Global Farmer Experience

Items Needed:

- One copy of the Global Farmer Experience Handout per table
- 16 mini-poker chips per table (green chips are available on amazon for $6.99 per 100)
- Projector, Laptop containing the Global Farmer Experience PowerPoint, Screen, and Microphone
- Copy of program descriptions from the Growing Hope Globally website that your Growing Project is going to support this year
- Copy of the script for each presenter

Setup:

Each table should have 6-8 chairs. As guests arrive ask them to fill in tables in order, this way there will be some mixing, and there should be just one table with less than a full group. Check to make sure that the sound system and projector are working and open the Global Farmer Experience powerpoint.

After the meal each table should receive one copy of the Global Farmer Experience handout and 16 mini poker chips.

Global Farmer Experience (Slide 1) PowerPoint should be open

Event Script :

Introduction:

Host: Hello everyone and welcome. Tonight we are raising support for Growing Hope Globally, an organization that responds to hunger around the world by providing farmers in rural and remote places with the tools and training that they need to be successful in growing their own food. Later this evening we will talk about the who, the where, and the why of Growing Hope's programs, but we wanted to start by challenging you to put yourselves into the shoes of the farmers in the programs we support. This exercise will help you to better understand the challenges and trade-offs that many farm families in developing countries face each year as they grow and harvest their crops.

We hope you'll see the value of the approach to development we promote, and understand why farmers in developing countries appreciate and value the programs we support so much.

Let's go ahead and get started!

Advance to Slide 2

Reader 1: Welcome to the Rio Fulano. We're going to be traveling for a little bit. You'll see that communities live on one side of the river with their livestock and farm on the other. It makes it easier to keep the cows and pigs out of the fields. A lot of life is centered around the river. It is also a means of transportation for selling crops and reaching markets.

Advance to Slide 3

Reader 2: The communities on the riverbanks are all indigenous communities. They can trace their lineage back to before European settlers arrived. Only a few of them grew up here though. There was a conflict in the late 70's and 80's that forced most of them to flee to refugee camps North of here. Most of them spent 15 to 20 years there, waiting for peace. During that time a lot of the traditional practices were lost. Now they have the challenge of rebuilding their lives and returning to farming.

Advance to Slide 4

Reader 1: As you can see, homes follow a simple design and are built high on the banks of the river. That way when hurricanes or floods come and the river overflows the banks, the homes remain above the water. Sometimes the water rises so suddenly that there isn't time to save livestock or quickly harvest crops.

Advance to Slide 5

Reader 2: Well, here we are at your farm. Good luck.

Facilitator : Hello, I'm (Ismael or Veronica). I've been waiting to talk with you. I've got good news! There is a local nonprofit that has offered to help you with your farming. They've asked for your opinions on several things and we need you to help us decide what is going to be best for your community. They thought you would probably know your own needs best, so it is your job to let us know what will work best for you and your family, so we can report back to them. Make sure you're thinking of your entire family because the decisions you make will affect all of you.

Obviously you already know all of this, but maybe it's worth mentioning anyways. In front of you is your beautiful field **(Hold Up A Handout)**. You grow mainly corn and beans here. No matter how hard you work you seem to always end up with only nine months worth of food. See. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, and 9 **(point at squares)**. Go ahead and put a chip on each of those nine squares to represent the nine months of crops.

With the right choices you have the potential to grow more, maybe even enough to sell and trade with other people. Of course you can make the wrong choices too. Some choices might lead to less food for yourself and your family. There are already three months out of the year where you have to migrate for work, it means your daughters miss school and it means that your farm isn't being cared for. If you end up with less than 6 months worth of food, you'll face a crop failure and you'll need to migrate even further away, there's a chance you might even have to leave the farm forever.

So let's get started. Choose wisely and consult your whole family as you think through the different options.

Advance to Slide 6

CHOICE 1

As I mentioned, you have a limited amount of land here. In recent years you've been able to grow just enough to last for nine months. Currently it is all planted in corn and beans. Crops that you've grown for the last decade with pretty mixed success. Some years have been ok, sometimes you've even managed to grow 10 months worth of food, but there have been a lot of challenging years too. A couple of hurricanes, flooding, and even a plague of rats, and the last few years drought. The local nonprofit wants to know, which of the following options would be most interesting to you? Talk it through and make sure you're all in agreement. We'll take about five minutes for each of these decisions.

Choice A) We could ask them to help us improve our corn and bean crops. There are some opportunities for improved yields, but it might be limited.

Choice B) We could ask them to help us grow some new crops. They said they know of some kind of crop that supposedly has a good market in Europe. It is a type of berry that has all kinds of health benefits. It could really generate a good income.

Choice C) Finally, there are some other crops that farmers are growing nearby, but you may or may not be familiar with them. They are crops that your parents used to grow before the conflict. I don't think that anyone in this community has ever grown them since you were never taught how to plant them or more importantly, how to cook them.

Advance to Slide 7

Prior to reading the outcomes for each section, ask people to raise their hands to show which choices they selected. Read out the outcomes of only those choices that people selected. (I.e. - "So who selected the option of growing corn and beans, raise your hands, ok "This was a good choice…")

OUTCOMES 1

Choice A) This was a good choice. Since you already grow corn and beans, it isn't so hard to know when a plant is healthy, and you already know the basics of planting, harvest and storage. The really good news is that they've found another variety of corn seed that matures a little more quickly than the variety you grow. It yields a little less, but you can grow two crops in a single year. The problem of course is that you only have so much room for storage after harvest, so some of it goes to waste, and there isn't much of a local market for corn since everyone grows it. If you selected this option go ahead and add two chips to your handout. You now have 11 months of food.

Choice B) This was a risky choice, but you knew that right? It is always exciting to try something different and new that might lead to a much better income, but sometimes fear can prevent farmers from trying new things. In this case, though, that fear was well founded. There are sacrifices made when trying new crops. It turns out these berries take five years to mature before they really produce much. In the meantime that's less land that you can farm. Hopefully nothing else bad happens this year, or next, or the next, or the next, or the year after that. Five years is a long time, and you might find yourself with a tough decision. I'm sorry but you need to remove two chips. You now only have seven months of food.

Choice C) This was a great choice. The local varieties of yucca, taro root, and chocolate grow well. And best of all you can plant the chocolate while the corn continues to grow, the yucca is more resistant to drought, and taro root is more resistant to floods. Not only do you have more food, but your crops should be ready for whatever weather patterns you have in the coming years. The local nonprofit is going to include some cooking classes too to help you maximize the new crops. Good work, you guys get to add 3 chips. You now have a full years worth of food.

Advance to Slide 8

CHOICE 2

In addition to helping with crops, the local nonprofit wants to help with other challenges you face. However, there is a limited budget and they've said that they are only going to be able to help for a few years before they move on to other communities. Unfortunately you have to just pick one thing.

Choice A) A water project. They would provide you with the tools you need to dig a well and then build a pump. It'd be a lot of work for the whole community, but you'd have clean drinking water and maybe your kids would be sick less of the time.

Choice B) A community organizing project on education. You would learn how to better advocate for yourselves and how to negotiate with elected officials. It isn't certain exactly how this would work, but maybe they'd be able to build a school closer to you so that your children could study beyond sixth grade without having to travel 3 hours away!

Choice C) A team of medical missionaries. They would be here for two weeks and provide basic medical services to community members and medication as needed. They would also provide training on nutrition.

Advance to Slide 9

OUTCOMES 2 (again solicit participation through showing of hands)

Choice A) The water project is going to be a success and your families will finally have water! The clean water means that families will be sick less often, and children will be able to benefit from the food that they eat. An added benefit is that your daughters will no longer have to spend the mornings and evenings hauling water. They'll have extra time for homework, helping in the fields, and even some time to play. The training on how to maintain the water system should help keep the system running if something breaks. Without waterborne illnesses, the same amount of food will go further since your body will be healthy enough to absorb the nutrients. Go ahead and add two chips.

Choice B) Why did you choose this one? Go ahead and remove a chip. You know advocacy is hard work. You are going to have to make so many trips back and forth to the mayor's office. Sometimes it will feel like you're barely making progress, but I know you will start to learn how to be more effective. I bet in the future that eventually the secretary of education will at least add a new teacher to the elementary school. Go ahead and add chip for that, you'll save all that income that you would've spent on transportation! You know, now that we're talking about it, I bet when you get the hang of it you could start to reach out to other ministries as well!

The ministry of agriculture did promise to include neighboring villages in an upcoming program with chickens and the ministry of health is deciding where to put staff, you might be able to influence those decisions if you are organized. In a year or so I bet they will include you in the next round of water projects, so if you work hard you might even have water. Go ahead and add two chips for that.

Choice C) Having a medical mission team here would really be great. I noticed that your daughter's eyes are itchy all the time, and one of your neighbors probably has parasites. Getting some medicine for them would be really helpful. But how will you get more medicine once the team is gone? The nutrition training will be really helpful though. If everyone learns which foods have proteins, what carbs are good for, and the importance of vitamins, you might make some different choices in what you feed your kids. Learning the importance of boiling water could be really helpful too! Add one chip to your board.

Advance to Slide 10

CHOICE 3

So far you've made some decisions on what activities will be part of the program. There are still some other decisions we need to make. The non-profit is working on hiring somebody for the position of extension agent, they want to know what trait is most important to you? What type of person do you want most?

Choice A) Someone that's a real expert. They think that they can find someone that has a degree from an American University, maybe even a great Ag school like Iowa State. They'd probably have a background in corn and beans, and I'm sure they would be able to learn the language with time.

Choice B) Someone from the capital city that is excited to experiment with new ideas. After all, you are going to be doing things differently. It'd be great to know what works and what doesn't. Maybe they could even help you set up test plots! They would most likely also know what people in other places are doing.

Choice C) Someone that's from the local area and has completed a certificate in agriculture. They might not have a formal degree, but they'd be familiar with how you do things here and might have some new ideas as well. They've probably even planted and harvested not far from where you farm and they probably know some of the local leaders. I know there is one guy who's looking for work and his dad is a chief. It might be good to have someone that knows the area.

Advance to Slide 11

OUTCOMES 3

Choice A) Having an expert would be great. But it might be hard to understand them. Not too many Americans know your local language. Also, I'm not sure how it'd work out having him try to teach you how to farm corn and beans. I know he knows how to do it with big equipment, GMO seeds, and good herbicides, but I don't even know where you could buy those things here. Paying for them would be hard too. Overall I think it might be too difficult since you'd spend the first few years just training him on how to do things and teaching him about your culture, and by then he might be homesick. Unfortunately all that work really didn't lead to a lasting change. No change in number of chips for this option.

Choice B) Having a researcher really would be great. They might not be able to teach you much about planting and harvesting, but you already know how to do that. However, they could help you experiment, and that is something you really haven't done on your own. It would be good to look at things like crop spacing, tillage, and fertilizer. Who knows, they might even be

able to help you with other ideas like tracking rainfall through rain gauges. The best part is that you might even be able to learn how to experiment on your own. The only downside is that he may not entirely understand your traditions, for example I heard of another community where the guy wanted them to build fences to protect their vegetables. If you do that, the next thing you know you're going to have people fighting over the land. That's how you cause problems not solve them. It'll be limited success so add one chip to your board.

Choice C) Having a local person would be really great. There aren't many people here that would be able to do the job, but there are people from neighboring communities that have gone to highschool and some have even completed two year degree programs in agriculture. They would probably be familiar with how you plant corn and beans and maybe even know some techniques that have been designed specifically for your growing conditions. There might even be some things they know how to do in terms of making organic fertilizers and pest repellents using local ingredients. They wouldn't get homesick or burned out by the work because they have friends and family here. Finally, family connections and an understanding of how your communities make decisions might make it easier for them to gain trust and convince you to try new things. This sounds like it was the best choice. Add two chips to your board if you picked this one.

Advance to Slide 12

CHOICE 4

Well you've made some good choices. I think you're probably in a spot where you could sell some of your crops at market. However, there is always a risk that you grow something that doesn't sell and it spoils, or that you pay for transportation and the boat man never pays you for your crops.

You have a really tough choice to make. You only have so much ability to store your harvest. Your grain bin can only hold up to nine months of food and you can't afford to purchase additional storage right now. So you have to choose. How many of your months worth of food do you want to sell at the market? 1? 2? 3? 15? Remember if you end up with less than sixth months of food you'll have to leave the farm, and less than nine months means migrating at least part of the year. So go ahead and discuss it now. Take a few minutes, this is a tough choice. Once you've decided, please take those chips and place them in the square in the bottom corner of your board. Those are going to market and the rest of the chips on your board are being stored.

Advance Slide to 13

Ok everyone, How many months of grain did you store and how many are you taking to market? (Ask each table then read outcomes)

More than 9 months of grain stored) I understand that the markets are risky, but you just don't have many good options to choose from. When you try to store that much grain there's always a risk of rats, or weevils, or moisture spoiling the crop. Your grain storage just isn't able to hold that much food and burlap sacks and roof rafters aren't safe from pests. Unfortunately this year was really bad for pests. Last year's hurricane left a lot of debris that you weren't able to clear. As a result you are dealing with a plague of rats (yes this actually happened to a Growing Hope program). Anything that you stored outside of the grain bin was lost. So take any chips beyond nine that are on your board and set those aside.

Who had 9 Months of grain stored) Good choice, if you tried to save more it would be at risk of being eaten by rats or spoiling with the humidity. It's too bad you don't have a bigger grain bin. You don't have very good options for marketing your crops, so the extra you have been able to produce still might not be much of a benefit for you.

Who had less than 9 months of grain stored) I hope you have good luck at the market. You really need some good fortune. If you don't get good prices you might end up with less than a year's worth of food. That'd mean another year of migrating, not being able to fully invest in your farming activities and your daughters would fall further behind in school.

Advance to Slide 14

CHOICE 5

So now you have one last choice to make. How do you want to sell your crops?

Choice A) You could sell your crops to your neighbors who live just up the river. There isn't much risk, but that means that there isn't too much of a reward to be had either. At least you wouldn't have to worry about crops spoiling because you'd be able to eat some of what's left over after market day.

Choice B) You could send your crops up the river with a boat man. He would take the crops upstream for free and just charge you a portion of the profits when he sells them. It's a multi-day trip and it is hard to know what the prices in the market will be when he arrives and if the crops will still look fresh. There's a risk he wouldn't be honest, but he is the boat man that you use when you travel, so hopefully he wouldn't risk his reputation over a few dollars worth of crops.

Choice C) There is a wealthy man who has a truck that comes to town regularly. He always buys up any of the crops that people have. He doesn't pay very well, but he is a good guy. Last year when your neighbor's child needed to go to the hospital he gave them a loan. They weren't able to pay it off, so they traded him some of their land instead to cancel their debt with him. He's the only person that has money to lend in times of emergency.

Advance to Slide 15

OUTCOMES 5

Let's see how it turned out for each of you. Who wants to go first? How much of your crop are you selling at market and how much are you saving? Which option did you choose for selling your goods and why? Who else chose that option? Okay, bad news, just like in farming there is an element of risk and chance. Some years things work out and some years they don't. So we're going to flip a coin. (Flip a coin for each group and read out the outcome) (Repeat calling out for another option "Who chose choice B…").

Choice A HEADS) You were lucky. It was a good day at the market and you were able to sell everything you brought. There were lots of buyers and you didn't have to bring any of your goods home. So if you brought 3 items to market add a chip, if you brought 6 add two.

Choice A TAILS) Bad news. It was a rainy day today, so few people showed up at the market. There are more vegetables left over than you can cook and without a fridge some of the food will spoil before you are able to consume it as a family. Probably best to share it with your neighbors. If you picked this option you lose half of the chips that you brought to market.

Choice B HEADS) Good news, it was a good day at the market. Sending the goods further away means a better price than you could get in your village. More buyers equals better prices. But, after paying the boat man there wasn't much left over. It's too bad we don't have a co-op that could help us with marketing and transportation. For every two items you brought to market add an extra chip. So if you brought four chips to market add two chips.

Choice B TAILS) Bad news. The boat man came back, but it looks like he was beaten up. With storms off in the distance, he decided to try to make the trip in a single day and ended up traveling at night. He struck a rock in the river and his boat flipped. He lost your crop and there isn't a way for him to repay you. What a difference a road would make. Sorry you lost all of the crops you brought to market.

Choice C) Well, we kind of knew what to expect right, I mean, he isn't the most fair person to deal with. No need to flip a coin on this one. I'm not sure what you were hoping was going to happen. He paid you less than your crop was worth. It isn't fair, but what can you do? There is no co-op for you to market your crops through. You lose half of what you brought to market.

FINAL OUTCOME

So who ended with… (Read only the ones that are applicable)

Less than six months of food) Unfortunately you had less than half a year's worth of food for the coming year. It just isn't enough for you and your family. The best choice you have is to sell what you have and try migrating. You could try to migrate to the city and hope to find employment there, but two out of three people that go to the city never find a job. The other choice is to try to migrate north. That's really risky too, of course. If you're caught you might end up with nothing. When non-profits implement programs that fail to address the larger problems facing a community or bring solutions that are not appropriate for the context, this type of outcome is all too common. With no support and no systems in place to fall back on, vulnerable communities quickly run out of good options.

Six to Eleven months of food) Well you did ok. When programs aren't designed to address some of the challenges we discussed, the support of a non-profit can end up making a pretty minimal difference in the end. It is important for programs to address important issues like access to markets and post-harvest storage in order to be successful. You'll have to take what you've learned and continue applying it with the hope that you have better luck in the years to come. Hopefully you won't get discouraged.

Twelve plus months of food) What a relief. The local nonprofit made a huge difference. You won't need to migrate this year and with the little extra you have you might be able to invest some in your farm or in your children's education. You could use the money to buy a larger grain bin or put it into savings. If your neighbors are all successful this year you could even start a savings club or co-op. It's progress that you can build on with what you've learned in the program. Even when the program finishes you'll be able to continue to learn.

Host: I hope this was a fun experience and a helpful way of thinking through what makes for a successful program. Now we've got a few questions. (Have the audience respond by calling on volunteers).

- How would you feel if someone else made these choices for your family?
- Would you be hesitant to try new things like the berries marketed to Europe?
- How did it feel losing crops because of a lack of storage or market opportunities?
- What things would be good to include in the next year of the program?
- Were there things that you felt would be important to address next?
- What things will you look for the next time you support an international program?

Advance to Slide 16

I want you all to know that we support Growing Hope Globally because they do this work so carefully. Community members are active participants in programs; they make sure that programs are holistic and don't just focus on crop production but address challenges like crop production, access to clean water, community organizing, crop marketing and cooperative formation, post-harvest crop storage and more. They also work with local staff that are committed to supporting communities until they are able to be self-sufficient.

Growing Hope Globally celebrated their 20th Anniversary in 2019. The organization also celebrated helping over 2 million people become more food secure. This is thanks to events like this and the support that Growing Hope Globally receives from so many communities across the US each year.

This year our group will be supporting - **Share program(s) description(s) from the website**