



PHOTO & CAPTION

Catering to Basic Needs



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

As part of its response to the December 2004 tsunami that devastated much of Southeast Asia, USAID sponsored a project to train residents of the Suk Samran district in southern Thailand's Ranong province in methods and skills for revitalizing coastal livelihoods and businesses. During the long days of training, participants needed nourishment, but the tsunami had destroyed all the restaurants and catering businesses that once existed in these communities. In addition, reconstruction crews had arrived to help rebuild coastal communities. They, too needed nourishment.

An entrepreneurial group of women identified a solution to this problem: to start a new catering business that could serve participants in the training sessions, work crews, and their community. They group came forward with a request for capital funds to purchase pots, pans, and utensils. They developed a simple business plan, and the community granted them a small loan from a USAID-supported revolving fund that provides seed money for small business start-ups.

Within a few weeks, the new catering business was up and running. Word about the catering business traveled quickly, and soon the women were providing lunches and dinners not only for people based in their own town, but also for individuals and organizations working in nearby villages.

USAID has directed significant resources across the region to developing cash-for-work projects and helping small businesses get off their feet in an effort to generate employment for those affected by the tsunami. USAID provides communities with grants to start their own "revolving fund" loan projects. Through these grants, USAID is helping coastal communities rebuild their livelihoods and small entrepreneurs get back to business.

As reconstruction crews arrived to help rebuild Suk Samran district's coastal areas, an enterprising group of women identified a need for ready-to-eat food. With USAID assistance, they opened a small catering business.