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From gardening to raising chickens as a sideline

Securing Income and Supporting School Lunch Programs in Tahuak Village

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In Tahuak Village, Ta-Oi District, Salavan Province, the majority of the Pacoh ethnic community relies on slash-and-burn agriculture and cassava cultivation as their primary livelihoods. Nang Or, a 50 year-old homemaker and the primary caregiver for her family of five, previously generated her family's main income of only 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 LAK (132 - 176 USD) per year from cassava sales. This income was barely enough to cover basic daily essentials such as salt, fermented fish sauce, and monosodium glutamate.

Additionally, due to small land plots and soil depletion, caused by continuous farming over many years, rice yields were insufficient to sustain the household year-round. Although the family attempted to raise livestock such as chickens, ducks, pigs, and goats to adapt, free-range farming and a lack of proper technical knowledge left their animals vulnerable to severe disease outbreaks, resulting in high mortality rates. These continuous losses caused deep discouragement and trapped the family in a cycle of poverty and food insecurity.

A key turning point came when the "Improving the Nutritional and Living Situation of Children and Families" Project was introduced to the community. After learning about the project through the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC), Nang Or expressed strong interest due to her prior livestock experience. The initiative followed a revolving loan model aimed at contributing to the school lunch program at Tahuak School. The project provided more than just material assistance; it focused on capacity building and community participation. Nang Or received comprehensive training on systematic native chicken rearing –covering proper livestock care, feeding, disease prevention, and building materials to construct sturdy, hygienic coops following technical guidelines to prevent disease.

“In the past we raised animals naturally, and they frequently died from disease outbreaks. But after joining the project, learning technical skills, and building a proper coop, I now apply this knowledge daily—especially following technical guidelines for chicken rearing. We now have much more knowledge. Today, our animals no longer die as easily, providing our household with steady food and income. Most importantly, I am overjoyed to see our village children receiving nutritious lunches and attending school.” - Nang Or

This success has not only transformed Nang Or's household standard of living but has also generated a positive ripple effect throughout the community. The increased income and poultry production contribute directly to the village "School Lunch Fund", serving as a critical driver to ensure local children attend school at the appropriate age and receive proper nutrition during school hours.



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