

Vietnam

Female Facilitator is Successful Training Facilitator, Successful Single Mother



At the monthly SUCCESS Alliance training facilitator (TF) meeting in the Dak Lak province of Vietnam's Central Highlands, 40-year-old H'Bim Buon Krong is sharp and focused. The first to speak, she precisely quotes her cocoa club figures without having to glance at her notes. As a member of the M'ngong ethnic group, H'Bim has emerged as a spokesperson for the M'ngong TFs in the room, who describe her as determined, respected and organized. She has to be: She manages three cocoa clubs, a shading tree seedling business and her own farm—and she is a single mother of two.

Her motivation as a trainer and entrepreneur is simple. H'Bim says, "Rice isn't enough to raise children." Because the soil is poor in the area where her community lives, farmers have not been able to plant high-value cash crops such as coffee or rubber. Instead they are only able to plant corn or cassava, which return a low profit. However, the soil is sufficient for cocoa and since cocoa does not need rich soil or require a high initial cash investment, it is a good crop for smallholders such as H'Bim to grow.

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H'Bim says her life changed dramatically for the better last year when she became involved with the SUCCESS Alliance, which is a public-private partnership consisting of USAID, USDA, the World Cocoa Foundation, Mars, Inc., and ACDI/VOCA. Through her training, H'Bim has become a leader and problem solver in her community, which is significant considering the traditionally low social status of women in Vietnam.

In March 2007, H'Bim was nominated by her local commune to be considered for the SUCCESS Alliance training of trainers (TOT) program. She performed well at the TOT academy, and, following a solid performance review, became an official TF. As a new TF, she was charged with recruiting 40 farmers to form a cocoa club where she would give trainings on cocoa cultivation techniques such as pruning, fertilizing and shading.

At the beginning of 2008, SUCCESS Alliance expanded its program in Vietnam, adding five new cocoa clubs. Because of her impressive abilities, H'Bim was offered the opportunity to manage two of the new clubs in addition to the one from last year.



ACDI/VOCA staff

Success Story

When she is not conducting her trainings, she consults with farmers on an individual basis. Quick to pick up on SUCCESS Alliance's teachings, H'Bim has set an example for her fellow farmers. For example, she used the few hundred grams of shade tree seeds she received from SUCCESS Alliance to produce more. Filling a gap in the market, she is now the primary shade seedling supplier to other cocoa-growing farmers in her commune. Not only has it made a significant difference to other farmers, it has brought her additional income to buy input materials for her rice paddies and to support her family.

Enthusiastic about the future, H'Bim has high hopes for both herself and the Central Highlands cocoa industry. "Until I became educated, I never knew it was possible for my life to change. I used to be all bones. I couldn't leave the house. Now I can help my commune and teach technical skills," she said.

By teaching others how to create more sustainable livelihood options with cocoa, H'Bim is helping improve her community—one workshop at a time.

