

Aus4Equality|GREAT Partnering for Change



Empowering Red Dao Women through Developing Herbal Bath Products Red Dao Community Cooperative

Opportunity

The demand for natural ingredients including medicinal herbal bathing products is on the rise both globally and within Vietnam. Despite the market potential, 75-80% of medicinal plants used in Vietnam are being imported, mainly from China. The lack of long-term planning and coordination has led to insufficient domestic supply and an over exploitation of some varieties.

The Red Dao Community Cooperative in Ta Phin Commune in Sa Pa District, Lao Cai has a wealth of indigenous knowledge on local medicinal herbs and their applications for health purposes. To meet the growing demand, the Cooperative is expanding the supply and range of herbal bath products by engaging additional women farmers in the supply of inputs, upgrading processing and bathing facilities, and promoting new products.

Solutions for Change

- » Expand engagement with local women to increase sourcing of traditional Red Dao natural ingredient inputs from Hoang Lien National Park
- » 4 ha of seedling plantation developed
- » Technical training on medicinal herb production and collection skills and knowledge
- » Upgrading the processing and herbal bath facilities
- » Enhancement of market access by improving branding and marketing capacity of Cooperative
- » Gender equality trainings for men and women

Challenges

Currently, the Cooperative does not have enough financial capacity to invest in facilities to process medicinal herbs of a high quality. Access to quality seedlings and enhanced cultivation techniques are a challenge to ensuring a consistent and quality product.

While women are active in the medicinal herb sector, that are largely in labour-roles and are not accessing trainings or wage employment opportunities. There is also a limited understanding on sustainable production and collection practices. In addition, there are not strong incentives to conserve biodiversity due to a lack of benefit sharing mechanisms with producers.

Sa Pa District in Lao Cai Province has favourable ecological conditions for growing medicinal plants. Local people, especially ethnic communities, also have a long tradition of using medicinal plants.

Expected Results

- » **Increased income** for **165 women** all from ethnic minority groups
- » **70 new jobs** created
- » Minimum 80% of the participating women report **increased confidence**
- » **Private sector investment:** AUD 158,697