

## IMPACT STORY

## Informal waste picker

*"Before attending the First Aid and Hygiene training, I relied on herbs for wound care. Now, I prioritize safety by wearing gloves, safety caps, and boots while working, and using medicine correctly."*

- Duang



Image: Duang  
Credit: Swisscontact

Duang, a resident of the village of Khanmark in Vangvieng, is an informal waste picker at his local landfill. Although his main source of income is from this job, he also raises livestock for family consumption.

Duang lives with eight family members, some of which assist him in his work. He collects recyclable waste such as white or black plastic bags, cardboard papers, aluminum, plastic bottles, glass bottles, and steel.

Duang begins his daily journey to the landfill at 6:00 AM and returns home at around 5:00 PM. He sells his collected materials to a buyer at the landfill, earning an average income of 1.500.000 kip a month, which has allowed him to build a house and send his children to school.

However, working at the landfill poses serious challenges for Duang, as he is vulnerable to injuries from broken glass, light bulbs, or nails.

He also disclosed that several years ago he saw unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in the landfill and informed soldiers to have them cleared them away.

"Separating household waste, particularly glass bottles, in separate bags can reduce the risk of injury for waste pickers like me and help reduce waste," he said.

Before attending the First Aid and hygiene training, he would use herbal leaves along the road to treat his wounds. After the training, he now always wears gloves, a safety cap, and boots while working and knows how to use medicine correctly.

**"This knowledge has come in handy in real life, especially in terms of medicine and wound care."**

-Duang

### 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

