Nutrition Research Capacity Building in Lao PDR

Gerald Shively, Associate Dean and Director
International Programs in Agriculture, Purdue University

December 16, 2019
International Development Working Group
New USAID project awarded October 2019

- **USAID Lao Mission** “buy in” under the **LASER PULSE** award
- Focus on **capacity building** to support enhanced nutrition research
- In-country implementing partner is CRS
- Indiana University will also be a partner in delivering activities
- 6-month co-creation process with USAID (May-October 2019)
- 4-year project (2019-2023) with three phases:
  - Phase 1 (year 1): project **planning and scoping**
  - Phase 2 (year 2): training module **design and development**
  - Phase 3 (years 3-4): **implementation** of capacity building activities
Lao PDR

- The only landlocked country in SE Asia
- Population ≈ 7.5 million
- GDP/capita ≈ $7,500
- GDP growth rate ≈ 7%
- Population growth rate ≈ 1.5%
- Agriculture: 20% of GDP; 70% of employment
- Child stunting rate ≈ 33%
Project background

- Lao government’s long-term goal is to establish a National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)
- The US government provided funds to construct a building to house the NIN
- Building handover and ribbon-cutting on Nov 14th, 2019
- This project will focus on strengthening NIN staff
Implementation

- Activities will be guided by the National Nutrition Strategy Action Plan (NNSAP)
  - 11 Strategic Objectives
  - 29 Strategic Initiatives
  - 145 Strategic Activities
- This project will identify a small sub-set of these activities for capacity building (examples from NNSAP in the table at right)
- Four ministries potentially involved
  - Agriculture and Forestry
  - Health
  - Education and Sports
  - Planning and Investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Strengthen food quality analysis</td>
<td>MOH, MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Nutrition education and communication</td>
<td>MOH, MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Nutrition surveillance systems, data, analysis</td>
<td>MOH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Develop national research plans</td>
<td>MOH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Nutrition training for medical staff</td>
<td>MOH, MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Integrate nutrition into BS and Nursing degrees</td>
<td>MOH, MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>Overseas degree training</td>
<td>MOH, MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>Overseas short-term training</td>
<td>MOH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Develop university-level curricula (BS and MS)</td>
<td>MOH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Improve vegetable production</td>
<td>MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>Improve livestock production</td>
<td>MAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>Microfinance training</td>
<td>MAF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project design

- Training paradigm yet to be determined
- Initial focus will be on research fundamentals
- Specific topics yet to be determined
- Possible small grants w/faculty pairing
- Goals
  - Certificate training
  - Small “pilot” research activities
  - Research Symposium at end
  - Design framework for NIN to use
    - Center of Excellence for Research
    - Architecture for eventual degree program
- Some training may occur outside of Laos
  - e.g. Vietnam or Thailand
Next steps

- Conduct surveys to learn more about capacity and training needs (January 2020)
- Identify target audiences for capacity building activities
- Identify potential collaborators to deliver specific training modules
- Conduct project design workshop (March 2020)
- Develop a detailed project inception report
- Submit detailed MOU to government for approval (June 2020)