

ກໍລະນີສຶກສາ ກ່ຽວກັບ
ປະສິດທິພາບຂອງການພັດທະນາ
Development Effectiveness Case Study

ຊື່ເລື່ອງ:

TITLE: Reading Camp Volunteers

ຫົວຂໍ້:

Theme/s: Access to Assets; Voice and Agency

ຕົວຊີ້ວັດຜົນໄດ້ຮັບທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ:

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Program Area: Xamnuea

ຜູ້ຂຽນ:

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ການຍືນຍອມຈາກພາກສ່ວນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ:

Informed consent secured:

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Namxay Village is located about 41 kilometres south of Xamnuea. Road access to the village is quite difficult in the rainy season. There are 54 households in the village, consisting of 324 people (168 females). This village community belongs to the “Phong” ethnic group, and most of them are farmers. In the school year 2016-2017, there were 47 primary school students (22 girls) and only grades 1 to 5 were taught in this village. There was no kindergarten education centre.

ChildFund Laos and Xamnuea District Education and Sport Bureau (DESB) conducted reading camps in 25 villages in Xamnuea District, which were supported by 97 reading camp volunteers (57 females). The reading camps offer children opportunities to access reading activities outside of formal classes. The activity is led by village volunteers, who help to make the camp fun and to help develop children’s reading skills.

Mr. Vone is 31 years old. Mr. Tien is 31 years old. Ms. Phon is 27 years old and Ms. Souk is 29 years old. They are reading camp volunteers at Namxay Village, Xamnuea District.

ChildFund Laos and Xamnuea DESB conducted an orientation on community and home-based reading activities. During the orientation, a DESB staff informed village authorities, Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) members, and the community about the current situation of children’s reading and comprehension level in Laos, and spent a day brain-storming how villages can get involved in promoting reading among children in their community. The group discussed some useful questions, such as: Where do children learn the most? Who is the main person who facilitates children’s learning? What are the main causes of poor reading skills among children? What strategies can be used for helping children to learn to read at home? How communities can participate in promoting reading for children? Why communities should participate in promoting reading for child? Why regular reading activities are important for children? At the end of the meeting, the group had selected 4 volunteers (2 males and 2 females) to facilitate the reading camp in their village.

ChildFund Laos, on behalf of the BEQUAL NGO Consortium (BNC) and DESB, conducted the “Reading Camp Training for Village Volunteers” to train them on how to facilitate reading camps, and provided necessary stationary and the reading materials, which included 129 story books such: “The Generous Little Fish”, “I Want Balloons”, “Where I Should Go”, and other Lao-language books which include topics on animals, fruits, colours, cultures etc. for each reading camp’s “Book Bank”.

Reading skills are very important for children’s personal development. It is a key life skill that has direct bearing on their schooling as well as their future. At school, it is a key factor that determines their ability to learn and their progression to higher levels of study. However, the result of a recent assessment on child literacy shows us that many children are unable to read.

The causes of poor reading skills among children are influenced by many factors, but the main factor is a lack of available reading materials in rural and remote areas, materials such as newspapers, novels, magazines, and other reading paraphernalia, as well as a lack of opportunities to access reading skills development activities outside formal classes and/or school settings. In addition, many children think that reading is difficult and boring, and parents/caregivers generally do not pay enough attention to the progress of their children’s reading development. Furthermore, there is often a lack of support from village authorities, the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC), and the community in general around awareness raising regarding the importance of children’s reading skills; almost all of the community are farmers, and many of these ideas and concepts are new to them.



Reading Camp Volunteer reading a story to children during the Reading Camp activities



Children reading books together during the Reading Camp activities



Children playing games during Reading Camp activities



Children “make-take materials and borrow books from the Book Bank” during the Reading Camp activities

Currently, there are four village reading camp volunteers in Namxay that have received trained from ChildFund Laos, PESS, and DESB to facilitate the reading camp activities with children in their village.

Three of the volunteers, Mr. Vone, Ms. Souk, and Mr. Tien told us that this ChildFund Laos project is the first project that has implemented an education-focused activity in Namxay Village in which the public was consulted on the reading promotion activities and in which the community also directly participated.

They said: “In previous projects, we were never asked to be volunteers; this was a first for us. We attended the training with ChildFund Laos in March 2017. After the training, we informed the village authorities and parents in the community about the ‘Reading Camp’ activities and asked them to send their children to participate. We started the Reading Camp in our village in April 2017, and have been running the activities ever since. We normally facilitate the activities once a week, in accordance with our work season. When we are very busy, we only facilitate the activities 2-3 times a month. There are two volunteers facilitating every session, and every session we get more than 20 children attending”.

They also said: “Sometimes, we feel very happy when we facilitate the sessions and we see the children having fun with the activities, such as singing songs, playing games, reading books, and borrowing books to take home. Sometimes, however, we feel unhappy when we see that the children are bored because we were new at this and do not have skills or experience to facilitate certain games or to make many different types of crafts for the children to take home. Nevertheless, we will continue to be village volunteers and lead the village Reading Camp. If we have the opportunity, we would like to participate in the

training again to gain more experience so that we can better support and develop our children to love reading even more”.

In addition, Mr. Tien said that: “Since attending the training, I have facilitated the reading camp activities many times. Compared to before the training, I am more self-confident. I can spend time with children without feeling shy, and I now know more songs and games to play with them. The children seem to really enjoy their time when they come to the reading camp because there are many activities, such as reading books, playing, and borrowing books to take home”.

Ms. Soulee, a 25-year-old mother with one boy aged 7 years, highlighted the impact the volunteers are having on her son, stating that: “I am very happy to have this project in our village. This activity is useful for children. My son has participated in the reading camp every time the volunteers conduct it. Sometimes, I go to see my son in the reading camp; I’ve seen him singing fun songs, playing with children, reading books with his friends. He has even borrowed books and read them at home, and my husband and I always read with him. He goes to school every school day and loves to read and learn at home”.

As a part of the Reading Camp, volunteers have more responsibility regarding supporting education in their village. They have to lead the activities each week, and they have the chance to meet and talk to many children about what they like and dislike about reading. Currently, they are the key facilitators in promoting reading among children in their communities. This type of activity is very new for the volunteers, and they have only participated in a 3-day training. At first, the volunteers felt very shy and not very confident to lead the Reading Camp activities. To solve this, the ChildFund Laos Education Officer in Xamneua and DESB staff have made some handbooks, games, guideline materials for them to use and follow. In addition, the ChildFund Laos Education Officer and DESB staff also conducts regular monitoring and conduct on-the-job training for the volunteers when they go to their village for other activities.

Now, they are more confident, but, as mentioned above, these are new skills for the volunteers and the training was quite short, so they do have a lot of knowledge/skills in order to lead a diverse range of games for the children. They have had an impact in their community around promoting reading among children; children always attend the camp activities and their community highly values the volunteers’ work. The community has even exempt them from other work, such as village cleaning days, because the four volunteers are contributing so much to their children at the Reading Camp.

The volunteers would like ChildFund Laos to conduct more training for them, and if possible they would like to have a chance to go on exchange/study-tour in another location where this activity has also been implemented successfully. The parents are also happy to have this activity in their village, because their children have the chance to participate, have more opportunities to access a diverse range of books in the Reading Camp, and they can meet more friends and help each other via playing, games, reading, borrow books to take home.

Through implementing this activity, we have learnt that reading promotion via participation by community members can be a successful strategy. It helps the village authorities and the community to understand the activity, and the benefits of reading, and they have the opportunity to discuss the activity and select their community’s volunteers, work which the volunteers do without payment. By involving communities in the activity from the beginning, and encouraging their input into how the activity will be conducted and by whom, it encourages communities to take more ownership of education development in their village.

From now on, ChildFund Laos and DESB staff will try to cooperate with other development actors, such as: NGOs (BNC members: Save the Children, Plan, World Vision) and Government offices to find new information/good lessons regarding this type of activity, and also look at introducing some rewards, such as t-shirts that display the name of the activity and the names of the partner organisations to give to the volunteers.