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*Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged,
for the LORD your God
will be with you
wherever you go.*

Joshua 1:9



Traditional Birth Attendants as Agents of Change

A Story of Transformation *by Pascale Chantavong, Health Consultant for World Renew Laos*

In 2015, nine Rshi women from the Phi-alor cluster of villages wanted to help pregnant women in their villages. With the support of World Renew and their local partner in Laos, these women were trained as Traditional Birth Attendants, or TBA's. In addition to information about actual care for expectant mothers, the training was designed to overcome language and literacy barriers using creative, practical methods like videos, role playing, and picture lesson books.

In February of this year, a health consultant met with the TBA's for a short review session. Because the World Renew and partner teams had focussed on other challenges in the past two years, there had been only limited follow-up and no further training in the intervening two years. The consultant asked them to role play assisting with a delivery and was astonished to see how they managed, as a group, to reproduce with much precision, the training received 2 years earlier!

During the roleplay, the group of TBA's:

- demonstrated great care and support to the laboring woman
- gave water to the laboring woman
- walked with the pregnant woman in labor
- used soap to wash hands (putting on gloves is still something they need to practice!)
- checked for the position of the head
- dried the baby after birth, but did not remove the wet cloth
- placed the baby skin-to-skin with the mother directly after birth and after the cord was cut



- measured the proper distance to clamp the cord and cut it safely
- delivered the placenta and checked for completeness
- remembered, with no prompting, to check for maternal danger signs such as anemia, oedema, headache, dizziness, back pain, tiredness, anorexia, hemorrhage, unconsciousness — significantly more than they could identify during the training 2 years ago

Many steps were well done and proved that the use of videos, roleplaying, and illustrations work effectively in training women without Lao language or literacy skills. The consultant felt confident in entrusting the TBA's to provide Vitamin B1 to pregnant and new mothers to prevent beriberi, which is common in the region.

The World Renew Cambodia team is so encouraged to learn about TBA's involvement in the community and their active support of mothers. They have proven to be key players in promoting health messages to reduce infant mortality. They have proved that, despite language, cultural, and education barriers, they are able to learn and be agents of change in their communities.

World Renew Laos and Fennema Family Recent and Upcoming Events

- In May, Maria and Matthew participated in a swim meet in Phuket Thailand, achieving many personal bests and earning a medal or two.
- On May 13, Moe Moe organized a fundraiser for a Lao women with cancer who needs chemotherapy and cannot afford it. The effort raised a total of 6 million kip (approx. \$730 USD). Maria shared a few key learnings from her part in the fundraising: "I learned that people are generous. If you are brave enough to stand up, take action, and share about a need, they are willing to help."
- Moe Moe and Mike celebrated their 19th wedding anniversary on May 16— an incredible journey with many adventures ahead!
- Monica graduated from high school on May 26. She was chosen to give a speech at the graduation!
- Moe Moe, Maria and Matthew will be done with school on June 9.
- Mike and Monica will fly to Ontario on July 20, where Monica will attend a transition camp called REBOOT, specifically for 17-20 year olds who have lived and studied overseas and are likely to face culture shock upon their return to Canada! After that week, we help Monica get ready to attend Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ontario in September, where she will study Applied Social Sciences with the goal of becoming a teacher for children ages 3-5.



What's that for?

Take a close look at this photo. What could this item be used for?



Don't hesitate or be shy, but send your best guess to Mike at fivemfamily@gmail.com.

The mystery will be revealed in the next newsletter!

Mystery Revealed

You guessed: a snapshot of some drying pods or vegetables drying in the sun. Pretty close! You're looking at bamboo shoots being dried over a fire. A Chinese company in northern Laos purchases bamboo shoots from farmers who harvest them from the forest. The bamboo is treated in covered vats (shown in the forefront of the photo) and then dried using firewood (inside the taller building at the back in the photo). The dried bamboo is then sent back to market in China. This does provide income for villagers. However, the chemicals used leech into the environment and water sources used by livestock, causing some livestock death.

