



Aus4Equality|GREAT Partnering for Change



Specialty Rice Boosts Economic Opportunities for Women Muong Khuong Cooperative

Opportunity

In 2018, the total annual sales of Seng Cu specialty rice from the Muong Khuong Cooperative met only 40% of domestic demand. By expanding the Seng Cu rice production area to increase rice production from 150 tonnes to 700 tonnes per year, the Cooperative will be better positioned to meet demand. With an existing network of seven distributors in Lao Cai and the Northern provinces, the Cooperative can be confident of sales. For households that transition from traditional rice cultivation to high quality rice, the potential for increased income is high.

Applying an explicit gender equality approach to the expansion of rice production and educating households on the benefits of gender equality and women's economic empowerment, the Cooperative will support women to engage in stable income generating activities while increasing the supply of speciality rice.

Solutions for Change

- » Expand the Seng Cu production area with a focus on working with women-led producer groups
- » Technical training for women on aspects such as seed selection, sustainable rice intensification techniques and integrated pest control
- » Improve rice quality by upgrading processing and storage technologies
- » Branding and market development leveraging the existing Seng Cu Muong Khuong brand

Challenges

Ensuring a consistently high quality product is key to increasing income and accessing more stable markets. The main challenge for the Cooperative to achieve this is building technical capacity amongst farmers in applying advanced cultivation techniques, including seed selection and integrated pest management, which will lead to improved productivity and quality.

The Cooperative plans to develop a plantation area of 120 ha in three communes through establishing women-led producer groups to engage with 439 households. Producer income can increase by as much as 50% compared to other rice varieties, however, it is important to build trust between farmers and the Cooperative to ensure mutual commitment to farming agreements.

Expected Results

- » **Increased income** for 439 people, including 237 ethnic minority women
- » Minimum 80% of participating women report **increased confidence**
- » **Private sector contribution:** AUD 359,537