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From Farms to School:
Towards Sustainable and Inclusive School-Based
Food and Nutrition Programs in Southeast Asia

24-25 April 2023 | Alabang, Philippines



Overview of School-based Food and Nutrition Programs in Southeast Asia

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Outline

- Role of Nutrition sensitive and Integrated *Home* and School gardens
- Revisit examples of sustainable and successful models of home and school gardens from the Region Lao PDR, Philippines and Thailand
- Lessons learned or good practices and major challenges



Why promote School Food and Nutrition Programs?

- In 2013, Global Child Nutrition Forum in Brazil endorsed “School feeding program as a key national investment that complements early childhood interventions . “
- Widely recognized as an important intervention to develop lifelong positive nutrition behaviors
- Good entry point for food system transformation



- ❖ Schools can serve as platforms to deliver integrated nutrition programmes
- ❖ Can demonstrate potential for linking gardens with school feeding
- ❖ SFNE should however be integrated with effective complementary interventions



Facts about home gardens

Home gardens are:

- the oldest agroecosystem
- Integral part of traditional farming system where many perennial and annual plant species are planted and maintained by the household
- Dynamic in their evolution , composition and uses but often influenced by socio-economic circumstances and cultural values



- HGs can be part of pro-poor strategies that are socially acceptable, economically profitable, environmentally friendly and address small scale farmers
- Nowadays , HGs are used as a platform for research using local genetic materials (e.g. recognized by the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources)



- However, because of their small size the impact on food production is deemed insufficient to deserve the attention of governments and donors until recently.
- Now there is a greater recognition globally and regionally of the importance of home and school gardens as part of nutrition sensitive agriculture



Turning the tide : School gardens for food and nutrition security

Stories of sustainable models



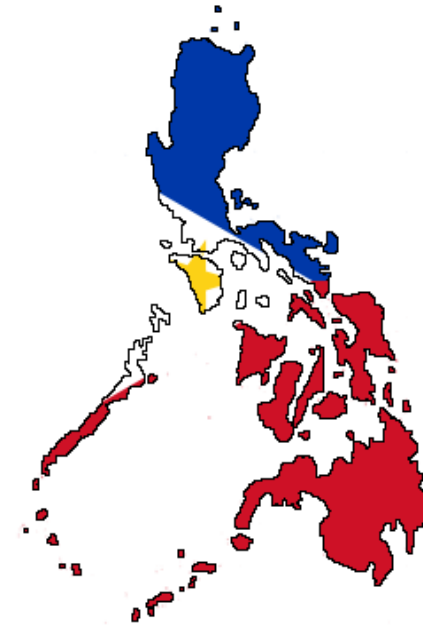
Bases for selection – “Sustainability”

- ❖ attributable and sustained nutrition impact
- ❖ continuing (at least 3 years after exit of project)
- ❖ self-reliant or minimum reliance from external support
- ❖ wider adoption or going to scale
- ❖ well-documented and have undergone evaluation



Philippines

Gulayan sa Paaralan (Vegetable for School Program)



Thailand

UNJP on Integrated Highland Livelihood Development

Wanaluang
School Garden
Project
(Mae Hong Son)

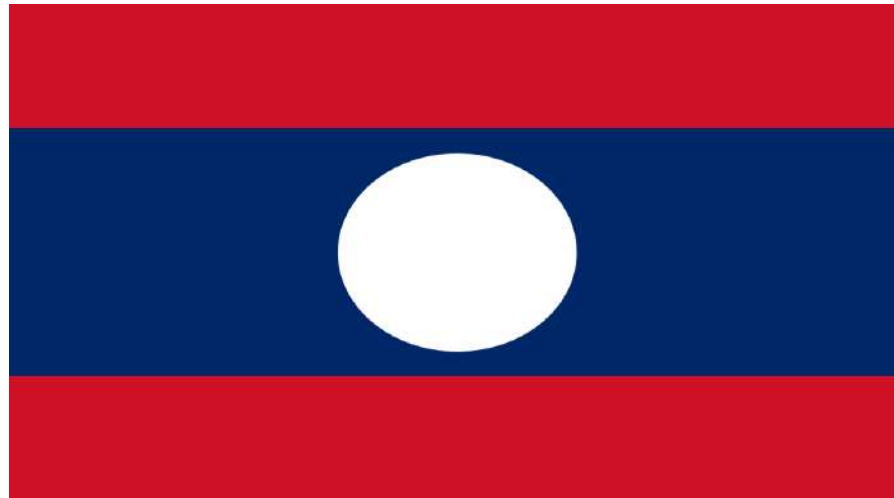


Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Agriculture for School Lunch Programme

Objective: *To improve food and nutrition
security of school children living in
remote areas*



**National School Meal Programme in
Lao PDR
Under the Ministry of Education and
Sports**



Lessons learned from selected country examples

Getting Tools out of the Toolbox



Key features : Programme Design

- ❑ Life cycle approach with special focus on CU5, 1000 days, adolescents, school children and WRA
- ❑ Holistic/integrated community development perspective
- ❑ Practice and promotion of biodiversity -based food production system



- ❑ Gender fair, context specific, based on agro-ecological setting, ethnicity
- ❑ Control of the means and outputs of production
- ❑ Needs-oriented capacity development



- ❑ Professional promotion and “messaging” of the program/project
- ❑ Sustainable funding source from government or private sector
- ❑ Sustainable source of resources (e.g. setting up of community nurseries)
- ❑ Incentive scheme



Implementation Strategy

- Carefully conducted situational analysis in various agro-ecological setting
- Targeting of poor villages, small landholders, marginalized households, women (leaving no one behind)
- Explicitly stated nutrition goals and objectives



An Enabling Micro Environment

- ❑ Community mobilization approaches to promote program ownership and local counterparting : **Let the locals lead!**
- ❑ **Community support/involvement in school garden activities**
- ❑ Technical competency of the community organizer or implementing partners



- ❑ Knowledge and sensitivity to local culture, beliefs and practices
- ❑ Respect for and promotion of indigenous/local knowledge and materials
- ❑ Capacity-building of local partners and use of village animators (e.g. farmer teachers)
- ❑ Community-based program management committee established



An Enabling Macro Environment

- ❑ Generating evidences in aid of program planning and policy formulation (cost-effective , replicable and sustainable intervention)
- ❑ Strong political will and support
- ❑ Establishing partnerships and strategic collaboration for Multisectoral/multistakeholder engagement (national government+ local government units+ NGOs+ CSOs+ private sector + academe etc.)





- ❑ Incorporation in relevant national policies, plans and programs like NNS, NPANs, NSEDP, NSMP, Agricultural policies and programs
- ❑ Presence of advocates or champions



Major Challenges

- Agro-ecological setting – drought (water requirements) or flood prone areas
- Sustainable source of materials /use of indigenous varieties/breed
- Child labour
- Gender bias



- Additional burden to women, teachers or students
- Transparency or accountability
- Community support
- Capacity of agricultural extension workers esp in integrating nutrition concerns along the value chain



Concluding Remarks

- Agriculture sector is under pressure to better deliver on the nutrition objectives
- Nutrition sensitive agriculture should promote diversification of agriculture but there should be deliberate inclusion of nutrition outcomes in the impact pathways



Implications

We need to implement what we know works as well as find new ways of approaching home and school gardens which includes bio-diverse and agro-ecological , climate smart technologies
and promote food based strategy from food production to food consumption.





Thank you!



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