

The Global Farmer Experience



Growing Hope Globally's staff has developed the Global Farmer Experience based upon more than 20 years of interviews, observations, and reports gathered while supporting sustainable agricultural development programs that have helped more than 2 million people find lasting solutions to hunger. All examples and illustrations are based on outcomes seen in the field.

Setup:

In Person Global Farmer Experience

- ♥ Prior to starting the event make sure that the facilitator has a copy of this script and has read through it in advance. The facilitator will also need a copy of the Global Farmer Experience PowerPoint Presentation available on their device, a printed copy of the field handout for each group and chips or coins that each group can use to track their crops.
- ♥ Divide into table groups of 5-7 people. This group size will allow for good discussion regarding each of the choices.
- ♥ During each decision, each table will have a discussion and come to a consensus about their choice. The facilitator will then ask each group to share their selected choice and explain their reasons for choosing it. The facilitator will read out the outcomes for all choices that have been selected by one or more groups. Each table group will track their own progress.

Online Global Farmer Experience

- ♥ Prior to starting the event make sure that each facilitator has a copy of this script and has read through it in advance. Each facilitator will also need a copy of the Global Farmer Experience PowerPoint Presentation available on their device, and a printed copy of the field handout, as well as chips or coins to track their crops.
- ♥ If you have a group of 10 or less, this can be done in a single Zoom session. With larger groups, it will be a more engaging in breakout rooms with 6-8 participants per room. Each room will need a facilitator.
- ♥ During each decision, we recommend asking participants to vote by holding up 1, 2 or 3 fingers to show their preferred choice. If the group selects multiple options, the facilitator can call on a participant representing each of the selected options to explain their choice and then the group can vote a second time to confirm their final choice. In many cases participants will change their minds after hearing the explanations.
- ♥ The facilitator will use chips or coins to track the group's crops on the field handout.

GLOBAL FARMER EXPERIENCE (SLIDE 1) POWERPOINT SHOULD BE OPEN

Host: Hello everyone and welcome. Today we're talking about hunger, food security, and sustainable agriculture. Did you know that globally there are 811 million people that suffer from hunger? And that more than 80% of those suffering from hunger are farmers or live in rural areas? Given that context, doesn't it make sense that we think about agriculture and the role it might play in responding to this challenge of global hunger? This activity will help you step into the shoes of a farmer who is working to feed their family. Let's get started.

ADVANCE TO SLIDE 2

Host: 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

Host: The communities on the riverbanks are all indigenous people. 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

Host: 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

Host: Well, here we are at your farm. I'm glad you're here, because I've been waiting to talk with you. I've got good news! 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 decide what will work best for you and your family, then let me know so I 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 anyway. In front of you is your beautiful field (**Hold Up 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**).

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, which means your kids miss school and 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

QUESTION 1

Host: 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 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, floods, 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? Take a minute to think about your choice, then we'll check to see if we are in agreement and discuss some of the reasons for our choices before determining our group's top choice. We'll take about five minutes for each of these decisions.

Choice 1) You could ask them to help you improve your corn and bean crops. There are some opportunities for improved yields, but it might be limited.

Choice 2) You could ask them to help you 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 3) 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 and grandparents used to grow before the conflict. Unfortunately, I don't think that anyone living in this community now has ever grown them since you were never taught how to plant them or, more importantly, how to cook them.

Host: Now, let's share which option you'd like to vote for. **Online:** Hold up 1, 2, or 3 fingers to share your choice. I'll call on you and see if you can reach a consensus. **In Person:** We'll go around and everyone can share your choice and why you chose it. Then we'll discuss and see if we can reach a consensus.

ADVANCE TO SLIDE 7

Host: OK, so think it through and when you're ready hold up your selection.

OUTCOMES 1 - Read the one that corresponds to your group's selection

Choice 1) 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 currently 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 one chip to your handout. You now have 10 months of food. Let's make sure to track that on our sheet.**

Choice 2) This was a risky choice, but you knew that right? Sometimes it is exciting to try something different and new that might lead to a much better income. On the other hand, fear of the unknown can sometimes prevent farmers from trying new things. In this case, 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. Let's make sure to track that on our sheet.**

Choice 3) This was a great choice. The local varieties of yucca, taro root, and chocolate grow well here. 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 year's worth of food. Let's make sure to track that on our sheet.**

ADVANCE TO SLIDE 8

QUESTION 2

Host: 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 1) 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 2) 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 3) 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

Choice 1) The water project is going to be a success and your community 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 ensure that you can get everything running again 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 2) 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 that eventually the secretary of education will at least add a new teacher to the elementary school. **Go ahead and add a 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 this 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 another two chips for that.**

Choice 3) Having a medical mission team here would 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 carbohydrates 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 helpful too. **This made a small difference, but only for a short time, I'm sorry, but you don't get to add any chips.**

ADVANCE TO SLIDE 10

QUESTION 3

Host: 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, and they want to know what trait is most important to you? What type of person do you want most?

Choice 1) Someone that's a real expert. They think that they can find someone from the Midwestern US that has a degree from an American University, maybe even a great agricultural school like Iowa State or Purdue. 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 2) 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 3) 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 1) 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 and leave before you can make any real progress. **Remove 1 chip from your board.**

Choice 2) 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 to 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 could 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, right? **It'll be a limited success so add one chip to your board.**

Choice 3) 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 high school. Some have even completed two-year degree programs in agriculture. They would probably be familiar with how you plant corn and beans, and might know some techniques that have been designed specifically for your growing conditions. They might even know how to make 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 your 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

QUESTION 4

Host: Well, you've made some good choices. At the end of the year, I think you'll be 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.

So now a final decision. How do you think the program could best support you at harvest time?

Choice 1) Form and manage a company that will buy your produce locally and process it, or sell it in the capital city. That way you won't have to work hard to find a market for your crops.

Choice 2) Help you build grain storage. You wouldn't get the high prices that far away markets would earn, but metal silos would be easy to build yourselves. At least then you wouldn't have to worry about crops going to waste.

Choice 3) Sell crops locally. When harvest is done, you store what you know you can eat before it spoils, and then sell the rest at nearby markets. You can then buy more food later in the year.

OUTCOMES 4

Choice 1) This option can be very helpful in the short-term, since there is a ready market for your produce. But what happens when priorities change, or the business fails and you are left with no market, and no marketing experience? It could be really successful, but there is also a lot of risk. Is that a chance you want to take? Do you want to change your choice? **If they don't decide to change their selection, ask participants to choose a number between 1 and 5. If they chose an even number, they were successful - Add 2 chips. If they chose an odd number, the business closed and they were stuck with no market for their produce - Subtract 4 chips.**

Choice 2) Grain storage is a great choice. Sure this doesn't lead to the potential incomes that foreign markets might offer, but it is progress. Farmers often lose 30% or more of their crop to insects, mold, rodents, etc. Improving storage can have as much of an impact on food security as increasing yields. This also means that you have crops to sell in the market when other farmers might have exhausted their own harvests, so you can sell at a better price than at harvest time. **Add 3 chips.**

Choice 3) Selling crops at the local market really isn't anything new. There's no risk like there would be with more distant markets, but there's no reward either. You avoid the losses of spoilage, but it means selling at harvest time. Everyone else is selling at harvest time too, so the prices tend to be at their lowest. When you have to buy food again with your profits, everyone else is also buying again, so prices tend to be at their highest. This is called a price scissors: you lose both when selling, and when buying. Forming a cooperative might be helpful. That way, you can sell in cooperation with your neighbors instead of in competition with them. **Go ahead and leave your chips as they are.**

FINAL OUTCOME

Less than six months of food) Unfortunately, you have 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 option you have is to sell what you have and try migrating. You could try going 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 nonprofits 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 nonprofit 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 helped you make 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 and give each other loans to further improve your farms. What you've learned from the program is just the start - It's progress that you can build on. 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?
- ♥ 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 14

Host: Let's close with this five minute video. We'll learn a little more about the programs Growing Hope Globally supports around the world as well as how we can make a lasting difference from right where we live.

Play Video: After the Global Farmer Experience - Next Steps Toward A Lasting Difference
<https://vimeo.com/643694590>

If you aren't already involved with Growing Hope Globally, we hope you'll take the time to learn more about our work by visiting [GrowingHopeGlobally.org](https://growinghopeglobally.org) If you are an FFA instructor go to [GrowingHopeGlobally.org/get-involved/ffa-resources/](https://growinghopeglobally.org/get-involved/ffa-resources/)

The Global Farmer Experience Handout



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You can learn more at GrowingHopeGlobally.org
