



Aus4Equality|GREAT Partnering for Change



Women's Economic Empowerment Through Market Systems Development in Medicinal Plants and Upland Tea Intercropping in Lao Cai

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in Vietnam

Opportunity

High demand for organic tea and certified medicinal plants in both domestic and international markets provides opportunities to increase income and improve the economic status of ethnic minority women in Lao Cai.

Despite remarkable achievements in socio-economic development and poverty reduction, Lao Cai remains one of the poorest provinces in Vietnam. The Province's multidimensional poverty rate (21.8%) in 2017 was three times higher than the national average (7.2%). Ethnic minorities account for over 65% of the total population of the province. Agriculture is the most important source of income for the ethnic minorities of Lao Cai. More than 90% of ethnic minority women participate in traditional agricultural activities.

Shan tea is one of the most exotic tea varieties in Vietnam. Shan tea trees grow wild up to several meters high, with farmers having to climb the trees to pick the tea leaves.

Expected Results

- » **Increased income** for 1,203 women, including 1,196 ethnic minority women
- » 1,604 women **improve their skills; increase confidence and decision-making power**

Challenges

To access higher-end markets, Shan tea needs to be certified as organic and medicinal herbs needs to meet the World Health Organisation Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP-WHO) guidelines.

Weak linkages between farmers and enterprises make it difficult to access raw materials of sufficient quality and quantity.

From a business perspective, enterprises find it difficult to establish strong farmer groups in new areas. For many ethnic minority women, there is no ready access to training on cultivation and collection techniques, particularly in local languages.

Solutions for Change

- » Support two companies to consolidate, develop and expand tea and medicinal plants production area in seven communes
- » Enhance women's capacity and confidence in production planning, harvesting, preliminary processing and quality management for tea and medicinal products under organic and GACP-WHO standards
- » Build the brand and promote market access for Shan tea and medicinal plants from Bac Ha



Provincial People's Committee
Lao Cai Province

