



Hope in action



JOURNEYS FOR REBUILDING RESILIENCE OF WOMEN IMPACTED BY COVID-19 IN VIET NAM

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HOPE IN ACTION

Journeys for Rebuilding Resilience of Women Impacted by COVID-19 in Viet Nam

"HOPE IN ACTION" is a powerful visual and narrative journey that captures the indomitable spirit of women in Ho Chi Minh City and Tien Giang province who have faced and overcome the multifaceted challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through poignant photography and inspiring stories, this photobook highlights their resilience, strength, and innovative efforts to rebuild their lives and communities. It stands as a testament to the courage and determination of women who have turned adversity into opportunity, showcasing their journey towards recovery, economic empowerment, and reducing the risks of violence in the face of an unprecedented global crisis.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

With financial support from DFAT, the project, '**COVID-19 Emergency Response and Recovery Support for Women at Risk of Violence**', was launched in April 2022. This project leverages UN Women's expertise in eliminating violence against women (EVAW) and promoting women's economic empowerment (WEE) within the emergency context of Viet Nam, particularly during the fourth wave of COVID-19 response and recovery in 2020 and early 2021.

The project's aim is to provide sustainable, holistic recovery support by examining the intersections of EVAW and WEE and understanding how these areas influence one another. It targets society's most vulnerable women, including the poor or near-poor, the unemployed or those who have lost their income, migrants, women with disabilities, women with HIV or chronic illness, household headed women, pregnant women or women with below 24-month children and survivors of violence and abuse in Ho Chi Minh City and Tien Giang Province, two areas severely affected by the fourth wave of COVID-19.

PROJECT'S IMPACTS

3,591

vulnerable women in Ho Chi Minh City & Tien Giang received cash grants and technical assistance to rebuild their livelihoods, positively impacting over 14,300 individuals in their households.

AT LEAST 30%

of Tien Giang province's population gained valuable insights on gender norms and livelihood skills through the Tien Giang public broadcast system, which included radio, newspaper, and community articles.

2.000

service providers benefitted from capacity building and 500 service providers received information card support to ensure they could deliver 24/7 services supporting survivors of violence against women and children.

An estimated

2 MILLION PEOPLE

were reached through national television, radio programs, and social media campaigns aimed at raising awareness about violence against women and children.





REVIVING FRUIT FARM ON DROUGHT-SALINE SOILS

In 2020, the drought and salinity was very severe. Over 20 star apple trees and grapefruit crop died. Cutting down each tree felt like a someone cutting your own skin. I got nothing from the fruit farm. Then, the COVID-19 hit and my children couldn't go to work. However, now the coconut prices have plummeted to 1.000VND/fruit, coupled with low demand for coconuts, it's even more challenging for us.

**Ms. HUYNH THI KIM LOAN, 56 years old,
Huu Dao commune, Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang**



My family has three children, two boys and one girl, all of whom are married. My husband was a seriously wounded soldier and passed away six years ago. This family is also a policy household because of him. The whole family has 3,000 square meters of land to grow coconuts, star apples, grapefruit, and sapoche. My two boys live with me but don't like gardening; they prefer to be blue-collar workers. Fortunately, my grandson shares my love for gardening, and together, we spend entire days tending to the garden. In the past, some farmers helped with the harvest, earning over 15 million in a year. As we approach the end of the off-season period, I rely on the income from selling coconuts, which provides a modest living for us.

If a family has money, they can renovate the trees and restore the land. I also want to do this, but I don't have the money. I do not dare to borrow from the bank because I am afraid I won't have anything to pay back. I borrowed 12 million from the Clean Water Fund to repair my house but still had to pay half.



The project supported me with 5.5 million VND. I renovated the farm and planted sapoche, which will start yielding in 4-5 years. Up to now, I have relied only on experience, but now I am learning more techniques and following the advice of others. In a few years, it will definitely be better!

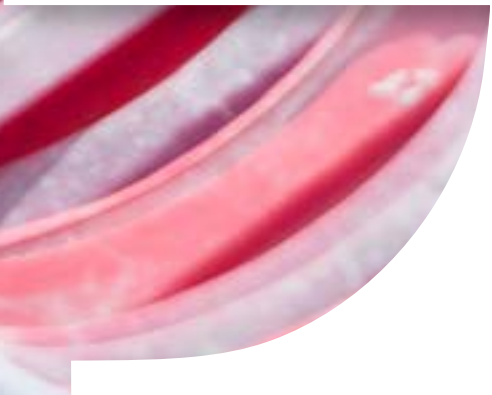
THE NOODLE SHOP THAT FEEDS THE FAMILY

Previously, my husband worked as a crane driver and shouldered the household expenses while I support him by selling food everywhere. Our family has five mouths to feed: the two of us, our two children, and a sister with disability. Every morning, my sister and I made small pots of noodles and sold them until 9 o'clock, earning 200,000 VND.

**Ms. NGUYEN THI THUONG, 44 years old,
Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang province**



Before the COVID-19 epidemic, my husband and I agreed that I would rent a kiosk in the market to sell goods, and he would take care of the yearly rent. But before we could do anything, he passed away.





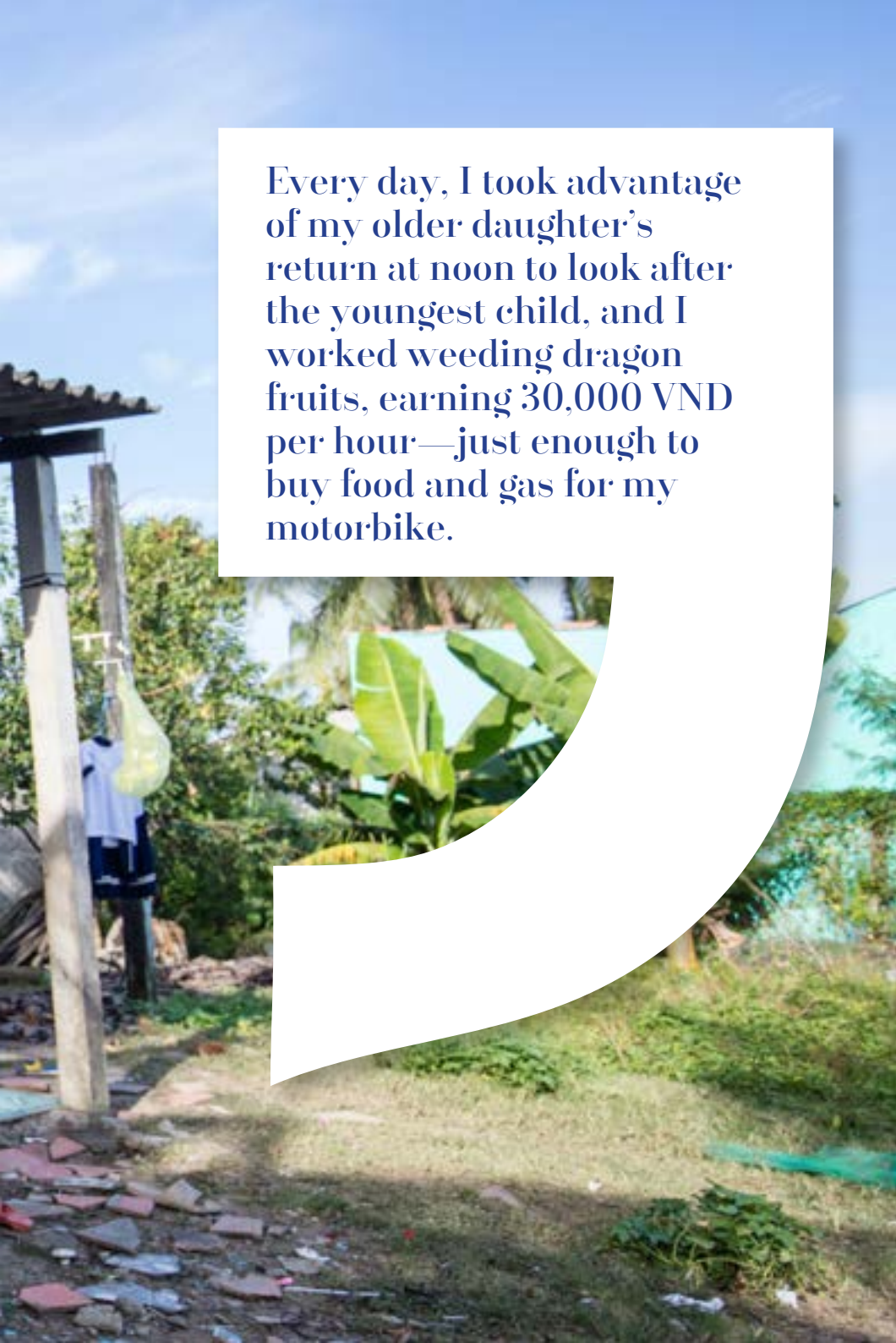
Then the most difficult period of my life came. The whole family contracted COVID-19, and he was the last to get it, but his case was the worst. He passed away after half a month of treatment. Several months later, my children and I received his urn. I was depressed for several months, unable to do anything. Luckily, I had some of his savings that we had planned to use for the market kiosk rent, and the government also supported me.

I just reopened the breakfast restaurant four months ago. But now business is very poor; before, I used to sell five portions, but now I only sell three. Since I am now the breadwinner of the family, if I don't sell, who will take care of my children and younger siblings?

I am very happy to receive money from the Project. I used the money to buy extra groceries and more tables, chairs, and drinks to make the noodle shop cleaner and more spacious. The shop's earnings have increased, improving our lives tremendously.. I'm so grateful!





A photograph of a rural outdoor setting. In the foreground, there's a wooden structure with a person standing near it. The background is filled with lush greenery, including banana plants and other tropical vegetation. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Every day, I took advantage of my older daughter's return at noon to look after the youngest child, and I worked weeding dragon fruits, earning 30,000 VND per hour—just enough to buy food and gas for my motorbike.

SUCCESSFUL GOAT RAISING

I couldn't stop laughing. My husband was so startled that he dropped the phone when our little girl said, "Daddy, I saw mom asking our neighbor for some baby clothes."

Before COVID-19, we had three children together: two girls and a boy. Our eldest is nine years old. In 2020, we were quarantined at home for several months without work. The whole family survived on rice, instant noodles, subsidies, and even the landlord covered our rent. During this time, I was pregnant with our fourth child. I didn't think we could make it, so we had to return to Tien Giang.

**Ms. VO THI THY, 43 years old,
Tan Binh Thuy commune, Cho Gao district,
Tien Giang province.**



The house and the field in front of it were lent to us by my brother. However, without a job, we lost money growing corn, raised a few geese that died, and ended up owing 1.6 million VND for fertilizer. Last month, my husband went back to Saigon to work as a security guard, earning 7 million VND a month. He sent money back to pay for the younger children's school fees and milk for the youngest child.

We were overjoyed to receive 5.5 million VND in support from UN Women! I used this money to buy three goats. I also received training on how to clean the cage, feed, and vaccinate the goats to ensure they grew quickly without getting sick. Last month, our mother goat gave birth to two babies, and I was so happy. I sold the baby goats for over 2 million VND to cover our living expenses and kept the female goat for further breeding. Thanks to the capital support, my family now has a more stable life, can engage in animal husbandry, and has more hope of escaping poverty.



RAISING PIGS TO ESCAPE POVERTY

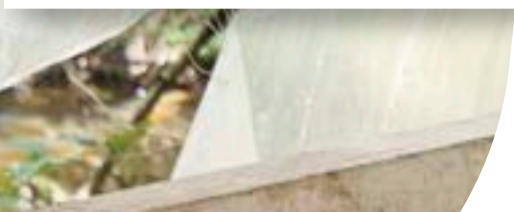
“With the available pigsty and additional support from UN Women, I have been able to buy two piglets and two bags of feed, stabilizing my livelihood.”

Before the pandemic, my family was classified as a poor household. After the pandemic, we were unemployed for several months. My health has deteriorated significantly after having COVID-19 twice. I can only do a little weeding, but it's also difficult for my body due to long-term spinal degeneration. Now, I have to take medication regularly. Fortunately, I have government-issued health insurance, so I can get the medication for free.

**NGUYEN THI KIM PHUONG, 46 years old,
Xuan Thuong commune, Chau Thanh district,
Tien Giang province.**



My husband works in the garden, weeding and doing whatever jobs he can find. The work is not stable, so our life is very precarious. My only hope for the future is to have a stable job and increase my income so that I can support my two sons in their studies and adulthood.





This Tet, I sold my pigs and made a few million dong in profit. I bought three more piglets and used the money to repair the leaky roof of my house.



With the 5.5 million VND support from the Women's Union and UN Women, I initially planned to raise goats but did not have enough capital. Taking advantage of the available pigsty and the support money, I was able to buy two piglets for 3.5 million VND. With the remaining money, I bought two bags of feed. I also learned from the project how to clean the pigsty, vaccinate the pigs, and mix feed so that the pigs grow quickly and stay healthy.



The support from UN Women has helped me change my mindset and given me more motivation to develop my livelihood. I hope that there will be more of such support for poor households like mine to help them develop their economy and achieve a more stable life.



SINGLE MOTHER WITH DISABILITY STRIVES TO RAISE HER YOUNG CHILD

Currently, I run a small grocery store and take care of my young child who is in kindergarten. Life is difficult, but fortunately, my grandmother is always there to help.

As a person with disabilities, my mobility is limited, making it difficult for me to find a job, which has greatly affected my life. Before the pandemic, I sold goods on the street in front of a school, earning 20-30 thousand VND per day. I also worked on posting articles on Facebook and other online platforms to earn extra income.

In addition to my health difficulties, I am also a single mother with a young child, so all my financial resources are devoted to taking care of him and sending him to school. I don't dare to think about the future; I just hope to have the strength to care for my child for as long as possible.

**LE KIM TIEN, 30 years old,
Binh Duc commune, Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang.**



I want to grow my business to have a stable income that can support my family and my child's education, but I don't have the capital to do so. I was very happy and excited to receive the capital from the support fund to expand my business. I used the money to buy more goods to attract customers and increase my income.



In addition to the financial support, I also received emotional encouragement, giving me more strength to strive for a better life. I hope this support will be extended to many people in similar situations and help more people in need.



SINGLE MOM SHOULDERS FAMILY THROUGH SHOPEE SALES AND RELENTLESS SELF-LEARNING

After the pandemic, I raised my daughter on my own by working as a Grab driver. When I got into an accident and broke my leg, I had to stay home from work for three months. After recovering, I went to work as a sales assistant for a hair salon, and my boss taught me how to sell on Shopee. I keep the profit from the sales I make myself, and I only pay the cost price. This earns me an additional 1 million VND/month on top of my monthly salary of 5 million VND. This is enough to cover food and school expenses for my child, not counting medical expenses. I don't dare to shop or go out.

**NGUYEN THI NGOC TIM, 38 years old,
resides in Ward 16, District 4, Ho Chi Minh City.**



“In the past, every day before I came home from work, I would receive a phone call asking, ‘Mom, what’s for dinner? Dad will go buy it for you.’ Now, no one calls like that anymore. When I received the news that he had passed away, my daughter and I were also quarantined. I didn’t think I could survive.”





When I received the 5.5 million VND, I was very happy. I bought a laptop to make posting easier because I couldn't type on my phone. My child also uses it to learn computer science and get used to computers. I bought a used laptop for 2.5 million VND, some more tape, cardboard boxes for packing goods, and wrapping paper.

I am currently self-learning how to sell on Shopee, such as tagging, posting product images, categorizing goods, and decorating my shop to make it more attractive. Usually, I get 1-2 orders a day, and on super sale days, I get 5-6 orders, earning an additional 1-2 million VND per month. My goal is to become a "Favorite Shop" on Shopee!



HOPE

Everyone says COVID-19 is over, but it still feels like it happened just yesterday. It hurts me deeply every time my daughter asks, “Mom, why hasn't dad come back from work in the city? He has not called me.”

In July 2021, 10 members of my family, both paternal and maternal, had to be treated for COVID-19 at the hospital, starting with my mother-in-law. My husband's condition worsened, requiring a ventilator, and he was transferred to a lung hospital in the province. He passed away after more than 10 days of treatment.

**Ms. NGUYEN PHUONG OANH, 37 years old,
An Thanh Thuy commune, Cho Gao district,
Tien Giang province.**







For several months after he left, I couldn't sleep and felt groggy. After the COVID outbreak subsided, my company had less work and only called back half of its workers. I work from Monday to Friday with no overtime, so I'm back with the kids by 4:30 PM. Now, with fewer orders, my salary is only 4.5 million VND per month. I have to save a lot to cover the costs for my parents and children, including food and school fees.

With support from the project, I bought an old sewing machine for 6 million VND and started doing additional processing work at home. Each pair of pants I sew earns me a little over a thousand VND, and I make about 1.5 million VND more each month, which is enough to sustain my children and me.

Only when I work
do I miss him less.
I hope to overcome
grief soon so I can
take better care of
my children.



THE OLD BAKERY AND THE DREAM OF A MOTHER WITH A BLIND DAUGHTER

After 20 years of marriage, I have two children. My 18-year-old eldest daughter has been blind since the 10th grade, and my second son has mild heart failure. My family's current situation is very difficult. Our livelihoods rely solely on the family's bakery business that has been passed down from our grandfather's time.

**BUI THI KIM PHUONG,
Ward 12, District 8, Ho Chi Minh City**

I am busy all day long, but the cost of hiring people to grind flour and mung beans has also increased, to 1.5-1.8 million VND/month. The profit is only enough to cover basic living expenses, and I can't do anything else.







When COVID-19 hit, our business was suspended and we could only rely on the government's support. Now that the pandemic is over, business is even harder than before. Every night, I make cakes and pack them ready. At 5 am the next morning, I deliver them to the markets for sale. Around noon, if there are online orders, I will make another batch.

When I heard about the project's support, I felt so happy that everyone asked me why I have been smiling so much lately. When I received the money, I immediately bought a flour grinder, imported some more molds, and some printing supplies to make the work faster. With the new grinder, I can take on more grinding jobs for others. I estimate that it will only take me 2 more months to recoup my investment.

If there are more training activities on online sales and live streaming, I would love to participate. I would also like to share with others. I am always willing to support other women who sell my cakes. They can pay me later when they sell them!





LEARNING TO “DO WELL IN BUSINESS”

“I was shocked for months. But I have to keep going because the living must live...”

Since my brother had an accident, I have been the sole provider and caretaker for my elderly parents and young grandchildren. In 2022, my mother passed away from cancer. Then COVID-19 hit, leaving me with nothing. My small coffee shop is now the main source of income for the family. The support money of 5.5 million VND from the project is a ray of hope in my life. My heart was full of joy upon receiving the support.

**Ms. NGUYEN THI DIEM QUYNH, 47 years old,
Ward 13, Go Vap District, Ho Chi Minh City.**



After receiving guidance from the project, I realized that to do well in business, I have to learn. I used the support money to buy more tables, chairs, and sunshades to make the shop cleaner and more airy. I also imported new types of soft drinks, invested in ingredients, and learned how to prepare new drinks such as iced lemon tea, ginseng, chilled winter melon, and coffee.

After just a month, customers are visiting more regularly and business is much better. My income has clearly improved.



Tên: 12
Chí: 9
Tên: 17
Tên: 12
Tên: 15
Tên: 20
Tên: 43
Chí: 20
Tên: 13

ĐẠI HỌC ĐÀ NẴNG





A RICE PAPER CART TO SUSTAIN A FAMILY

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, life for our family of seven was not abundant but still manageable. I supplied rice paper to grocery stores and tea shops, while my husband worked as a handyman, making iron gates, fences, railings, and more.

However, after the pandemic outbreak, things became much more difficult. Due to fewer customers, the shops ordered less banh trang. Meanwhile, expenses for the children, especially education costs, continued to rise.

**Mrs. HO THI THANH THAO, 40 years old,
Ward 13, Go Vap District, Ho Chi Minh City.**



With the support money from the UN Women's program, I bought a small cart to sell rice paper. I also added coke, orange juice and milk tea to meet the needs of customers. After just a month, customers have come to buy more regularly, and my income has improved significantly.



The support money may not be much for many people, but for us, it is an invaluable amount. We are immensely grateful and appreciate the project's assistance.



A DRYER BRINGS ABOUT SUPERIOR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

My family currently has a child with a congenital disability who has already undergone 9 surgeries. To support the family, I opened a laundry shop at home and helped my husband advise customers on purchasing washing machines and refrigerators. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, customers' demand for same-day laundry increased, but my shop only offered washing, hindering our ability to fulfill those requests.

**Mrs. NGUYEN THI TINH, 40 years old,
Ward 14, Go Vap District, Ho Chi Minh City.**

I had managed to save some money, but it wasn't enough to purchase a dryer. With the rising costs of rent, food, and other expenses, it became even more difficult to afford one.





Running a business after the pandemic has been much more challenging. When I received the support from the project, I bought a dryer, which contributed to expanding my laundry and drying services and bringing about superior business performance.

Deeply touched by this unprecedented assistance, I am truly grateful for this meaningful program that empowers women facing challenges to rise above adversity.

I was overwhelmed with joy upon receiving the support funds, as I realized it would allow us to invest in a dryer, helping our family's laundry business expand and boosting our income.



A SISTER'S DREAM OF A SEWING MACHINE

Currently, I work as a seamstress while taking care of my younger brother, who has a brain tumor. Every day, I sew while keeping an eye on him. Before, my father used to help me care for him, but after my father passed away due to COVID-19, I have to handle everything on my own.

I sew leg braces for people with broken legs at the Orthopedic Trauma Hospital. Because this job requires heavy lifting, the sewing machine often breaks down and needs frequent repairs. Sometimes, I'm hesitant to take on more orders because the money I earn might not even be enough to pay for machine repairs.

**Ms. NGUYEN THI HANH NGUYEN,
District 10, Ho Chi Minh City.**

“When my father passed away, I told him to rest assured that I would take care of my brother. Only then did my father close his eyes.”





The night before receiving the support money, I couldn't sleep because I was so happy. Even in my dreams, I couldn't believe I would receive such a large sum of money.

With financial support from the project, I immediately bought a new sewing machine to work more efficiently, avoiding the frequent need for repairs. The number of items I can sew has also increased significantly. I also pray for smooth work, for my health to take care of my brother, and for his safety. I believe I can endure any difficulties that come my way.





TEACHING KNITTING AND CROCHETING SKILLS TO WOMEN TO BOOST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I've been battling cancer for the past 10 years. Being the primary breadwinner in the family, I have to take care of my family's needs as well as handle medical expenses. When the COVID-19 outbreak happened, my husband had to return to our hometown to take care of his parents, and he's been stuck there since 2020.

**Ms. THACH THI NGOC HA, 46 years old,
residing in Ward 5, District 8, Ho Chi Minh City.**

I sell knitted goods, mostly during special occasions like March 8th and October 20th when people buy them as gifts, but this job isn't stable enough to provide consistent income every month.





At the end of 2023, encouraged by the Women's Union, I established a knitting and crocheting club to teach skills to women in difficult circumstances around the neighborhood, aiming to develop our economy together. Customers have to place a deposit for their orders and wait until the items are finished to collect them. Each time a customer completes their payment, I immediately pay the ladies in the club so they have money for their living expenses. Therefore, I don't have much liquid capital and have had to pass on several orders because I couldn't afford the materials.



When I received funding from UN Women, I was overjoyed because it came at just the right time. I also got to attend a financial management and business development class. With this 5.5 million VND, after completing the teddy bear order, I can proceed with an order for 200 gift bags for graduation ceremonies and use the profit for future endeavors.



I'm so thrilled! We've completed an order for over 200 teddy bears for a kindergarten! The ladies in the club are very happy because they now have income. Luckily, the funding from the project arrived just in time, so I had enough money to purchase all the materials.

The more orders I get, the more work and income the ladies in the club will have. I always believe that giving will ultimately bring back good things!



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