

## IMPACT STORY

## Informal waste picker

***“I’m now more conscious of separating waste properly to ensure my safety. I hope everyone will follow suit, as it can make a big difference in creating a safer working environment for waste pickers like myself.”***

- Phuangphet Thaivichit



Image: Phuangphet Thaivichit

Credit: Swisscontact

Phuangphet Thaivichit is a hardworking informal waste picker who resides in the village of Nongduang Thong in the Chanthabuly district of Vientiane Capital.

Thaivichit provides for her family of eight by waste picking, running a small, home grocery shop and assisting the village Naiyban (chief).

Every day, she sets out at early to collect bottles and materials to sell. Her workday is long and she does not return home until 7:00 PM.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a significant challenge for Thaivichit, as she struggles to earn money while facing increasing expenses. She is also vulnerable to injury from broken glass and steel when picking through waste. She has even been bitten by dogs.

Despite these challenges, she presses on and carries out her work and remains determined and proactive to ensure her own safety while working.

Thaivichit attended the workplace safety and first aid training, which is invaluable in keeping her safe on the job. She now always wears gloves, boots, and a high-visibility vest. The lessons she learned in first aid and wound care has proven to be incredibly useful in real-life situations.

Thaivichit says that properly separating different types of waste makes the work of waste pickers like her safer and more efficient.

***“Separated waste not only ensures clean recyclables, but also prevent accidents from occurring.”***

- Phuangphet Thaivichit

### 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

