

IMPACT STORY

Informal waste picker



"With the knowledge I've acquired, I'm more aware of safety measures and now know how to assist others in case of illness or dizziness."

- Liengamphone Phouxay

Image: Liengamphone Phouxay
Credit: Swisscontact

Liengamphone Phouxay, a resident of Khanmak village in Vangvieng, makes a living as an informal waste picker. She collects and sells recyclable waste from the local landfill to support her three children. Her husband, who works in house construction, occasionally assists her in this work.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she struggled financially as she was unable to leave her home to earn money.

Now, Phouxay is able to set out early to collect plastic bottles, cardboard papers, cans, beer bottles and cans, steel, and aluminum and sells them to buyers at the landfill. Many of these items are broken, sharp and dangerous to waste pickers.

Before participating in the First Aid and Hygiene training, Phouxay was not properly equipped to protect herself, lacking gloves and proper clothing.

After attending the training, she is now more aware of the necessary safety measures, such as wearing gloves, boots, and a hat, and she is equipped with the knowledge of how to assist others in case of dizziness or illness.

Liengamphone stresses the importance of having households separate different types of waste. "Households with babies should separate their diapers and clinics should ensure medical waste is placed into separate bags to avoid contamination," she said.

"This simple action will make the workplace safer and more manageable for us waste pickers."

- Liengamphone Phouxay

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

