Sample: Food for Life: Nutritional Agriculture Training Project

Actual implementation may vary depending on the specific needs of the local partners

There are two main components of the Food for Life training project. The first phase is a 21-week course and the second half involves follow-up assistance as the trainees return to their respective NGO sites to train others.

Training-of-Trainers

Mercy Ships agriculture staff train ‘trainers’ from in-country partners. All of the trainers are NGO staff that serve as consultants to local farmers. These agriculturalists may be part of an association, or another NGO. Mercy Ships agriculture staff screen potential participants prior to course implementation to set proper expectations and select participants best suited for the Food for Life Course.

The course includes both classroom and hands-on farming instruction. Participants learn to enhance their ability to grow food and increase local food production utilizing sustainable, organic, and conservation-oriented farming methods. Training in food transformation is also provided throughout the course; examples include, making yogurt, soy milk, and mango jam. The project will also implement aquaponics training. Aquaponics is a complete food system that produces fish and vegetables by combining aquaculture and hydroponics. Separately, aquaculture and hydroponics are costly and unsustainable solutions. However, by combining the two methods, aquaponics solves most of these issues. The process uses fish tank effluent water as a nutrient source for vegetables that are growing in a hydroponic environment that serves as a bio filter for the fish tank water. The water is cleaned and recirculated through the root system of the plants, keeping the fish healthy.

Also in the course, destructive practices such as slash-and-burn tactics and the use of harsh, expensive chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides are identified and discouraged. Alongside organic agriculture techniques, the agriculture team provides instruction in proper business practices and communication for development. In particular, the team emphasizes how micro-credit can help build businesses. Towards the end of the course, participants also create a business plan indicating how they intend to apply the course material in their respective NGO’s.

Training highlights the importance of nutritional foods as well. The project’s nutrition instructor is present throughout the course teaching the participants about nutritional foods and how individuals can incorporate these foods into a well-balanced diet. This portion of the course also highlights the importance of food safety, particularly as it relates to health and transmission of disease.