



PHOTO & CAPTION

Diversifying Economies after the Tsunami



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

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. USAID and its partners are helping families in coastal communities who lack the resources, assets, and business skills to rebuild the livelihoods wiped away by the disaster.

USAID-sponsored business advisory groups have trained over 500 community members in how to assess and identify promising business opportunities. Participants also learned about the importance of diversifying businesses and sources of income within households and communities.

USAID supports small enterprise training that teaches communities affected by the 2004 tsunami how to restart their businesses and livelihoods from the ground up.

One quarter of the participants received specialized training in preparing business plans as well as funding opportunities available through local banks and community-based small loan cooperatives. Of these, 54 received extra help preparing applications for grants or small loans. All of them received some level of funding. USAID also sponsored one-on-one business counseling on how to start a small enterprise and, before investing too much, how to grow that business until it demonstrates strong potential for success.

For communities disrupted and displaced by the tsunami, the project is doing more than just encouraging business development and economic recovery — it is helping families recover emotionally as they begin rebuilding their lives. The project is also teaching communities to develop skills and economic models that will strengthen their resilience against future economic or environmental shocks. With new businesses and new skills, these coastal communities are determined to emerge from the disaster with renewed energy and strength.