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Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

Project Director

Bao Vang
651-495-9160
baov@hmong.org

Recipient Organization

HMONG NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, INC.
1628 16TH ST NW # 203
Washington, DC 200090000
DUNS No. 868716879

Performing Department

Administration

Co-Project Directors

Thao, Bruce

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

The Saint Paul-Minneapolis (Twin Cities) metropolitan region is the 16th largest metropolitan area in the United States, and Minnesota remains one of the fastest growing states in the Midwest. In 2005, Minnesota ranked second after California in the number of refugee arrivals. In 2008, 1 in 10 Minnesota residents was born outside the U.S., compared to 1 in 28 in 1990. The proposed SEED Program will target beginning Southeast Asian farmers (particularly Hmong, Burmese/Karen, and Bhutanese) in the seven-county metropolitan area surrounding the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/Saint Paul. The Twin Cities area has experienced a rapid influx of Hmong, Burmese/Karen, and Bhutanese immigrants and refugees, especially in the past decade. In Southeast Asia, most Hmong, Burmese/Karen, and Bhutanese lived as farmers, growing a variety of crops near their hillside villages. As they resettled in the United States, the Hmong's agrarian heritage led many of them to become involved in produce production, truck farming, and poultry farms as they attempted to find ways to support themselves in a new and unfamiliar country. For the Bhutanese and Burmese/Karen, many were able to continue their farming and agricultural practices by finding pockets of urban and rural land to farm and grow local gardens. As a result, there are hundreds of Southeast Asian farmers selling their vegetables, flowers, and other specialty crops and herbs through farmers markets, co-ops, and schools across the Twin Cities metropolitan area. These Southeast Asian farmers need access to culturally appropriate education and support to help make the shift from income-generating farming activities to wealth-generating farming businesses. Agricultural participation from Southeast Asian refugee/immigrant communities has increased over time in the U.S., but not without challenges. Olson, et.al surveyed 62 Hmong farmers as part of a project to help determine the local specialty crop production and market conditions. Sixty-eight percent of the 19 farmers responding said they were familiar with multi-peril crop insurance. However, only 12% of farmers responded they had bought crop insurance in 2002. Unfortunately, little to no data is available related to the Burmese/Karen and Bhutanese farmers, due to their very recent arrival to the United States. The literature notes that immigrant, new and beginning farmers face challenges primarily around cultural and language barriers, inability to rent or buy land, navigating an American agricultural system, and lack of business and financial planning. Many of the farmers do not read or write in their native language and/or in English. Olson et al. found in their research of Hmong farmers that only 11% of the 56 farmers responding had a written marketing plan for their crops. Sixty-one percent of the 54 farmers responding said they know how to price their produce, but 31% said they were not sure. As a result, this lessens many farmers' chances of getting loans and calculating the real cost of farming. These challenges can serve as risks to competing in a market where similar products are sold, which directly impacts revenue and wealth.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

The purpose of the SEED Program at HAP is to build economic prosperity for New Americans, Immigrants, and Refugee Populations through business development and entrepreneurship opportunities. Based on the needs identified by local Southeast Asian farmers, the SEED Program will focus on the following three priority topics: 1. Business management and decision support strategies that enhance the viability of beginning farmers and ranchers. 2. Marketing strategies that enhance the competitiveness of beginning farmers and ranchers. 3. Legal strategies that assist beginning farmers with farm or land acquisition and transfer. The four primary goals of the SEED Farmer Entrepreneurship Program are: 1. Build a community of farmer entrepreneurs as leaders in sustainable agriculture and healthy food systems, 2. Move farmers from income-generating to wealth-generating businesses, thus creating more solid economic sustainability for farming families, 3. Provide farmers with appropriate agri-entrepreneurial leadership and management skill training, 4. Engage farmers in the creation of and investments in commercially viable agri-businesses.

What was accomplished under these goals?

Over the past three years HAP established strong working relationships with all of its partner organizations including but not limited to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG). During each training session put on by these partners, participants received hands-on training and technical assistance in order to be successful farmers. HAP has now built a community of beginner farmer entrepreneurs through the educational workshops and trainings it has provided to over 700 farmers. More importantly, experienced farmers have been able to take part in the program and have praised the trainings offered. For example, a SEED participant stated how she has been able to incorporate trainings on marketing and business management to shared farmer's market business stall. Through the trainings and workshops she has networked with partners from MDA, FLAG, and other farming communities in Minnesota.

HAP has provided participants with several trainings to improve farmers' entrepreneurial leadership and management skills. Through FBM trainings, farmers have gained knowledge on management skills: record keeping, business planning, household expenses, etc. which lead to participants better understanding their inputs and outputs when it came to planning and harvesting their fruits and vegetables. Majority of participants reported how important record keeping was and how they have started to incorporate it into their family gardens.

One of the most successful training were participants mentored by MDA certified farmers where they learned basic strategies and information on starting a farm business at small farmers' markets. Participants visited and gained first-hand experience working alongside these farmers during farmers' markets. 100 percent of participants have never worked as a vendor before; everyone was excited and expressed how although they were only assisting, they felt ownership and could see themselves managing their own fruit and vegetable stand in the future.

Additionally, participants gained gardening skills by working alongside each other at their community gardens and were provided technical assistance from HAP itself, partnering staff, and church congregation members. For instance, an ORLC congregation member and experienced gardener, Bruce Ring, stated how he's spent some time in the community gardens with participants in which he's shown them how to use garden tools in addition to learning from participants themselves on the unique Bhutanese/Nepali vegetables and herbs they are planting in which he has never seen before. These introductory skills were useful to participants' understanding of small farm entrepreneurship.

Throughout the entire program HAP has organized several workshops each year that contributed to our goals. These workshops included professional trainings on soil management, pest control, noninsured crop disaster assistance, marketing, budgeting, and FSA loans to name a few. Additionally, participants have gained first-hand experience being mentored by experienced farmers through visits to mentors large farms and or farmers market sites. For example, a highlight story included participants visiting Minnesota Hmong Agriculture Co-op (MHAC) farm in Inver Grove Heights where they were able to use a roto tiller for the first time. Ninety percent of participants have never used a roto-tiller before and were very nervous and excited to operate the machinery. One of the most memorable memories was watching the MHAC farmers teach participants how to operate a roto-tiller as it was comparable to a father teaching his child to ride a bike. 100 percent of participants expressed how amazing and convenient the machine was and stated how fast it was to weed using a tiller compared to using a hoe.

Peer Mentoring and Networking:

In the last three years, HAP has worked with experienced peer farmers that have provided mentorship in cohort participant groups. Through our Cohort Learning Program, mentors have provided one-on-one coaching and technical assistance that relates to harvesting, planting, crop nurturing, market scaling, marketing tools and resources. One component part of the peer trainings most helpful was conducted at the farm with in-field training experience during site visits.

In the last year of the SEED program, HAP partnered with a cooperative farmer's group called Minnesota Hmong Agriculture Cooperative (MHAC) as part of our cohort mentorship program. Participants were mentored and trained by MHAC's farm located in Inver Grove Heights. Participants learned how to farm successfully in the United States through planting, weeding, pest control, and planting vegetables in a line. Additionally, participants were taught how to operate a garden tiller and got firsthand experience tilling at a garden site. Working alongside and learning from experienced farmers are an essential stepping stone for participants as they learn skills and techniques that will aid them in the future. Moreover, the cohorts have found it very engaging working with the mentors in the cohort groups and gained a great deal of experience. 80% participants

have expressed the peer mentoring as a valuable asset in the SEED program and understand the farming tools needed to be successful.

A major challenge from the past three years has been recruitment of mentor farmers. For example, many farmers who agreed to be mentors were unable to commit to the program due to their busy schedules and/or careers. As mentioned above, HAP has overcome this by partnering with MHAC in which their co-op of farmers has provided SEED farmers with high impact training and first-hand experience in farming.

Highlight Story:

Participants took a trip out to Afton, MN to visit SEED program farm mentor, Lundi Vang's multiple farm sites. During this trip Lundi educated the participants on topography, soil sampling, integrated farm planting techniques with a small tractor, and how to harvest vegetables, e.g. potatoes, green beans, cabbages. Participants were able to see the difference between good soil and bad soil. For example, Lundi showed participants good soil, peat, and educated them on how bad soil looked like. Participants were very engaged and asked several questions during the visit. One participant stated, "I had no idea what topography was until now, and will look for land with good topography when I am ready to farm on a bigger scale". This shows significance because majority of our immigrant farmers have not farmed in the United States before and have little to no education experience so being able to learn from our experienced farm mentors has shown to be very valuable to participants.

Farm-Faith Project Community Garden Kick-Offs Stories:

HAP partnered with five Saint Paul, MN churches in the Farm-Faith Project, and conducted annual garden kick-off events in the beginning of the summer farming season. The kick-off events consist of HAP and Interfaith Action staff along with participants to build garden boxes together with the help of the church communities. They are also a great way for HAP participants to meet with the church community members and build relationships.

Major accomplishments throughout the years have been the continued community building between participants, church members, and neighboring communities. HAP and its partners have worked hard build impactful relationships within the community and will continue to deliver for years to come.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

During 2013-2015, HAP expanded its partnerships and reached out to other agency partners to conduct workshops on a variety of topics such pest management, farm leases and contracts, NAP insurance, farm loans and products. These workshops gave participants more knowledge on the farming business and becoming successful entrepreneur farmers. In that period, HAP served over 200 farmers. One major accomplishment over the years has been HAP's ability to reach out to and serve diverse populations of people. Through educational workshops and trainings, HAP has consistently continued to help farmers of all populations and backgrounds strive to be successful in their respective agriculture businesses. In addition, through the continued outreach and support HAP has provided to the different communities of interest, HAP has exceeded its outcomes. HAP hopes to continue serving populations from different backgrounds through work that exceed its outcomes and impacts the community.

One major opportunity for training and professional development the SEED program has provided was the annual Immigrant Minority Farmers Conference (IMFC). HAP is part of the planning committee for the conference along with MDA, USDA, FLAG, Minnesota Food Association (MFA), University of Minnesota Extension and local farmers. This annual 2-day conference provides workshops, networking opportunities, and professional development training to thousands of farmers across the United States, but aims to target immigrant and minority farmers in particular. SEED participants from the program have attended the conference the past several years and have attained valuable knowledge on a wide range of agriculture topics from cover cropping to even livestock.

Over the course of three years, SEED participants attended and completed a business development curriculum that was culturally and linguistically appropriate, designed for Southeast Asian immigrant farmers taught by the agriculture program coordinator where they learned about business management, marketing strategies, and how to become a successful entrepreneur. The SEED Curriculum helped participants to learn agri-entrepreneurial leadership, management skill training, and educated farmers in how to move from income generating to wealth-building businesses. Participants were able to take what they learned in the classroom and see it in real working environments through field trips to local farmers' markets. The effectiveness of the curriculum has been shown as 100 percent of participants who completed the curriculum have reported increased knowledge on business development, management, and marketing techniques and strategies for their future business. Additionally, participants stated how much they enjoyed the classes as they were taught by HAP farm coordinator and how the classes allowed participant engagement where they could discuss and share knowledge from classroom materials with one another.

In 2014-2015, HAP's new Farm to Families project funded through USDA's Community Foods Project elevated HAP's SEED program. HAP's Farmers Market and Nutrition program occurred for 16 weeks during the beginning of summer to fall season. The Nutrition program taught by University of Minnesota Nutritionist and SNAP educator, Shirley Vang, specialized in culturally specific healthy foods in which SEED participants attended a 9-week long session, along with HAP's adult day care participants, children and families and WIC participants. The nutrition program was also opened to the community at large, in which over 160 people attended. SEED participants learned the importance of eating healthy and ways you can prepare and

cook certain food that reduces saturated fat and grease and other unhealthy things for your body. 100% of participants thought the nutrition program was very engaging and will consider cooking healthier foods now.

During the farmers' markets, SEED participants also got to engage and help the farmer's market vendors out who sold produce. They learned a great deal by selling in person and what it would be like to be a market vendor. SEED participants attended a few market days to help the vendors set up, sell, and take down when the market is over. 90% of participants enjoyed being trained on selling at markets and are interested in selling at future HAP farmers' markets.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

SEED Participants came from different ethnic backgrounds and levels of farm experience. Majority of participants do not own their own farm business and are eager to find more land to rent so they can start. We have seen that the resources we have provided through trainings and technical assistance that participants are ready to take the next step and start their farm business.

An important detail that HAP has learned over the years has been the relationship building and networking among participants. As mentioned earlier, all SEED participants have different levels of farming experience. Through community gardens, events, and professional development trainings, each farmer has had the opportunity to learn from one another and will build on the successes and challenges they have encountered. HAP hopes that SEED participants will continue to network with one another along with share their success stories with families and friends.

Moreover, HAP has found success in outreach due to past participant success. With every successful participant over the years has had continued interest from the community which has been very beneficial in outreach. Populations and communities interested have always been referred from past participants and or attended HAP trainings and partner workshops. HAP hopes to continue providing high impact workshops and trainings in order to keep the interest in the farming community high.

Additionally, HAP utilized a variety of marketing and communications tools to publicize award funds including program activities. HAP's major outlets include:

1. Social media tools such as Facebook and LinkedIn were used to showcase program activities along with outreach outlet. Social media was able to target a different audience which turned out to be helpful when highlighting key events and success stories.

2. In addition to social media, HAP's organization website (www.hmong.org), HAP's quarterly newsletter to its stakeholders, Media releases to local news sources such as Asian American Press, Hmong Times, Hmong Today, and Hmong radio stations have asked our work and efforts being done with Hmong farmers in the United States, along with informing the public on the current impact HAP's beginner farmers program are having on the community.

3. Events such the Hmong National Development conference and the Immigrant and Minority's Farmers Conference were a major outlet in promoting and informing the community of the program. These opportunities allowed staff to tell the success stories along with showcasing the impact that the farmers have had in the community.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	1	0	0	0	1
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0.3	0	0	0	0.3
Other	0.4	0	0	0	0.4
Computed Total	1.7	0	0	0	1.7

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

Southeast Asian beginning farmers completed the SEED cohort program, through which they received intensive assistance to help them become successful farmer entrepreneurs.

The SEED program targets beginning Southeast Asian immigrant/refugee farms, particularly Hmong, Burmese/Karen and Bhutanese farmers in the seven-county metropolitan area surrounding the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. Over the past three years, HAP has reached over 5000 people and distributed 6000 flyers. We also conducted calls to over 1500 individuals explaining the program, and met with over 500 individuals. Outreach efforts to reach targeted audience have been conducted at several places in the Twin Cities. There have been several successes and challenges for outreach in the SEED program. For instance, HAP has been able to successfully reach out to the community through current and former participant successes after graduating.

Due to the numerous workshops and trainings offered, HAP participants were consistently referring their friends and families to attend events and workshops every year. We also have interdepartmental referrals every year within our organization that we gain participants from. More importantly, HAP has established great relationships with partnering organizations in which we worked in collaboration and hosts events every year for educational purposes, along with networking and program recruitment.

On the other hand, some challenges HAP has faced over the years has been following up with participants. For example, due to outreaching efforts in the Fall/Winter seasons, many participants were interested; however, once trainings and workshops start late Winter/early Spring, some participants were not able to partake in the program anymore due to other obligations such as finding full-time work, or moving to a different city. HAP has combatted this by planning several trainings and events throughout the entire calendar year to keep participants engaged and interested. For instance, participants enjoyed participating in workshops/trainings during the summer while farming.

Additionally, during the years of 2013-2015 the SEED program, HAP and Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul (formerly known as Saint Paul Area Council of Churches) worked in partnership to connect farmers with neighborhood congregations through community gardens and community building events, which was called the Farm-Faith Project.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

HAP's SEED program has provided numerous educational aids and professional development opportunities for the program participants and the greater community in whole.

Southeast Asian Farmer's Entrepreneurs Program Curriculum:

Over the course of three years, HAP has served 72 participants in the Southeast Asian Entrepreneurship cohort program. HAP's Southeast Asian Farmer's Entrepreneurs curriculum is culturally and linguistically appropriate designed to Southeast Asian farmers. The curriculum offers educational materials and training to develop a business plan, on recordkeeping, marketing, and financial services and products. HAP's Agriculture Coordinator taught 9 curriculum classes in each cohort. 100% of participants said that they have learned something new to help them with their farming business startup; 90% understood the importance of marketing materials, 80% of farmers were able to understand how to do business recordkeeping, and 100% knew how to write a business plan. More importantly, participants were really engaged in learning and were always asking questions throughout the classes.

Even with the language barrier, participants did not shy away from consistently seeking answers to their questions on any given subject. Additionally, participants have shown ability to implement what they learned in the classroom to real-life situations. For example, each year participants attended a field trip to local farmers' market in which they observed and discussed how farmers displayed their products, price their vegetables, and run their business. Over the years, participants have shown significant amount of marketing knowledge and skills.

Educational Workshops:

HAP conducted annual workshops from partnering agencies in the Twin Cities such as Farmer's Legal Action Group, United States of Agriculture, and MN Department of Agriculture in the Twin Cities on a variety of topics such as pest management, farm leases and contracts, NAP insurance, farm loans and products. These workshops have given participants more knowledge on becoming successful entrepreneur farmers.

Over the years, participants have especially enjoyed the training conducted by Kevin Plante (Minnesota Department of Agriculture) on farm budgeting. Majority of participants felt this was a training that would not only help them keep track of their future business expenses but more importantly they can implement into their daily lives right away. Participants expressed how they have never had any financial literacy education and or even how to balance a checkbook. Kevin Plante provided participants with an exercise on balancing expenses and income to which participants felt was greatly helpful for their daily living.

In addition, HAP has also seen participants taking the initiative to take advantage of some training opportunities. For example, HAP loan officer, Greg Kaiser, has given several financial literacy and loan workshops for SEED participants. Since these trainings HAP has had 10 participants sign up for Individual Development Accounts (IDA) over the years. HAP has served over 300 farmers over three years and will continue to work with its partners to offer educational workshops and trainings.

Other trainings and activities:

HAP also conducted several trainings and activities for the Farm-Faith project throughout the calendar year. One of the most significant successes over the past couple of years has been the community building efforts taken place between SEED participants, church members, and neighboring community. Everyone involved has worked together in unison to accomplish several goals throughout the years including building over thirty garden boxes, or preparing for national events such as National Night Out, and lastly, working alongside each other and learning from one another about gardening and harvesting.

The Farm-Faith project has brought people from different populations and backgrounds together through agriculture and community building.

The successes of these trainings and activities did not come without challenges. An important highlight from the past three years was having Ramsey County master gardener, Liz O'Toole, give a workshop on weeding, planting, and watering. Participants and church members were able to learn several new things during this training and also had their questions answered from Liz.

Major challenges throughout the years were the language barrier between farmers and church members. Often time, farmers and church members were out in the community gardens at the same time and communication between the two would be difficult. This was overcome by having consistent events and opportunities for staff, farmers, and church members to meet and share stories of their gardens. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church member, Bruce Ring, stated how after a couple interactions with participants he was able to learn a little Bhutanese and was able to teach participants some important English terms as well. Through these experiences HAP will continue to learn and grow from these challenges.

Changes/Problems

When the program first started one of the biggest problems was transportation. At the time farmers did not have reliable transportation to attend trainings and events. In order to overcome this barrier, HAP worked with the Minnesota Department of Motor Vehicles to help educate participants to obtain their driver permits and licenses through our Employment Services job training program. Since the first year, transportation wasn't a major issue anymore, because participants were able to rely on themselves and able to get around. We also addressed the issue of transportation by enrolling participants into our Individual Development Accounts (IDA) program where participants would go through a 6-12 months of financial literacy, credit and asset building training to be able to purchase a vehicle that was matched with a one-to-one ratio savings. Also, since year one, HAP has also purchased several company vans in order to take participants to events and field trips as it was a need for the SEED program to thrive.

Over the course of the years, we saw a growing Bhutanese immigrant and refugee population in the twin cities who were particularly interested in agriculture and farming, and we faced the challenge of not having any staff that was Bhutanese. Since the Bhutanese community was fairly new in the U.S., we felt that it was important to hire a Bhutanese Case Aide in our Agriculture program. HAP's Bhutanese staff has worked alongside the Farm Coordinator to provide interpreting and

translation during workshops, trainings, and events. There were also successful outreaches done among the Bhutanese community at large. We were very fortunate to have a full time staff. We have seen that over 50% of our participants were Bhutanese were ready to be entrepreneur farmers after the completion of the SEED program.

Throughout the SEED program we have been training and assisting participants facing not only language barriers, but also socio-economic barriers such as those on public assistance. Our hope is that the SEED program will provide the proper education and development tools necessary to aid these families to be successful members of the community and provide for their families. Participants were also asked of any challenges they faced during the season and many times their answer is "lack of access to land" for farming. Fortunately, through many discussions over time in the past three years, one of HAP's long-term partner MN Food Association has provided the opportunity of leasing 2.4 acres of land to help our long-term agriculture work in helping our farmers gain access to land and help build their entrepreneur business startup. Beginning farmers would be able to utilize their skills in a bigger scale garden and sell their produce to markets and beyond. This was indeed a very successful accomplishment and important opportunity of growth for HAP's agriculture department.

Other challenges faced throughout the years have been the ability to secure mentor farmers for participants. Our initial thought was that ten established farmers would be on board to mentor 36 participants (3-4 farmers per mentor), however, it was difficult to secure established farmers due to their capacity to commit time to the program because of their busy schedules. However, what eventually worked was reaching out to the Minnesota Hmong Agriculture Cooperative (MHAC) in which ten of their well-established farmers had provided mentoring services and hands-on field trainings for our participants. HAP was able to overcome this challenge through consistent efforts of building significant relationships with their vast network of participants, farmers, and partner organizations.