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THAILAND

CASE STUDY

Displaced Families Start Over

Training and seed funds help displaced families recover



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

Women displaced to the southern Phang Nga province learn accounting skills at a small business workshop aiming to help restart livelihoods in tsunami-affected areas.

“The United States and Thailand have had a long and special relationship. In this time of crisis, close collaboration between Americans and Thais help target effective development assistance to those most in need,” said William Itoh, former U.S. Ambassador to Thailand.

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

The December 2004 tsunami affected 30,000 Thai families. In addition to the loss of life, thousands of houses, schools, and boats were damaged or destroyed. Many families had no alternative but to leave home and resettle in camps elsewhere. For the most part, these displaced families lacked the resources, assets, and business skills to start over.

Initiative

USAID funded a project to bring business advisory groups to work with displaced families to identify opportunities for starting small business and rebuild their livelihoods. The advisory groups informed participants about grant and loan opportunities available through local banks and community cooperatives. They also helped participants prepare business plans and loan applications. Through one-on-one counseling, advisors consulted with the soon-to-be entrepreneurs about how to develop products and tap into local markets. The project's main goal was to invigorate local business development, but equally important was the program's ability to empower displaced communities by showing them the path to recovery.

Results

In one area of Phang Nga province, USAID helped 425 small entrepreneurs displaced by the tsunami learn about business planning practices. An additional 25 people received more intensive entrepreneurship training, and 54 loan applicants received assistance filing out loan applications, as well as follow-up support. Thanks to USAID-funded training in relief camps, displaced families got a strong start on the road to economic recovery.