

Justice.
Compassion
Love

Project Location

Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang Province.

Donors

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and ADRA Deutschland e.V. (ADRA Germany)

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Teach Me
More
& I Will Do It
Myself

“

I now have a new skill. I can produce food for my family. Our time in the forest has reduced. I do not have to venture out to treacherous slopes and dense jungles. My family loves the mushrooms I grow. We make soup and grill, steam, and fry them

”

—Khamsing Sivongkham



My
Story

"I have shared what I know with my family and neighbors. Five other families came to learn from me. We find and prepare all the [mushroom cultivation] ingredients together. We divide up the bags among ourselves after we make them. I have tried to invite more people to join us. I want to share this knowledge with as many as possible.", siad Khamsing, a PICRAIL Beneficiaries who enjoys growing mushrooms.

Khamsing, 42, lives in a stilt, wooden house, located in Namsam Village, which is 53 km from PICRAIL project office. The village is one of the most inaccessible in Phoukoud District. He and his wife have five other mouths to feed—two sons and three daughters. The eldest son, 19, having finished 12th grade, has to give up the hope of pursuing college due to poverty. The second son, 17, and first daughter, 14, dropped out of school after 10th grade for the same reason. One might think things could not have gotten worse. Their second daughter, 12, is disabled. She had been bedridden until a donor, through ADRA/PICRAIL, gave her a wheelchair. Being disabled, she does not have the opportunity to attend school or visit even her next-door neighbors. The device allows her parents to show her around. Their last daughter, 5, has not attended school yet because the village does not have preschool program.

Before ADRA/PICRAIL came to his village, Khamsing, being poverty-stricken, felt helpless. His family did not have enough food to eat. They mainly produce rice on a small plot of paddy which never yields enough harvest. That forces them to also practice slash-and-burn agriculture. He knows well that this form of cultivation is both labor-intensive and harmful to the environment, and it is not sustainable

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In addition, his family supplements their food shortage by foraging for forest products which are insufficient and unreliable. For instance, he had to walk more than three hours back and forth to a nearby river and forest to look for wild mushrooms. The most he could find was one or two kilograms. More often than not he came home empty-handed.

His family received a cow, grass seeds (ruzi, napier, and stylo), some tools, and multiple sessions of training, including veterinary/animal health, from PICRAIL. To apply the knowledge, he envisages taking a good care of the cow and eventually having a herd. He also wants to expand mushroom farming and have enough produce to sell to the market. A kilo of mushroom sells for \$2.7, and Khamsing has already formulated ideas of what quantity he can produce and where to sell it. Besides having more food and looking toward the future, he thinks the income from his livestock and mushrooms will improve his family's livelihood—they can buy new clothes, home appliances, pay for their children's education, and provide better care to their disabled daughter. Moreover, he thinks PICRAIL activities will help his family transit from shifting cultivation to animal husbandry and permaculture or more environmental-friendly practices.

Khamsing wants to streamline or scale up mushroom cultivation by requesting a training on mushroom spawns. "I love mushroom farming," he said, "and I really want the project to teach me how to make spawns." This will allow him to be fully independent from project support and sustain the activity.

Khamsing first came in contact with PICRAIL through ADRA project staff who were conducting nutrition activities in his village. The news raised Khamsing's expectations and enthusiasm. In his view, he expected the project the help his family overcome poverty by providing new skills, knowledge, and/or funding to his family to enable them to defeat poverty. According to him, he told that the project has met his expectations, and he wants to make the most out of the support it provides.

Khamsing thanks ADRA/PICRAIL and donors for remembering his village. He feels very proud of ADRA/PICRAIL. He can see the changes in his family—more food, less time in the forest, and new hope. He promises to be more enthusiastic and active. He also wants the project to continue and stay longer.

