



Seed Funding for Social Enterprise

Budget: \$16,675 fully funded.

Update:

This project supported a new social enterprise to become fully operational. The business is a mulberry and moringa farm, selling tea and health products from the two trees. The business already had export markets, and needed some initial capital investment to enable it to then become profitable. The company is run by a woman from a minority ethnic group, and she has a heart to help her own people escape poverty. Her farm operates as a space where ethnic young adults and youths can come to learn skills and gain work experience, as well as avoid drug addiction. Her aim is to model the skills required to succeed in modern life so that the next generation of her people will have the skills to thrive.

From a construction point of view, a new water tank (right) and system was installed and the tea processing and packaging house (below) was completed. Salaries for 2 staff to manage the project and work the fields were paid and produced good results.

As the mulberry trees reached full strength of leaf production, our partners were able to fill the oven's capacity for drying and increase sales of tea.

One of the visions for this project was to be able to train and empower individuals and families of minorities in Laos. Many have fled their homes because of persecution, drug addiction, poverty or lack of education. Our partner has been able to encourage 5 young men to grow agricultural products and produce the tea and food supplements. She has also had the opportunity to teach these men the Lao language as well as how to read and write it. Additionally, she has taken the child of one of her workers (mother is illiterate, father is an alcoholic) under her wing and has taught him to read and write and he is now going to school.



Post script: Unfortunately, between completion of the project and writing this report, the Lao government has decided to build a highway through the middle of this farm. The highway will be 40metres wide and they will demolish our partner's hut, toilet and water tank (unless she can move them) and half of the mulberry farm. She will only be nominally compensated for the intrusion which will make the business unviable moving forward.

Despite this setback, our partner continues to take in short-term and long-term lodgers providing manual labour and counselling as part of their drug rehabilitation. She is a positive role model for these young people who are addicted to amphetamines, alcohol and pornography.

Thank you for supporting our partner's vision to build a sustainable business and to reach out to ethnic minorities who need assistance.