



Dear Friends,

Community transformation is one of two strategic priorities for CRWRC. We continue to highly value change in the life of one person or one family, but now know that if our community development work is going to have “staying power” there needs to be lots of new skills learned at the community level.

*Living Justice, Loving Mercy* This transformation can take much more time than expected. The community of Batey Fao is an example of this. CRWRC partner program, DesCo, worked in Fao ten years ago promoting literacy classes, microcredit loans to women and even helped install a small water project. But over time things went sour. DesCo pulled back and Fao was left on its own. It took a serious racial incident to awaken the community. Twenty-some homes were burned down. Many promises of help were made to Fao residents, but few ever happened. Together with DesCo and some North American groups, the people in Fao are helping to rebuild homes for affected families.

Perhaps as important as the houses is the new community justice committee that has been formed. The broader Fao community and the committee know what their rights are and by working together they can better defend them. They are networked by cell phone to other participating communities. The local Christian Reformed church in the community is playing a key role. Since it started reaching out to its neighbors new people have started showing up at church.

On the Zwier family front two big events took place:

- Patti and I traveled in September to Laos to visit our son James for a week. James is in a two-year internship program with CRWRC there. One strong impression - 30 years after



the end of the Vietnam War, the scars on the Laos countryside are still visible. War scrap is being recycled and reused in ingenious ways just about everywhere.

- The extended Zwier and Ebersole families gathered in Chicago in late October for a wedding. James married Sarah Page, a close friend from his Calvin College years. Being all together with our children was a real highlight. After their honeymoon James and Sarah returned to Laos.

Christmas is a time for family and friends. It is a time to reflect on God’s gift to us, his son Jesus. Our hope is that too much of the former will not keep you from the latter!

Merry Christmas! *Joel, Patti and David Zwier*