

Dwane Collins reports a total of 760 students enrolled in the three Fa Ngum Schools this year.

A work schedule for the construction of the Fa Ngum Savannakhet School has been established. The schedule calls for the completion of some buildings by October 1971, which means that for its entire first year the school will have to occupy borrowed quarters. The determination not to start any construction or earth work at Savannakhet until the completion of a whater layout for buildings and grounds was a valid decision based on previous experience. What we did not realize was that it would take as long as it has to develop such a packaged plan. Fortunately, the availability of classroom rooms at the Technical School will enable us to live with the construction schedule.

The experience at Savannakhet indicates that we should not plan for the opening of Fa Ngum IV at Luang Prabang until October, 1972, even though discussions have already started with local officials concerning land for the school. We are working up an overall timetable for the planning, construction, staffing, and furnishing of Fa Ngum Luang Prabang in order to arrive at a realistic opening date.

Dr. Collins raises the problem of the need for additional English teachers for the Fa Ngum Schools, stating that the need is currently urgent and that next year the need will be critical. The problem for this year, if it is a problem, concerns the schools at Phnom Hong and Savannakhet. At these locations, the Hawaii Team consultants are teaching English, which has both advantages and disadvantages which were recognized and acknowledged many months ago. Although it would have been desirable to have an IVS teacher at Phnom Hong this year, the position was not included for inclusion in the staffing pattern because of the security situation. However, the Lao principals at Phnom Hong and Savannakhet and the wife of the principal at Phnom Hong are qualified to teach English, which continues to indicate to us that the resources for teaching English at the two schools are apparently adequate though somewhat on expedient.

Fa Ngum requirements for English teachers for 1972-73 have been noted and are under study. In this regard, we have recommended to Mrs. Finkham that the National Seminar on the Problems of Teaching English in Laos, which will be held next January, make a study and projection concerning the availability of Lao teachers of English and the requirements for foreign teachers from various sources over the next five years. Such a study will be needed by the new Executive Committee for IVS and for coordinating recruitment of English teachers from other sources.

General

We were pleased to have a visit this month from Dr. William "Morris" Williams, Chief of the Education Division of the East Asia Technical Services Office, AID/W. Dr. Williams was given a good look at the activities of the three projects, including visits to some refugee school sites on the Vientiane Plain and to ESP and to the Fa Ngum Schools in Vientiane and Phnom Hong.

Division personnel helped in various ways to prepare the Ministry's

exhibit for the That Luang Fair. Acknowledgment should be made of Communication Media's contribution, requested at the last minute of a large display of the UNESCO symbol for International Education Year, which is the theme of the Ministry's exhibit.

Other Donors

The French Cultural Mission supported a one-week in-service training program for about 30 Lao teachers of French in secondary schools. A similar course was held last year. Dr. Somphon stated that one of the purposes of the course was to prepare Lao teachers to replace French nationals.

Mr. Fitzgerald reports that an additional small quantity of school supplies for elementary education was received by the Ministry from Australia.

We have contacted Canadian officials concerning the need in Laos for more paper to reprint elementary textbooks. A representative from the regional office in Saigon has been in to collect information in order to prepare a request to Ottawa.

The Russian Embassy presented the Ministry of Education with 300 copies of a beginning course in Russian language for French speaking students.

The Japanese government announced an unspecified number of scholarships for Lao post-secondary students to study science, engineering, agriculture, medicine and other subjects in the "natural sciences". Study would be in the Japanese language.

The East-West Center at the University of Hawaii announced four scholarships for Lao students for undergraduate study beginning in the 1971-72 school year.

The American Women's Club of Laos sponsored the publication and printing of 3000 copies of a supplementary reading book for first and second grade pupils entitled "Somchai's Flowers". The book is being distributed on an experimental basis.

Personnel

Mr. Kheuang Noinaly was assigned to the position of Administrative Assistant for the EDU program in Savannakhet.

Mr. Walter Haney, formerly of IVS, has been employed by the Ministry of Education as a teacher of mathematics at the Fa Ngum Vientiane School. He is teaching in Lao, and confirms that the students learn subject matter better by studying in their own language.

Mr. Kao Outsama, Director of Planning and Statistics, MoE, returned from a successful six-week visit to the U. S. sponsored by USIS.

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