

Guyana Partners of the Americas Farmer to Farmer Trip Report

April 21- May 4 2008

Team 3—University of Wisconsin-Extension

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Leadership Academy

Team 3 members of this project found the experience in Guyana to be exceptional. We want to thank Kelvin Craig and Shaun Francis of The Partners of the Americas in Guyana for their guidance and support for the entire trip. Their vision and continuity between all the visiting teams helped to give direction for Team 3's work. The Guyana Ministry of Agriculture staff was very clear concerning their objectives for this team's visit. Their insights and the contributions of Joseph McAllister and John Woolford were important in developing the content of the various workshops we presented. We hope that we continued to "plant the seeds" of leadership and community development with the Extension Officers and the farmers groups in Parika and West Watooka.

The following is a chronological description of our work during our visit to Guyana.

April 22: Met with the POA representative Kelvin Craig later in the morning and we discussed the proposed week's activities before meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture including Joseph McAllister, John Woolford, Michael Welch, Brian Sears, Brian Greenidge, and Colleen Bascomb. That meeting focused on identifying in more detail, what their goals and objectives were for MOA and Guyana Extension. The Team then worked out the following plan for our two days of work based on their goals for the Guyanese Extension Staff. (See Appendix A)

April 23: Presented our proposal to the MOA and Extension administration. They found it to be on target to what they want accomplished. We then visited with a FTF collaborating agency, IICA Guyana, and talked with Ignatius Jean about their projects, and possible inclusion of FTF volunteers in the future. The afternoon took us to the Parika farming community previously visited by Teams 1 and 2. Our purpose was to inform them about our up coming visit, and get a feeling for the area, perceived issues, general economic strength of the area, and directions from them as to what they wanted to learn. We met with three farmers and an Extension Officer. Upon return to Georgetown we started developing our program with the Parika farmers group.

1. Utilize focus group discussion techniques to "flesh out issues" they were concerned about.
2. Incorporate an economic analysis tool to help them identify the amounts of money leaving the community

3. Incorporate a force field analysis tool to help identify local resources and outside forces to help them address their issues regarding organizing into a formal farmers group
4. Present ideas about organizational leadership and team building.

April 24: Travel to the inland community of West Watooka near Linden. The area is a “recovering” bauxite mining community—the larger city area of Linden—but the agricultural area is also adjusting to the ups and downs of the profitability of mining. (The mine is currently owned by a Chinese firm and slowly reinvesting in its upgrade). We visited with two Guyanese Extension Officers and three farmers. We found similar perceptions with the West Watooka farmers as we did with the Parika farmers about local people were not willing to work together and sharing ideas. We designed an approach unique to their needs as follows:

1. Review past work by displaying the flip charts and asking for interpretation
2. Help the group focus on leadership and then talk about shared leadership and leadership attributes
3. Help the group understand committee structure and responsibilities
4. Help the group channel their energies toward accomplishing one of their past goals of forming their own market area.

April 25: Training Session for MOA Extension Staff, Guyana School of Agriculture Compound

At this first session with the staff, there were 22 to 28 persons in attendance at various times during the day. We followed our proposed agenda, incorporating a few new concepts as discussion lead us.

Sue welcomed the participants to the session. Team 3 members introduced themselves. Sue led the introductions of the participants by involving them in an ice breaker exercise. She asked the attendees to meet in pairs, interview each other and then introduce their partner to the group. The interview questions were: where you were born and raised, what is something the others at the meeting don't know about you and are willing to share, what you learned and/or use from the January session with Team 2, and what do you expect from the sessions with Team 3. The information from the last question enabled Team 3 to modify the agenda to meet the group's needs.

Arlen then led the discussion about organizational and community development frameworks. The concepts included community development educator roles, building trust based relationships, leadership development, collaboration, organizational development, community based planning, conflict management, and strategic planning. Sue also discussed the concept of shared leadership.

Dave presented his section on building a community or organizational process which included some fundamental planning basics and creating a foundation for developing a good process.

Arlen, Dave and Sue each shared case examples of their experiences with community development frameworks.

After lunch, Sue led the SLOGO (Slogan and Logo) exercise. The group broke into four teams to develop a team name, slogan and logo based on the strengths of the team members. The success of the activity varied based on the different strengths of the individuals. The point of the exercise was to help them understand the various stages of team development – forming, storming, norming and performing.

To use these new teambuilding skills and understanding of teams, the four teams worked to come to an agreement on a farmers group issue and develop a process to address the issue. The issues that were addressed were either group process or ag technology related. It was interesting to watch the dynamics of each of the groups. With some, the concept of shared leadership was easily understood. In others, group members deferred to either the most outspoken member of the team or the most senior member of the group.

After debriefing the team activity, Arlen shared the Swain Personality Styles with the group and asked them to complete the Styles exercise as homework. Following a brief discussion of the day's activities, the session adjourned.

Arlen, Dave, and Sue developed the following observations and results of the day:

1. Participants expressed several concepts that they learned from the January session with Team 2.
2. They understood the concept that the local farmers groups owned and controlled the process and the outcomes of their work.
3. The participants were open to learning new processes to help their work with farmers groups.
4. They recognized the shift from ag technology to broader community development, but not all were in agreement or comfortable with it.
5. The participants' comments reinforced that we were on target with our proposed agenda.
6. They understood the concepts of teamwork, but still had trouble with shared leadership in discussions and decision-making.

That evening we had an opportunity to go to an art exhibit at the Brazilian Embassy and had a five minute conversation with the Guyana Prime Minister Samuel Hinds. We were able to discuss our work with the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Partners of the Americas Farmer to Farmer Program with the Guyanese Extension Service. He appeared to be in approval and interested in our work. Had a chance meeting with Jerry McAllister, a member of Parliament that evening and discussed our work as well.

April 26: The team traveled up the East Coast Region, to observe the differences in crops, housing, people, industry, and river life. This would help us gain a better understanding of Guyana, Extension's potential differences from region to region, and

the inter-connectedness of markets for produce and food supply. We think this new perspective helped us provide better programming for the following week's workshops.

April 27: Day off, tourist activities—but we continued to learn more about the country's geography and relate ideas to enhance our programs.

April 28: Parika area farmers meeting: The day started out a bit slow as there was competition for our meeting with a local traditional Hindu wedding activity that drew some of our meeting participants. However before we finished there were 7 farmers and 4 Extension staff and Joseph McAlister. Learning from past groups' experiences, Team 3 incorporated their prior progress and concerns.

David led the focus group type discussion. The group came out with numerous ideas and themes. David's skill in questioning and guiding direction allowed the group to focus on three main issues:

1. The new group needs skill training in forming a group or committee to get broader participation.
2. They need to work together as buyers and sellers to be able to enter the markets with more power.
3. They need to be empowered to say no to outside groups that convince them to grow a crop but then never show up when the crop is ready to help them take the crop to market.

Arlen noted down concepts from the discussion and presented them back to the group in the form of a "leaky bucket" demonstrating the economic inputs or income (filling the bucket) and expenditures outside the area illustrated by holes in the bucket. This simple conceptual visual aided the group to understand their economic situation. They began talking about ways to "plug the holes".

1. Train and hire one of the newly forming group's children to be the area marketer of produce.
2. Grow a variety of crops but in a large enough volume to create a presence and quantity for proposed buyers.
3. Learn how to make compost so they can use it as a fertilizer instead of buying this input in the city.
4. Become a formal committee of at least 10 producers. New MOA programs will only help fund or offer technical support to formal groups—thus capturing more money for this new group.
5. Gain more knowledge on how to grow better and more varieties of crops.

Arlen then led them using a force field analysis on forming a formal group.

Helping forces

- * an identified need to organize
- * desire to progress
- * good productive land that grows many crops
- * they do have some capital

Hindering forces

- * no tradition of forming groups
- * not willing to share information
- * need leadership skills

Helping forces (cont'd)

- * they have some knowledge
- * they do have some surplus time
- * it doesn't cost anything to organize but time and they have time to give
- * they want to grow and learn leadership
- * enthusiasm and knowledge that they have to take responsibility for their future

Ultimately the group noted that they had several assets aiding them in forming a group, and that the few hindering forces were minimal.

Sue led discussion on leadership training ideas that could be carried out with the local extension staff that included:

1. Develop a Young Farmers Group to develop future leaders
2. Help on roles and responsibilities for members
 - a. president
 - b. vice president
 - c. secretary
 - d. treasurer
 - e. all meetings published notices, minutes, financial and transparency in decision making
 - f. that leadership is not only positional, but everyone can contribute to the development of the organization
3. Mentoring of new leaders
4. Suggested the farmers group to visit another farming community to learn from them and share ideas

Joseph McAlister supported the idea of them forming into a formal organization and committed two stipend staff to help them develop within two weeks. The seven farmers committed to meet at one of the farmer's homes on Monday, May 5, 2008 at noon. Extension staff will also be present. (It was recognized afterwards that May 5 was a national holiday so the meeting was rescheduled for another day that week.)

Other ideas they want to learn more about include:

- bio gas
- raise chickens for the product as well as the manure for compost
- make compost
- marketing

These could be future FTF projects or MOA staff could provide education and guidance.

April 29: Traveled to the Linden area and formally met with the West Watooka farmers group. After introductions, one of the group members talked about the prior meetings and what they learned. She demonstrated confidence in her presentation, and to us, a great exemplary evaluation of the concepts learned and accomplished from the last groups, and a passion to move forward.

David lead the group in identifying one area the group wanted to focus on and provided facilitation tools to help them with an action plan of:

1. what needs to be done---starting a new market area for West Watooka farmers
2. how to work on this—by meeting with the appropriate authorities (Regional Democratic Committee)
3. why—to get approval to use the land
4. when—start the process at the next group meeting -4th Sunday of the month

David then led a force field analysis to demonstrate what energies and forces are readily available in the community to help them accomplish their goal and what forces are working against them.

Force Field Analysis

Helping Forces

Availability of Quality Product
Labor to Build a Farmer's Market
Ample Space
Good Location
Lumber
Large Population Nearby (market potential)
Competitive Advantage (Don't have to pay toll for bridge)
Organized Farmer's Group

Hindering Forces

Organizational Strength
Approval from Authority
Perception of Competing
with Farmer's Market in Linden

Sue helped the group focus on leadership: what is a leader, what are the attributes such as being a servant leader, being a good communicator, being a teacher, providing guidance, etc. The group talked about the importance of trust. The group identified the following characteristics of building trust: listening, communicating, being dependable, providing encouragement, and providing resources when committed to do so.

Sue also led a discussion about shared leadership. She used the flying geese metaphor about how geese rotate leadership – when the leader gets tired, the leader drops back and another goose moves up. Discussion was also held about identifying the strengths of all the members of the group so they can be leaders when needed, using those strengths. The group agreed that everyone can be a leader, and share the work load.

Arlen helped the group understand committee structure and responsibilities

1. Roles and responsibilities of the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and members. Much of the focus was to incorporate more subcommittees and members into the actually doing of projects and area assistance. The president cannot do it all. To include the membership in a democratic decision process instead of an autocratic style and how things work better that way. If people are involved in the planning process they are more willing to help achieve the goals agreed upon.

2. He also lead in a process on how to approach the process of forming a West Watooka area farmers market---
 - a. Items that need to be addressed before meeting with authorities
 - b. Develop a plan on where and what the market area will look like (create a visual map to scale)
 - c. Some rules on what and who can participate
 - d. Design of booths or stalls (uniform design for attractiveness)
 - e. Form a subcommittee on how to manage the market (review issues, settle disputes and make decisions).
 - f. Decide what will happen to the garbage generated

In concluding the session, the farmers group agreed to move forward in an organized approach to achieve the formation of a farmers market in the area. The above topics and issues were to be part of the agenda of the next meeting of the group.

On the return to Linden, the group met with the Region 10 Regional Executive Officer Henry Rodney and Region 10 RDC Chairman, Mortimer Mingo. They discussed their long term vision and goals for the region: increased agricultural production and larger scale farming, and more value added products. We shared West Watooka's market idea and Mr. Mingo was very interested and is anxious to see the pending proposal.

April 30: Training Session for Extension Staff, Guyana School of Agriculture Compound

The morning session began out with David providing a summary of the previous training session for the benefit of those who had not attended that session. The participants re-affirmed their desire to develop understanding and skill needed to better work with groups of farmers, rather than individuals.

Sue asked the local Extension staff to provide a summary of this week's meetings with Parika and West Watooka Farmers Groups. Gavin, Extension staff member, covering Parika, ably provided a summary of the processes, issues, and results of the Parika session. Extension Officer, Foyleanna discussed the West Watooka process. It was clear that the two groups and thus the processes were not at the same stage. West Watooka had already formed a farmer's group and was moving toward achieving some goals. By contrast, Parika farmers had just made the commitment to moving forward with a structured Farmer's group. Sue then facilitated a group dialogue assessing the stages of organizational development in the two groups including how they had developed and next stages in their development. She referred back to the April 25 discussion about the team development process of forming, storming, norming and performing. Sue then discussed the importance of building trust in groups, using the Flying Geese metaphor.

Following up on a homework assignment to the group, Arlen used the Swain Personality Styles manual to give examples of the different assets each personality brings to a process and how to better understand individuals with a different profile than your own. The tool can be used both in internal staff relationship building, and in understanding the social dynamics of working with farmer's groups.

The next process involved rotating between three individual training sessions lasting approximately ½ hour each. Arlen presented on practical organizational development issues such as organizing your leadership, committees, officers, and on running effective meetings. Sue provided a group dialogue and information regarding how to develop strong leaders both within the Extension and with farmer's groups including a discussion about Emotional Intelligence, leaders needing both technical and interpersonal skills, the difference between leading and managing, and Extension Officer roles with Farmers Groups. David demonstrated some specific tools used to move organizations forward including: nominal group process, affinity diagrams, force field analysis, and action planning.

The training ended with a debriefing as to whether the participants saw value with the topics and concepts learned and how they could apply these to meet their goal of working more effectively with farmer's groups.

After the session, a faculty member in the fisheries department, Devon Dublin, brought in a group of students to engage in a dialogue with Arlen regarding his practices rearing trout and other fish species on his farm.

Team 3 observations and possible future activities for POA and MOA:

1. The staff and farmers are talented and energetic. Most have the capacity to build the skills needed for moving groups forward. There are already some Extension Staff operating at high levels who could be a resource to others.
2. Although there seems to be ongoing training in community development and building social capacity, it is currently at the level of building awareness and understanding of the tools, topics, and concepts. There needs to be some more in-depth, skill building training incorporated into the longer-term training plan.
3. Extension can create a "learning organization" or culture of learning. Extension staff that tried a practice can share their experiences with their colleagues on successes and failures in working with farmer's groups. Staff also can learn by participating in the organization of their own training sessions, much like we expect that they will involve farmers in deciding the approach to use in individual communities.
4. Since staff turnover is always an issue, training must be repeated at varied intervals so that the skill level remains high. Perhaps a team of 3 to 5 staff could gain high level skills and teach a session once a year utilizing the train the trainer model. Provide in-depth training for a small team of Guyana Extension staff on leadership, group processes, strategic planning and

community development. They would then be a local resource for the entire Extension network. Training could be accomplished via the internet and teleconferencing — Interactive distance learning with a US institution, possibly UW – Extension. There is also the possibility that Extension Officers in Guyana could use Partners Fellows Program to travel to Wisconsin to continue their learning in a Wisconsin community development setting.

5. The Extension system would benefit by gradually moving toward alignment in its organizational practices and culture. While Extension staff members are being asked to empower farmer's groups and become leaders in their respective areas themselves, there seems to also be a fairly structured hierarchical system in place which may inhibit some of the staff's individual growth and the perception that they are left out of the decision making processes.

6. With the Grow More Campaign, building leadership skills throughout the Extension organization both internally and externally will be important. The approach could be three-pronged. First, the MOA could conduct a leadership development program for employees over a one or two year period. Second, for the development of leadership in communities, the MOA could sponsor and develop a one or two year Rural Leadership Development Program for rural leaders. And third, Team 3 recommends a Farmer to Farmer exchange between rural communities to share ideas and provide a learning situation where farmers gain knowledge from colleagues.

May 1: This day was a national holiday, Labor Day. We spent the day reviewing our activities and developing a draft of our Partners of the Americas Farmer to Farmer Report.

May 2: We met with Peggy Carlson, Partners of the Americas, Farmer to Farmer Program and Albert Yeboah, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist of US AID, Washington, DC. Together we met with Peter Hubbard, Mission Director, US AID, Guyana, at the US Embassy. Our one hour conversation was beneficial in better understanding the needs of the country's agriculture community through his perspective. In the afternoon, Team 3 members had their wrap-up session with the Ministry of Agriculture officials to share their work and suggestions. Brian Greenidge, John Woolford and Joseph McAllister shared that they have heard and seen growth in their Extension Officers and they know that information shared by previous teams have been learned and used. Also participating in the discussion were Peggy Carlson, Albert Yeboah, Kelvin Craig and Shaun Francis. It was a positive meeting and it seemed there was support for the next round of grants from US AID for Partners to continue with the development of farmers groups and roles of Extension Officers with those groups.

May 3: The team spent the day getting organized to leave and helping the local Guyanese economy. We also had the opportunity for one more meeting with Peggy Carlson.

May 4: The team spent 22 hours in travel, arriving back in Wisconsin safely.

**Appendix A -Draft Agenda
April 25 and 30, 2008
MOA Staff In Service**

Goals

- To understand some basic processes used for building stronger communities and organizations
- To learn about some specific community development tools and how they might be used to help community groups and organizations work more effectively
- To discuss and apply some of the concepts and how they could work in the local Guyana setting to build and sustain community groups and organizations

Key Questions for the Facilitators

1. What did you learn from the first two teams? What have you applied or what do you have other questions about?
2. What are the ways that you have worked with organizations? What are some of the frameworks that we use to work with organizations in Wisconsin?
3. What are some of the educational processes that have worked and not worked for us and ways we have adapted approaches to help communities.
4. What are some of the specific process tools and applications for building strong communities and organizations
5. How can/could these methods work in Guyana and how can you apply these.

April 25, 2008

Introductions - Sue

- Facilitators and Participants
- Program Overview – Goals, Objectives, Agenda for the two sessions
- What has happened since the last team

Organizational and Community Development Frameworks - Arlen

- Community Development Educator Roles – (Facilitator, Convener, Expert, Process Guide, etc.)
- Building trust based relationships (roles promote fairness, objectivity, credibility, shield individuals and their ideas from personal attacks)
- Leadership Development - building skills as facilitators and in the group members
- Collaboration – partnering with others that can assist
- Organizational Development (Organization structure, operating effectively, etc.)
- Community Based Planning (pre planning, planning processes)
- Conflict (participatory decision making, conflict as an asset or obstacle)
- Strategic Planning with organizations/boards

Building an community or organizational process - David

- Where do you start with an organization or community

- Some fundamental planning basics
- Creating a foundation (building off of a model, trying new approaches, creating a learning organization)
- Some specific tools and their applications

Case examples – Examples of uses of different approaches we have used with group.

Winter Community Development

Sawyer County Development Corporation

Humane Society Board

Working with Tribes in Oklahoma

Working with dissimilar organizations to attain a funding goal in Oklahoma

SLOGO – Teambuilding – Sue Buck

Exercise – Sue, Dave, Arlen

Identify 3 Guyana scenarios to build a process as a team - Three small groups to work together and share with each other.

Reporting out ideas

Personality Styles exercise (Arlen)

Review the Day and Goals for Next Session

April 30, 2008

Review, Questions from April 25

Personality Profiles – Understanding personality styles - Arlen

Characteristics that build trust in communities and organizations - Sue

Breakout into 3 small groups for topics, discussion – Groups will rotate between the sessions.

Organizational Development – Arlen Albrecht

- Organizational Structure
- Tools for effective operation
- Sustaining organizations

Planning for communities and organizations – David Berard

- Creating local ownership in a process
- Building success over time

- Situations, roles, tools,

Leadership – Building Trust Based Relationships – Sue Buck

- Building local leadership capacity
- Defining Leadership; difference between leading and managing
- Needed leadership skills
- Role of Extension staff

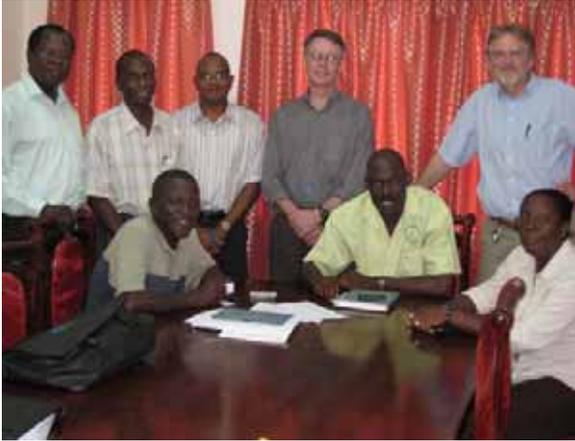
Enhancing Extension Professionals and Organization

(Facilitated Group Work)

- What ideas do you expect to apply?
- What do you need to find out more about?
- How can you share with and learn from each other as you try new approaches?
- What additional follow-up needs to occur? (Locally, with us, or possibly another team)

Program Closing

Photos



MOA Staff and Kelvin Craig, POA



Sue discusses values that build trust in West Watooka



Arlen presents to fisheries students of the agricultural college



A West Watooka group member summarizes the work of team 2



Team 3 with Mortimer Mingo Region 10 RDC Chairman



Sue teaches leadership concepts at the agriculture school Extension staff training

Photos



A West Watooka farmer updates team 3 on the local issues.



Parika farmers discuss organizing a formal group



Dave highlights a variety of facilitation tools.



Arlen shares concepts of working with people of diverse personality styles



Asset mapping in West Watooka



POA Representative Shaun Francis prepares for Extension staff training.