



Impact Story

Beneficiary

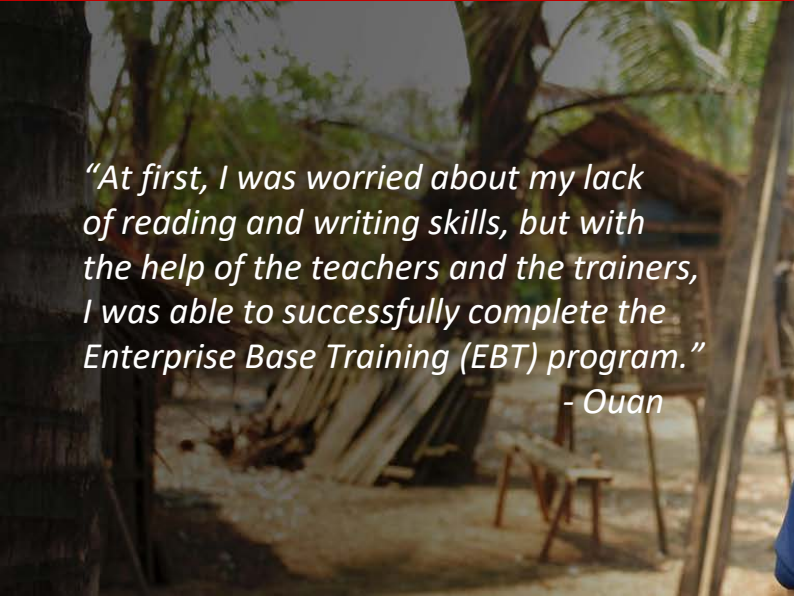


Image: Ouan Credit: Swisscontact

Ouan is a dedicated owner of a small mushroom business in the Xayaburi District of Xayaburi Province. Before she started cultivating mushrooms, she made a limited income from planting rice and corn as well as raising chickens, but it was not enough to support her family. In 2021, she heard from teachers at the Integrated Vocational Education (IVET) school about the Employment Support Services (ESS) coaching cycle courses.

Initially, Ouan joined the Vocational Training and Employment Support Services (VTESS) project as an ESS coach, where she provided guidance and support to others. Then, motivated by her own experiences and eager to enhance her own skills, she eventually participated in the Enterprise Based Training (EBT) program which includes social skills, business planning, basic accounting, and mushroom cultivation practices. She also trained for three months at a farm in Naleng village, where she had hands-on cultivation training. “At first, I was worried about my lack of reading and writing skills, but with the help of the teachers and the trainers, I was able to successfully complete the EBT program.” she said.

After receiving seed money, Ouan purchased mushroom cultivation materials such as tanks, gypsum, pumice, effective microorganisms (EM), plastic covers, plastic bags, sugar, and other necessary materials. Her husband also helped build two mushroom houses, which reduced construction costs.

When Ouan first started production, she encountered a contamination problem with 30 bags in her mushroom cultivation. She believes that the contamination occurred when her father-in-law came to talk to her while she was adding mushroom leavening into the bags. She quickly set up a system to not allow anyone else into the work area and always use alcohol to clean her hands.



Image: The DO NOT ENTER sign at Ouan’s mushroom house entrance.
Credit: Swisscontact

Ouan started the business in August 2022, and as no one else in her area cultivates mushrooms, she does not have any competitors. In October of the same year, she began harvesting mushrooms until early 2023. In just four months, she made 8 million kip selling these mushrooms.

Ouan adopted two main strategies in her business. At times, she would transport her products to the village market, where customers had the opportunity to purchase them directly. On other occasions, local merchants would visit her residence to buy mushrooms in bulk. The wholesale price per kilogram stood at 28,000 kip, while at the market, the selling price ranged from 30,000 to 35,000 kip per kilogram.

Ouan plans to expand her mushroom production from 1,065 to 2,000 bags, and her husband will build another mushroom house. Although her husband is a farmer, he will assist her when he has time.

Ouan now has a steady income from her mushroom products and seasonal income from farming. She said when the mushroom harvest ended in February, she earned around 1 million kip. She's now getting ready to start the next round of production.

*Image: Ouan harvesting mushrooms.
Credit: Swisscontact*



Inception phase: August 2019 - March 2020

Project duration: August 2019 - November 2023 (4 years)

Funded by: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Implementer: Consortium Swisscontact / Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Key implementing governmental partners:

- Ministry of Education and Sports - MoES (Lead)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare – MoLSW

Target Groups:

- Main: Early school-leavers - young people (15-35 years of age) who have completed primary school only and are deprived socially and economically.
- Wider: Teachers from IVET schools, staff from job centres or similar institutions (career counsellors, job coaches, community or youth workers, village facilitators and social workers).



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