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Q1: Respondent details

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Q2: Country or Customs territory

THAILAND

Q3: Organization

Private sector

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Q4: Title of case story

How a small rural business in a developing country was empowered to effectively expand internationally through e-commerce with Amazon

Q5: Case story focus

E-commerce development and efforts to bridge the "digital divide".

Q6: Case story abstract

This case story describes how Lanna Clothes Design - a small woman-led business from rural Thailand - was empowered to expand internationally through e-commerce with Amazon. Within 10 months of its enrollment with Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA), Lanna Clothes Design grew 70%, with sales on Amazon making up 85% of total sales. Amazon's e-commerce services have enabled the business owner, Praew, to fulfill her dream of improving the lives of her family, employees, and community. Based on her own e-commerce success, Praew plans to help other local designers grow their businesses.

Q7: Who provided funding?

Private sector

Q8: Project/Programme type

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: Your text case story

Nutpusson Khrutnok (nicknamed Praew), the owner of Lanna Clothes Design, grew up in rural Thailand hand making and selling clothes as part of the family business. In order to sell their clothes at the night bazaar, Praew and her mother traveled 15 kilometers each day from their small village to central Chiang Mai. Their sales were heavily influenced by tourist seasonality, and during the off seasons, they would often face weeks or even months without getting any orders, forcing them to find other ways to get by. In addition, their housing rent continued to increase each year by 5%, adding to the family's financial challenges. Praew and her family needed a better way to generate income.

In 2013 Praew expanded her family's business to online retail after a European tourist asked her: "Why aren't you selling these beautiful pieces online and all over the world?" Curious about ecommerce, Praew consulted others and began selling online to customers in different countries that year. Branding the family business as Lanna Clothes Design, she sold handmade yoga pants, Thai fisherman pants, pom pom shorts and maxi skirts.

Managing the online business was challenging, particularly managing international shipments. Praew had to go to the local post office every day to send parcels, check the status of her shipments, and pick up returns. During her first few holiday seasons, she would get an average of 200-300 emails a day from customers requesting information regarding their orders. Handling these types of issues consumed the majority of her time, leaving little room for her to think about how to grow the business.

In late 2015, Praew attended an Amazon Global Selling workshop in Chiang Mai which taught local entrepreneurs how to sell to millions of existing Amazon customers and use Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) to simplify their global online operations. A few months later, Praew shipped her first FBA shipment to an Amazon warehouse in the US. Within 10 months of enrolling, Praew's online business grew 70%, with sales on Amazon making up 85% of total sales.

Most importantly, using FBA freed Praew from the burden of managing orders herself, giving her more time to develop her business and help other small business owners in her community. "I don't have to spend time replying to emails from customers about shipment status anymore," Praew explains. "Amazon FBA takes care of that. Now my biggest challenge is to be able to produce more to sell!"

With the growth of her business on Amazon, Praew has been able to fulfill her dream of improving the lives of her family, employees, and community. Furthermore, since launching her Amazon FBA business, Praew's number of employees has increased from 5 to 20, most of whom are women from rural Chiang Mai or the neighboring province of Phayao. Previously, these women were only able to work part-time making clothes and often had to leave their families behind to work in bigger cities or work in rubber farms. "Now they can work full-time with a stable monthly income. They don't have to be afraid of losing their jobs and can live with their families and manage their time better," Praew explains with pride. Praew plans to continue hiring more local designers and expand into more countries through Amazon.

In addition to her employees' wellbeing, Praew is dedicated to helping her community. Based on her own e-commerce success, she plans to help local designers grow their businesses. In addition, twice a year, her company donates clothing and food to a nearby orphanage with 600 children.

"There are no limits and everything is possible when you work hard," she says. "I'm really happy to be working with Amazon."

Q10: Lessons learnt

Respondent skipped this question
