



ECHO[®] Asia Network News

Edited by Abram Bicksler & Rebecca Garofano

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Welcome Letter from Abram Bicksler

Dear ECHO Friends,

The ECHO Asia Impact Center is pleased to put out our first installment of ECHO Asia News since Rick and Ellen Burnette moved back to the USA. We are glad that you are receiving this and other ECHO Asia publications, and we expect to learn much with you and from you as we work together.

I owe much to my predecessors, Rick and Ellen Burnette, who were the first Director and Office Manager, respectively, of the ECHO Asia Impact Center and guided ECHO Asia during its first four years of existence. Rick and Ellen have left a phenomenal legacy at the Center, and we are pleased to continue in their rich tradition of service to empower those working with the poor and hungry of Asia.

It is our hope that through our resources, you will be encouraged, inspired, supported, and equipped with practical ideas to better support the poor and hungry of Asia to build sustainable livelihoods.

As we learn with you and from you through our resources, events, network, and personal visits, I would encourage you to share stories of your successes and failures with us. Part of the beauty of an ECHO Regional Impact Center is the ability to access real-time information and receive feedback from farmers, organizations, and practitioners such as yourselves. We need your help and feedback to remain relevant and practical and to share our "lessons learned" here in Asia and with the larger ECHO world.

I am thankful to have met many of you over the past several years, and look forward to getting to know many more of you this year. I hope that you will find ECHO and its resources helpful for your work in Asia.

Kind regards,

Abram J. Bicksler, Ph.D.
Director, ECHO Asia Impact Center

Asia Network News

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(Left) Photo of Rick and Abram together at Rick's last seed bank meeting in May 2013. (Right) Photo of some ECHO Asia Seed Bank staff, along with visiting ECHO Florida interns, following the 2013 ECHO Asia Conference in October 2013.

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This Newsletter is For You!

Send announcements and your stories to echoasia@echonet.org for inclusion in our next newsletter.

ECHO Asia Seed Bank

A resource available to ECHO Asia network members for regionally appropriate seeds.

[The 2013 Seed Catalog](#)

[FREE Sample Packets](#)

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2013 ECHO Asia Conference Update

The ECHO Asia 2013 Agriculture and Community Development Conference just happened one month ago in Chiang Mai, Thailand! We were delighted to host an assemblage of 94 delegates from 10 countries working in many different roles and facets of sustainable development in Asia.

Over the three main days of the conference, each morning began in worship and a time of devotion led by 1 of 3 local Christian leaders tackling the theme of “wrestling with legitimacy.” The nine plenary sessions in the morning ranged from “Getting started- lessons learned,” to rice breeding, to climate changed-adaptable agriculture, to appropriate construction technologies, and more!

When participants were not checking out the resource fair, afternoons covered a broad-range of topics held as concurrent workshops, whereby participants could attend 1 workshop over two sessions each afternoon. Appropriate technologies, leadership, aquaponics, meet the speaker, drip irrigation, Creation care, focus groups, natural farming, livestock, and vegetable grafting were just some of the 36 workshops offered.

The last day of the conference allowed delegates to attend one of 8 post conference tours. 7 of the tours were day trips around Chiang Mai to see practical aspects of development in action, and 1 tour was an overnight tour to UHDP, where the ECHO Asia Seed Bank is located. In addition to 4 filled days of sessions, workshops, the resource fair, and tours, much networking of delegates happened. Friendships and partnerships were formed; lessons learned were exchanged; and encouragement and words of wisdom were shared.

We are grateful to God and delighted that the conference was such a success, as evidenced by many words of appreciation by the delegates. If you were not able to attend, look for another conference to be held in Chiang Mai in 2015, as well as regional workshops to be held around SE Asia. You can stay informed by [checking our link for upcoming workshops and meetings](#).



Photos from the 2013 ECHO Asia Agriculture & Community Development Conference

ECHO Asia's Small Farm Resource Center Research

Since January of this year, ECHO Asia Impact Center staff, with major involvement from Dr. Ricky Bates (Penn State University), has been carrying out research for a case study entitled, “The Small Farm Resource Center’s Current and Future Roles in Extension and Advisory Services in Southeast Asia.” Administered by MEAS (Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services) through the University of Illinois with major support from USAID, the study aims to document, evaluate, and empower existing small farm resource centers as a useful research-extension tool in South and Southeast Asia operating outside the formal government/academic extension model.

Defined by ECHO’s first Director, Dr. Martin Price, a small farm resource center (SFRC) is a research-extension tool that coordinates trials at a central site, as well on the fields of individual farmers, with the purpose of evaluating, within the community, ideas that have been proven elsewhere. The SFRC concept is that any new ideas, techniques, crops, or



Photos from Huai Wai village during the UHDP SFRC study.

new varieties of a local crop may first be evaluated at the SFRC and promising ideas extended to local farmers with little risk. This adaptive research is often done directly by non-governmental agencies (e.g. development projects, missions organizations and other small institutions) and local farmers for possible extension to farm communities.

Related to this study, the overall objective for MEAS is to “define and disseminate good practice strategies and approaches to establishing efficient, effective and financially sustainable rural extension and advisory service systems in selected countries.” With the support of MEAS, ECHO Asia staff and Dr. Bates have visited seven SFRCs across Southeast Asia (Thailand, Myanmar, Indochina, Cambodia and the Philippines) and interviewed their community-based beneficiaries to attempt to determine whether the model remains viable for extending information and technologies to farmers. All seven centers were visited, and case studies have been submitted to MEAS for review before being disseminated through their channels. Additionally, Drs. Bates and Bicksler presented their findings to the delegates at the 2013 ECHO Asia Agriculture and Community Development Conference held in Chiang Mai October 1-4, 2013. [You can access their findings here.](#) Overwhelmingly, the analysis of lessons learned pointed to the fact that indeed the SFRCs are still relevant and needed in helping to extend agricultural knowledge and practices to poor, rural populations, especially among the underserved and marginalized. Watch for the seven case studies and the overarching “Lessons Learned” analysis to appear on ECHOcommunity.org as well as the MEAS site.

Join the Lights Video

ECHO Asia had the privilege of hosting [Join the Lights](#), a creative media not-for-profit organization that seeks to discover, empower, and share stories of compassion throughout the world. While Davis, Tim, and Kevin were with us for 1.5 weeks, we shared about ECHO Asia’s vision, created a story that represents a facet of what we do, shot that story in video format, collected recordings, and got to know these amazing men sacrificing 12 months of their time to travel to 12 places around the world to create 12 short promotional videos free-of-charge for organizations. [The video is now finished and you can check it out, here.](#)

Comings and Goings

Rick and Ellen- Rick and Ellen Burnette officially left for the USA on June 9, 2013, and have taken up life in N. Ft. Myers, Florida. Rick has become the Director of Agriculture at ECHO’s headquarters and Ellen is staying busy getting their new house ready and helping their two children adjust to life back in the US. Rick and Ellen leave a tremendous legacy in Asia, after having founded the Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP) in Mae Ai, and have served as the founders of the ECHO Asia Impact Center in Chiang Mai. They will be missed, but know that we are here to serve you and to build upon their solid foundation.



Dan Young- Dan has been a long-term volunteer up at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank for over a year. Originally from England, Dan found out about ECHO through UHDP (where our Seed Bank is located), and has cheerfully been serving by helping with the seed bank production processes. Dan will be moving on from the Seed Bank, as he has begun a 3-year TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) undergraduate degree program in Bangkok, but will reside in Fang part-time. We will miss Dan’s contagious smile and pleasant demeanor around the seed bank, but we are happy for what this new chapter brings in his life.



Brock Mashburn- We are happy to welcome Brock Mashburn to the ECHO Asia Impact Center. Brock was the Tropical Monsoon intern at ECHO Florida, and he comes to ECHO after having earned his B.S. in Agriculture at Truman State University (Missouri). Brock grew up as a missionary kid in Senegal, where he enjoyed playing soccer, going to the beach, and eating Senegalese food. He will spend his six months with us at the ECHO Asia Seed Bank helping with seed production and working on an experiment to determine best locally produced potting soil mixes for our seed bank and farmers alike. Some of the materials Brock plans to study include compost, manure, rice hull, soil, biochar, and char. Stay tuned for his results in upcoming correspondence!

Paw Danmalidoi- In addition to Brock Mashburn, we are pleased to welcome Paw to the ECHO Asia Seed Bank team as our new Information and Quality Control Technician. The work of the seed bank is increasingly becoming tied to a new suite of information technology and inventory systems, and demanding greater quality control over our production, storage, and distribution system. Paw will help us to meet these challenges by drawing upon her experience in business and data management.



Good Development Ideas

In the last ECHO Asia News, we solicited for Good Development Ideas for people to share at the conference. We requested that people share brief slide presentations, hands-on demonstrations, or video clips of proven agriculture and community development ideas, technologies and/or approaches that they have developed, adopted and/or promoted. Each person was given ~5 minutes to convince the judges and the audience the merit of their idea. The criteria were that these ideas be:

- Original and/or unique.
- Have been proven to be useful, successful and/or adoptable to some degree by smallholder farmers.
- Likely to be appropriate (replicable or adoptable) elsewhere under similar circumstances without an extraordinary amount of skill, effort or funding.

Judging was completed by both a distinguished pane of judges (Rick Burnette, Director of Agriculture, ECHO; Beth Doerr, Intern Coordinator and AT Consultant, ECHO; and Dr. Doug Fraiser, Community Development Consultant, SIL) and the audience (using iClicker response devices). The competition was stiff and the following ideas were entered:



- Self-flushing downspout made out of galvanized metal to trap solids and contaminants from rainwater used for drinking- presented by Geoffrey Wheeler
- Easy measure buckets made from PVC bent and flattened; used especially for mixing cement and other building materials- presented by Geoffrey Wheeler
- Black Soldier Fly rearing contraptions for home gardeners and farmers to rear BSF as a source of compost, companion to worms, and protein- presented by Marvin
- Automatic aquaponic fish feeder using a plastic bottle and piece of PVC that is oper-

- ated whenever the pump is turned on- presented by Yayasan Abdi Satya
- Ceramic nipples attached to a water bottle for use as a drip irrigation system- presented by Yayasan Abdi Satya
- A suite of PDFs from the web for development practitioners- presented by Craig Soderberg
- Off-grid lighting systems that are sturdy, lightweight, and cheap- presented by Andrew Hay
- A “protoponics” aquaponic design kit for those interested in aquaponics to learn about various techniques before building a full-size system- presented by Keith Mikkelson
- The NGO called Abundant Water, creating locally made clay pot water filters in Laos- presented by Gordon Hirst

After the presentations were made, the audience was able to vote for their favorites using the iClicker devices and the judges conferred to agree or disagree with the audience. The winners were announced during the final session of the conference on Thursday evening and were:

- Fourth place (winning a Sustainable Agriculture in the Tropics Book and t-shirt): Marvin Hoffman; BSF rearing
- Third place (winning an Edible Leaves of the Tropics Book and ECHO Asia t-shirt): Geoffrey Wheeler; Self-flushing downspout
- Tied for First place (winning a Fruits of Warm Climates Book and ECHO Asia t-shirt): Yayasan Abdi Satya; Ceramic nipples attached to a water bottle for use as a drip irrigation system
- Tied for First place (winning a Natural Farming Book and ECHO Asia t-shirt): Andrew Hay; Off grid lighting systems

Congratulations to our four winners, and thanks to everyone who participated! Look for more in-depth information about these good development ideas on our website and to be featured in future editions of ECHO Asia News.

Seed Bank Partner Evaluations

We have a need for partners to evaluate our seeds in different locations throughout Asia! We are looking for dedicated observers to receive seeds of merit from our seed bank (already released as well as potential additions) and provide detailed information about your growing conditions, planting times, growth of the plants, etc. so that we can compile this data and make it available to others to help them determine which seeds are best for a particular area and set of climactic conditions. To take a look at what the evaluation entails, [please see our online form](#), and e-mail us at echoasia@echonet.org to be involved with this project. We thank you in advance for the help that this information will provide to all of our network members!

Cono Weeders for SRI Weeding

ECHO Asia Impact Center is selling 5 cono-weeders that we had made locally in Chiang Mai. We first ran across these in NE India, where they were being used by local farmers to weed their SRI rice fields more efficiently and with less hand-weeding. Recent research suggests that the usage of a weeder that disrupts weed roots while aerating the soil is part of the suite of best practices that SRI depends upon to increase rice yields. The first model was modified to improve its performance, and we are now selling 5 copies of the refined model that has been put to use in the field. The weeder works best when there is between 1 and 2 cm of standing water in the field. [For a video of the weeder in action, click this link](#). The base price of the weeder is 3,000 THB plus shipping. Email echoasia@echonet.org for more information or if you are interested in purchasing one.



Upcoming: Seed Banking Workshop January 21-23rd, 2014 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



Appropriate seed saving techniques and solutions for small scale agriculture and community development organizations.

Program and Topics: The workshop will include plenary sessions offered by professional development workers, researchers, and business persons related to the following topics:

- The importance of seed saving,
- Community seed selection and improvement of local varieties,
- How to conduct a community seed swap (workshop participants will also participate in a seed swap with one another during the event),
- Seedbanking Practicum I: Planning, Production, Harvesting, Cleaning, and Drying, and
- Seedbanking Practicum II: Storing, Inventory, Testing, Village Level Techniques.

Site Visits: Attendees will participate in two field trips during the workshop:

- An afternoon visit to Mae Tha organic farming community to learn about their local seed selection and saving methods, and
- An overnight trip to ECHO's seed bank to learn about the operation of a small-scale seedbank, and about ECHO's ongoing research geared towards community-level seed saving.

Fees: The cost of the training is 2,900 Thai Baht. Registration costs will cover transportation to and from site visits, lunch and dinner on the 21st, lunch and dinner on the 22nd, and both breakfast and lunch on the 23rd, as well as snacks and coffee breaks during the workshop days. While this fee does include one night stay at the ECHO Seed Bank in the Fang/Mae Ai area of Thailand, it does *not* cover the cost of lodging for the first night, January 21st. ECHO Asia staff is happy to assist you in finding a relatively affordable place to stay during that first evening. Payment can be made either via Paypal or interbank transfer.

Registration: To register, [please go to this link to fill out a form.](#)

To receive more information about the workshop, please visit ECHOcommunity.org or contact echoasia@echonet.org.



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