

DHOM Opening remarks (5 mins)

- . Good morning colleagues, ladies and gentlemen
- . I started my term as Deputy Head of Mission at the Australia Embassy Vietnam just one month ago
 - and it is a pleasure to formally open the Engaging Women in Markets Seminar series organised by Vietnam’s GREAT program.
- . I’m pleased to see such strong representation from countries across the region, as well as from Canberra, at today’s event.
- . While the context in each country is different, we face many of the same challenges to empowering women and girls
 - a key goal of this seminar series is for us to learn from each other.
- . Vietnam has achieved a remarkable reduction in poverty over the last three decades.
- . However, not all people have shared equally in this success, with Vietnam’s 53 ethnic minority groups continuing to lag behind the rest of the population on a number of development indicators
 - but especially in terms of expenditure, income, education and access to sanitation.
- . Geographic distance, and remoteness, are the biggest barriers to improving the well-being of ethnic minority people.
- . As women often have less access to services and education, addressing gender inequality within ethnic minority communities can help to address pockets of entrenched poverty – we have seen this through the work of the GREAT program in the provinces of Northwest Vietnam.
- . At a national level, a women’s economic empowerment strategy can also underpin broader economic growth

- McKinsey estimates that under a ‘best-in-region’ gender equality scenario, Vietnam could add 10 per cent to its GDP with more gender-responsive policies, and greater activities targeting women in the private sector.
- . The Australian Embassy here in Hanoi has a longstanding commitment to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, with the release of a whole-of-Post Strategy that covers development programming, but also broader diplomatic advocacy.
- . And we reaffirmed our commitment to supporting women’s economic empowerment, as part of economic recovery, through the Partnerships for Recovery strategy and Vietnam COVID-19 Response Plan.
- . Even before the pandemic, Women’s Economic Empowerment was highly relevant to the Government of Vietnam – in particular, by helping to address the “unfinished agenda” of Vietnam’s recent, and rapid, economic growth:
 - by promoting more inclusive growth, improving domestic productivity, and reducing the poverty of ethnic minority groups, particularly ethnic minority women, who now make up most of Vietnam’s poor.
- . The Government of Vietnam has recently re-confirmed these priorities in its latest National Target Programs and through its next Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025).
- . Our flagship women’s economic empowerment program here in Vietnam – the Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism or “GREAT” Program – is taking a market systems development approach to removing barriers that prevent ethnic minority women from fully participating in markets.
- . The approach is new to poverty reduction and sustainable development in Vietnam.
- . It mobilises resources from the private sector, thus moving away from a traditional subsidy livelihood support model, and demonstrates a more sustainable approach to ethnic minority development that is both scalable and replicable.

- . Results from the program to date (2018 – 2021) indicate the significant potential for market-based interventions to improve outcomes for poor ethnic minority communities. These include:
 - Approximately 12,000 women have been provided with access to resources such as finance or improved seedlings
 - Over 15,000 women have increased their income
 - Over AUD 7 million has been leveraged from the private sector
 - We've also been able to influence the design of the Government of Vietnam's new target programs to be more responsive to the needs of local communities
 - And we have seen a positive impact on transforming gender roles within families.
- . The GREAT Program and other DFAT funded investments are continuing to evolve their approaches to best engage women in markets and support women to have balanced workloads, share decision-making, and promote communities free of gender-based violence.
- . I hope the discussion today and in the coming weeks can help us further along this journey.
- . Thanks – in advance – to all of the other programs participating today, and for being so willing to share your experiences.
- . I look forward to learning more from today's proceedings. Thank you.

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