



In Laos, women weave lengths of handcrafted material on traditional hand looms or embroider as a key source of income.



Weaving provides consistent income for the household each month, while crops and livestock are seasonal and less frequently bring income.



Weaving incomes allow the family to survive throughout the year and funds agricultural production. Let's look more closely at who weaves...



As women age, their eyesight diminishes...



... meaning that their income also diminishes.



By the age of 50, many women can no longer weave, due to an eyesight disability.



When I was young, I could produce over 40 lengths a month. Now, my eyesight is less clear. I maybe manage 30, and I make more mistakes.



USAID Laos Microenterprise Activity tested the eyes of 1,360 women weavers. These were women who had never had their eyesight tested before in their lives.

Results revealed...

62%
of those
aged 30-39
and

99%
of those
over age 40

needed corrective glasses





After receiving corrective eyeglasses, the women in the pilot became more productive and their incomes increased 59% on average.



The increased income was spent on household and farming expenses, as well as school costs.

After the positive pilot results...

...the project provided eyeglasses

3,488

individuals



Of the women who received eyeglasses, 97% reported using them. All women who wore glasses reported an improvement in the quality of their woven product.



The majority said they would pay to replace the eyeglasses if they broke.



By wearing glasses, women could:

- See the pattern, threads and colors clearly
- Work different hours of the day and more accurately
- Tie broken threads more easily
- Use a smartphone and read



Women in neighboring villages even heard about and saw the results of women weavers; they decided to travel over an hour to get their eyes tested and buy glasses – something they had never contemplated before!



The project was able to identify a lasting solution to support the livelihoods of women and their households, while at the same time addressing a common disability faced globally as we age.



Importantly, women have been able to regain their economic importance in the household.

This cartoon was developed to visually tell the story of one unique intervention under the Laos Microenterprise project, implemented by ACDI/VOCA.