

IMPACT STORY

Informal waste picker

“Since attending the workplace safety training, I’ve gained a better understanding of the potential hazards associated with handling different waste.”

- Thong



Image: Thong Credit: Swisscontact

Thong is a trailblazer in the world of recycled waste. With a keen eye for valuable discarded items, she buys and sells steel, aluminum, and plastic bottles to earn a living for herself and her six-member family who live the village of Nongduang Thong. Her daughters work as shop assistants, her son is an air condition mechanic, and her son-in-law joins her in the business by buying waste.

Every day, Thong rises early and tries to be on the road by 10:00 am to buy recycled waste from households and other sources in the Chanthabuly and Sikhottabong districts. She then sells them at a nearby shop in Khualuang village. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted her routine, leaving her struggling to earn money and provide for her family.

Thong also faces many others obstacles such as stiff competition from sellers in neighboring countries, who offer factory prices, and injury while sorting items from bins. Despite the challenges, she is determined to succeed and is always looking for ways to improve.

Thong understands the vulnerabilities of her job, so she attended workplace safety and first aid training organized by Swisscontact’s Waste to Value project and found the sessions on wound care to be particularly useful for her livelihood.



Image: Thong's pushcart .
Credit: Swisscontact

Thong is not just a waste picker, but a leader and an inspiration in her community. She is dedicated to promoting for a safer working environment for all waste pickers.

With her unwavering spirit and commitment to a brighter future, Thong is a shining example of what can be achieved when we rise to meet life's challenges.

“The training has given me the confidence to act quickly and effectively if an injury were to occur.”

- Thong



Waste to Value Project

Main objectives: to improve the environmental performance of service sector SMEs through access to green products and better waste management practices; and to enhance the business operations of informal waste pickers to improve their livelihood.

Project duration: February 2022 – December 2024

Project location: Xaysetha and Chanthabouly in Vientiane Capital, Vang Vieng in Vientiane Province

Project partners: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Hotel and Restaurant Associations, Green suppliers and service providers, National University of Laos, Local district authorities.

Target Groups: Service sector SMEs and informal waste pickers

