Two Ears Of Corn

Part II

1 The challenge - an evolving response

- Agricultural productivity depends on a multitude of variables: weather, topography, seed quality, insects, plant diseases, the quantity and seasonal distribution of water, and many properties of the soil, including its texture, nutrient levels, water-holding capacity, and pH.

This point is important because without optimal variables agricultural productivity would not flourish- i.e., if seed quality was sufficient, but say the soil in which the seed was planted in was inadequate, lacking proper soil properties to nourish the seed the result harvest would not be as successful or beneficial for those ingesting the harvest because nutrient properties in the soil were lacking in which the seed was grown. This plays a role in maternal health because pregnant women need more than just adequate food sources to grow healthy and full term babies, and in the developing world especially most of the food comes from the grounds that are worked on.

- In order for the farmer to optimize those few conditions over which some influence can be exerted, he must have the right tools, animals, fertilizers, pesticides, capital, and labor resources in the right amounts at precisely the right times. The “right” amounts of these inputs can only be determined through time-consuming research and experimentation, and they constantly vary with changing conditions.

This is an important point because not only does a farmer need to have optimal agricultural variables, he also needs proper practical variables working together in creating a flourishing harvest. In the developing world I assume that farming
traditions must of been passed down through generations as a watch- and see learning style and mentality. Because most farmers in the developing world are illiterate, inaccessible to modern resources, and unaccustomed to change, this creates an inability to be educated on the “right amounts” of variables at the right time, as conditions are continually changing. I’ve often thought to myself, using Africa for example, as a vast land of dirt, sun, and dryness, with the thoughts of what if educated people came through with techniques in creating food sustainability towards that specific environment- could that be a thing. Cultivating specific crop suitable for specific environments. This comes through research and experimentation, but who in the developing world has access to that? Perhaps this is the definition of food security. This would change communities, it often crosses my mind. However, behind the lack of successful harvest in developing areas of the world, agriculture and working the land is not a learned subject taken in school and because of this style of learning- the “right amounts” of inputs found via research and examination are not incorporated in agriculture in the developing world. Because specific conditions need to be attained for farmers to produce a surplus farmers need to educated on these specific conditions which are applicable to the areas in which they live. Maybe this education will come via missionaries holding practical skills, like Derek talked about this week. This is relevant to maternal health because food security is essential in again, growing healthy babies as well as sustaining and raising children on food sources easily accessible in the community.

• By and large, these farmers are illiterate, inaccessible, powerless, unorganized, suspicious of outsiders, unaccustomed to change, unable to take risks, and convinced by lifelong experience that their situation is not likely to improve.

This is a worldview issue, a perspective that are really and truly holding farmers in the developing world back in a sense. It is preventing them from learning new techniques which could possibly solve some of the issues occurring in lack of
harvest. I believe that is important for missionaries with a heart for food security and permaculture to be integrated long term in developing world situations where they can work alongside farmers within the communities, not come as a threat to their way of life. The more I learn about this subject the more I wonder if world hunger and starvation could actually and truly be solved with missionaries holding skills to teach via relationship in areas of the world where these issues are occurring, only then could their situations be improved. However it would have to be approached in a most genuine and sincere way, if farmers in the developing world are suspicious of outsiders, unable to take risks, and feeling powerless, it would do them no good at all for a white man or women to pull up on the scene with all these ideas in fixing the problem- the long term effects would not be as successful as if the missionary came alongside and worked together with developing world farmers, teaching one another, and doing life with one another. This effects maternal health because it creates dignity in the men and women who are working the land, as well as teaching the men how important nutrition is for their wives carrying growing babies.

- Program leaders, whether agronomists or others, eventually begin to suspect that they have been trying to teach too much. By teaching everything about agriculture, they have failed to explain any one practice enough to convince the farmers of its value or make sure the farmers can apply it successfully.

This is important because in order to make an impact within developing world farming communities it is essential to take baby steps while introducing new ideas, concepts and ways of doing things. This is because for so long they have been doing things their way, and the way their ancestors have shown it to them. It is integrated heavily into their identity also as people, so when working alongside a community it is important not to offend people groups by coming in and saying they’ve been doing things wrong, but mainly to focus on basic and enriching solutions one at a time, rather than all at once. This is important to
maternal health because traditions are passed from generation to generation in order to insight change we need to help them understand the generational benefits and make it scalable if its easy to integrate its easy to adapt.

- Program leaders soon realize that demonstrations are more convincing and experiments more relevant if they are conducted by farmers in their own fields rather than by agronomists on a program plot. Furthermore, showing their successes to others stimulates the innovators’ own sense of dignity, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for further improvement.

It is important to be aware of the most beneficial styles of teaching and ways of reaching the community especially when understanding that most of the general population is illiterate. A more personal approach to demonstrations and experiments on fields are more relevant and dignified as opposed to teaching via reading and writing or on programmed plots. This is important to maternal health because it creates a successful and dignified impact within the community as whole.

2 The program goals

- The goal of an agricultural program should be, on the one hand, to train and motivate the farmers to teach each other the innovations introduced and, on the other, to teach them how to improve on those innovations by themselves.

This is important because there needs to be visible and relevant goals for people to work towards in establishing a better community for themselves. Farmers helping farmers by sharing with one another new skill and innovations. This is relevant to maternal health because midwives are ‘with women’ and have been for ages, midwifery is timeless, being passed down through generations
and as time passes sharing new technique, innovations, and skills has benefited the art of midwifery as well as healthier outcomes for mothers and babies.

- In short, the goal should not be to develop the people’s agriculture, but to teach them a process by in which they can develop their own agriculture. This is important because developed world farmers and influential teachers should not go into situations in the developing world with the mind set of developing a “new” and “improved” way of doing things- that has a negative connotation by stripping them of their dignity, and the way they have always done things. Rather the goal should be to create vision and attainable goals in achieving healthier crops and soil grounds for the greater good of the village. This is important to maternal health because as new ways of agriculture are introduced to developing countries, harvests will improve and food sources will set the stage for a secure and healthier society benefiting mothers and babies nutritional needs as well as creating work and a sense of purpose.

- Most small development programs have much broader goals than simply increasing agricultural incomes. They recognize that, “It is fullness of life which makes one happy, not fullness of purse.” These broader goals are variously referred to as improving the quality of life, liberating the human spirit, achieving more fulfilling lives, or developing the total human being. This is important in achieving not only a more improved agricultural sustainability but to aim for a higher quality of life for people creating solid communities, where liberality in spirit, heart, soul and body are fulfilled. This is important in maternal health because as creation never ceases to come to an end, and babies are being conceived and born everyday there needs to be communities in which to welcome them. Societies, villages, and communities where people are happy and whole, where children can be raised with a sense of security and hope for the future.
• Although increased incomes through agricultural may be necessary for people to be able to feed, clothe, house, and educate themselves adequately, higher income does not guarantee that people will do these things.

This is in fact true, just because increased income may be a result of agricultural success it does not mean that the finances produced will be used by the people to feed, clothe, house and educate themselves. This is something that needs to be taught and integrated amongst village communities. This is important in maternal health because as agricultural success creates opportunities for mothers to have better living conditions in which to raise children in, it also creates opportunities to get proper education on prenatal heath and to attain proper care during pregnancy, labour, and postpartum.

• Many programs working in agriculture also hold as a goal the enrichment of people’s spiritual lives. Although many Westerners feel somewhat squeamish about the mixing of economic and social goals with ethical and religious ones, most third world peoples do not share this uneasiness at all.

It is read that in many cultures people feel very deeply that the material and spiritual sides of life are vitally intertwined, and that man achieves happiness or fulfillment only through a balanced dedication to both. I also believe this and I think it is important in maternal health because birth is such a spiritual time for a women where she is co-creating with God in manifesting new life to this world. It can’t get more spiritual and materially intertwined than that and so I think that in order for a life to be fully enriched, the goal in successfully releasing agricultural sustainability should also inspire a release for enriched spiritual lives as well.
3 Paternalism, enthusiasm, and participation

- The rusting hulks of well-intentioned but long-forgotten give-aways are scattered all over the Third World. Villagers themselves generally recognize the uselessness of giving things away. Folk sayings in dozens of countries admit that people don’t take care of things they never had to work for.

This is an important reality not only in developing countries but also here in the western world because when things are freely given as a hand out people in turn do not appreciate or take it as value to them because it was not worked for to be obtained. There is a beauty that comes with working hard, or waiting patiently for something to be attained, integrity is created as the process of “getting something” is waited out. This relates to maternal health because as a mother patiently anticipates the arrival of the new life within her, she is taking steps towards a healthy outcome. The mother has to be conscientious of what she nourishes her body with, what environment she spends time in, who she allows around her to pour into her spiritually as well as emotionally- these are working towards an end result of a healthy baby and mama.

- When the only progress villagers see is accompanied by give-aways, villagers can easily become convinced that they are incapable of making progress by themselves. That creates a mind frame of being incapable of doing anything without more outside “help.” This feeling of inadequacy, in turn, creates dependency and subservience, robbing people of their self-respect.

If things are always given to villagers of course it is going to eventually create strongholds which lies such as feeling incapable of doing anything for themselves are believed. The result of this is a chaotic situation where the mentalities of village people are distorted and an inferiority towards those who
are there to “help” is created. This type of “hand out” help does in turn do way more harm than good for all people across the globe. This relates to maternal health because if this is the environment a woman is familiar with being in she will never feel as though she has the strength or courage to birth her baby for herself and a sense of hopelessness and fear surrounds birth.

- Give-aways can also blind people to the need of solving their own problems. Give-aways create a mentality that other people can solve the problem, it takes responsibility and accountability away and strips people of their ability to do things for themselves. When this happens a lazy, and self-reliant society is created which is detrimental. As a woman is surrounded by these mentalities in this kind of environment she is not empowered and it will be more difficult for her to birth and raise her child with positive support.

- Give-aways destroy the possibility of there ever being a multiplier effect. If the people’s adoption of some innovation depends on a gift, or people become convinced that it does, local farmers will not try to teach it to their neighbors. With time I believe that this “give-away” mentality creates an entitlement within people that inhibits their motivation todo anything, but instead makes them feel entitled to things without ever having to work for them. This is a dangerous mentality for villagers to develop because of the state their economy and societies are in already. If they do not have the motivation to do things for themselves but are waiting for a “hand-out” from developed sources then, they will never progress.

- Instilling enthusiasm is the only plausible way of avoiding paternalism. It is, therefore, the basic dynamic of any true self-help program-the driving force that is indispensable to all true human development.
The opposite of paternalism is participation and enthusiasm and through villagers participating in their overall communities success, self-confidence, pride, and satisfaction of having made a change is created. This is important in maternal health because it is by enthusiasm that felt needs are met, enthusiasm for a mother to seek prenatal health during her pregnancy in order for her to acquire care and have a healthy outcome, which in turn will follow again the next time she is pregnant.

4 The program area

- For programs with goals of social justice, equality, or empowerment, it is obvious that to achieve these goals, they must work directly with the poorest.

Working directly with the poorest will give them a sense of purpose and increase enthusiasm for pushing towards a better future. It is assisting and working alongside the poor- not giving them a “hand-out” but empowering and motivating them to learn so that they can create a hopeful reality for change to come. This is important for maternal health because mothers living in poverty hope nothing more than the opportunity for her child to get an education, and to get out of poverty.

- Experience indicates that small farmers can be encouraged more often than larger ones to voluntarily teach new innovations to their neighbors, there by doubling or tripling a program’s impact at a minimum of expense.

It is interesting for me to read this, I believe that small farmers have a higher motivation and are enthusiastic about learning and teaching new innovations to others because they are the ones who work the land for the result of eating its harvest- it becomes a more personal and heart invested work than those of larger farmers. It becomes a passion driven vocation, as opposed to just a job for them.
• Programs that teach genuinely appropriate technologies in an appropriate manner seldom have difficulty finding innovators.

This is an important point because any innovations taught to the poor need to be appropriate for that group of people. Is what is being taught applicable to their environment- is the method of teaching getting across- is it stirring enthusiasm and aiming for self-reliance and a way out of poverty.

• A whole series of attitudes will also help accelerate agricultural improvement; among these would be honesty, reliability, trust in the goodwill of others (especially of those running the program), faith in development and its long-term possibilities, inquisitiveness, a feeling of neither inferiority nor superiority to outsiders, and the willingness to work hard when necessary.

I believe that these attitudes are so important in the relationship between all people, the leaders who are bringing new innovations into the developing world, as well as those who are investing time in learning and gaining essential skill to bring to their village with aims of creating a better quality of life- which also benefits the children of the next generation and the women who are birthing and raising these children. When attitudes are kept positive and accountability is entrusted between teachers and students- faith in development and its success can be more easily met which in turn creates more enthusiasm in attaining more innovation to meet other felt needs.

• An extremely important way for outsider personnel to learn about the program area is to live among the villagers.

This is very important because the closer program leaders come to living as the villagers do the better the outcome will be. When there is a set focus, and mentalities and familiarities are left at the door, the missionary can make a greater impact by meeting them at their reality of life. When relationship is established it is easier to trust, and work together in meeting the set goal. This is also applicable to maternal health because when a midwife is caring for a woman during her prenatal period it will be easier for her to let go, surrender,
and trust the process of birth when she has a familiar support system by her side, who she knows loves her and has her best in mind- fear is eliminated.

5 Planning

- The urgency and complexity of poor people’s problems overwhelm us. We yearn to attack all their problems at once, and at full throttle. But the villagers will only be able and willing to work on a few problems at a time, and at their own pace. Thus, precisely because the need is so great and the resources so limited, we must decide which problems are of highest priority and attack them with maximum efficiency. To do so, we will have to back up our good intentions with sound program planning.

This is such a good reminder and I think it is of utmost importance when in the process of expediting on towards a missionary trip. Planning needs to be in place, or without a plan you have planned to fail. I think that because the need is so great in so many areas around the world, people in the developed world with good heart intentions feel the need to pack up, go over, and make all things better for these people. But in turn, this to me implies a sense of inferiority and that has little to no affect at all unless you are well aware of the need, and the root cause of that need in that environment. It is not about going into the developing world tackling all their problems at once, this would become bitterly overwhelming and exhausting and is a good set up for burn-out, but instead, realizing the most critical needs and making attainable goals of assisting, supporting and empowering village communities in solving them for themselves. Also, I believe in long term planned missions because things do not come quickly, and anything worth having takes time- in seeing success for village communities it will take time and effort, and I think that aspiring missionaries need to be aware of this as well as their motivation behind their desires to go- is it for self fulfillment, or is it for truly meeting the needs of others. Is my hearts intent to serve women as a midwife for the fulfillment of my own life, or is because I know millions of women are dying each year during
labor to problems that could be easily solved with a skilled caregiver? These are things I consider often.

- In the early stages of a program, the villagers’ ability to participate constructively in planning may be limited. As villagers gain experience in the program, they become increasingly able to participate in planning. By the third or fourth year, they should be able to plan completely by themselves.

This is important because as villagers actively participate in their own communities planning it gives them a sense of dignity and enthusiasm in making the plans come to pass. It may have to start with the program leaders showing villagers how to plan, it may have never been taught to them, so once concepts are learned they can do these things for themselves. This helps create a dignified sense of being. In relating to maternal health- as a woman knows her choices and options, she is able to take responsibility for herself which in turn creates dignity and empowerment to make similar choices and options in motherhood.

- Villager participation will help combat suspicions about the program and help villagers appreciate the complexity of a development program’s job.

Village participation creates community and a sense of togetherness, there is not a power struggle, but a sharing of thoughts and ideas which also establishes trust and a feeling brotherhood. Fear is dismissed in the face of transparency. This applies in maternal health because when a mother and her caregiver is on the same page, where thoughts and ideas are open to be processed and talked about there is no need for suspicions therefore eliminating the fears and worries that come with the birthing process.

- If a program’s plans are poured in concrete before the people are able to become involved, no room will be left for their participation.

In turn enthusiasm will be lost, suspicions may arise, and a feeling of inferiority is created. This is not helpful at all for village communities. An integration of
both parties need to be in affect for real goals to be made and attained within the community.

- Constant monitoring of a program’s activities and it’s impact is essential for all agricultural programs. At any moment, an agricultural experiment that runs into trouble, a minor misunderstanding, or a rumor started by middle landowners who see the program as a threat may damage the villagers’ confidence in the program.

Constant monitoring is so important and essential for agricultural programs because accountability is in place which leads to higher levels for success and less misconduct and corruption within the program.

6 Start slowly, start small

“The journey of a thousand miles must begin first with one step.”

- Folk saying

- It takes time to come to know an area, to get a good feel for all the cultural, social, economic, and agronomic conditions that affect agricultural improvement.

This is important because it takes time for program leaders to get a feel for specific needs and interventions for village communities. It also takes time to establish good relationships with villagers, and only from that point can program leaders be effective. Infant and maternal mortality rates may seem overwhelmingly high, but it consists of intervening in on one birth at a time with continuity of care in place to see these rates change. Little by little, one step at a time.

- During a program’s first year or two, time must be allowed for very close supervision of the villagers’ experimental plots.
Supervision is important and necessary during the first year or two because the villagers have no experience, and no means to know what expect. With supervision in play, it is easier to detect what is not normal, or what is not working and when it is caught early, improvement can be made. This relates to maternal health care because throughout pregnancy when a woman is seeing her midwife, a midwife gets to know the normal for the mama she is caring for. When complications or something arises that is not normal, the midwife will be more able to detect it and find a solution before it has gone too far.

- A cardinal rule for all programs should be to promise something only when the program has absolute certainty it can keep its promise. In an environment in which neither transportation, communication, supplies, nor the promises of other organizations can be relied upon, it is best to promise as little as possible.

This is important because it is not good to ever make promises that one cannot keep- if promises are made that get broken trust is immediately lost and goals for improvement within the village communities is ultimately destroyed. This makes it extremely difficult for the present program to succeed or the next one that comes along to even stand a chance because trust has been broken.

- To ensure early success we need time - time to overcome unexpected obstacles, time to make sure that the technology to be used is as appropriate as possible, and above all, time to choose and develop good leaders.

This is important because time allows the development of what works best and what does not, it allows crop to bring forth harvest, it creates relationship with program leaders and village people- time is what determines the success of goals aimed for in agriculture as well as in birth.

- Being more flexible, small programs can change in response to villagers’ feedback, thereby making villagers feel that their participation is valuable and motivating them to participate more.
This is important because when villagers feel as though they are being heard, they will participate more in the building up of their communities and feel empowered when felt that they are valuable. In turn this will bring revival to not only their agricultural situation but will aspire to achieve more for their generation and for generations to come.

Part III:

1. Five key points to ensure enthusiasm

- The freedom to set their own goals when they desire.

Traditional birth attendants have been working alongside their own people for generations and understand the needs of the women in their environment. It is the indigenous and traditional birth attendants and healers that community developers need to go work alongside in setting goals and planning programs for future success in village communities when it comes to midwifery and infant and maternal health and mortality.

- The freedom to be creative in their work.

In village communities traditional birth attendants and healers have a freedom in the methods they use when treating different needs in their communities, usually these needs are met through different herbs, and means found in nature. Just because Westerners are used to one way of doing things- ie. medically focused for example, doesn’t mean that it needs to be the only way of doing things. Creativity brings a refreshing and personal way of approaching vocation and that is what brings life to most village midwives- the creative ways they use in caring for the pregnant women in the community.

- The opportunity to work together in an atmosphere of mutual support and companionship.
In order to meet needs and fulfill set goals a team needs to be on the same page- inspiring, affirming and focusing on one another’s strengths rather than weaknesses. When stress is met, the support that comes from an empowering team overrules the bumps in the road and thus creates a firm foundation on which things can get done.

- The opportunity to continue learning about new subjects of interest, especially solutions to other felt needs.

In order for enthusiasm to hold it’s place in the vocation of midwifery I think it is essential for midwives to always be learning about new subjects and be taken down different avenues of skill to benefit the art. Learning new things is humbling for a midwife because it adds to knowledge and will always in turn lead to improved outcomes.

- The recognition, gratitude, and positive feedback of fellow villagers, program leaders, and other program workers.

Those in authority should make genuine effort to affirm and lift up their team as a whole as well as each individuals strengths and talents. This stirs up enthusiasm in people and impacts the way they view one another, as well as how they care for mamas and baby’s.

2.

“Early recognizable success is a crucial ingredient in making participation constructive.”

I think that I would place the focus on meeting issues that are visibly apparent first, such as teaching indigenous midwives the importance of clamping and cutting the cord with sterile instruments rather than dirty ones, sterilization of tools and why- teaching on bacteria and infections, the dangers of fundal pressure during labor, and hands on techniques such as measuring fundal height and determining positioning of baby. Teaching on things like family
planning, menstrual cycles, and nutrition may take a longer time to see the benefits.

3.

I think that the only way to approach birth and maternal and infant health in the developing world is small and slow- that is the only real way beneficial changes can be made and last. In indigenous societies birth is heavily rooted in tradition and religious beliefs and in approaching the beliefs that are doing more harm than good will of course take some time because it is a system that has been passed down for years. Creating relationships with traditional birth attendants and introducing small impactful changes will plant seeds for future success.