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## Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEMA</td>
<td>Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRED</td>
<td>Centre for Regional Economy Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCCI</td>
<td>District and Department Competitive Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFAT</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREAT</td>
<td>Gender-Responsive Agriculture and Tourism Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTP-SEDEMA</td>
<td>National Target Program for the Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas 2021-2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMU</td>
<td>Project Management Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEE</td>
<td>Women’s Economic Empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This Gender-Responsive Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT) Program update presents an overview of Program activities undertaken between July and December 2020 and includes an update of progress against the Program objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic remained the defining constraint to economic development across Vietnam throughout this reporting period, however the impact on GREAT investments was reduced (from the earlier reporting period of January – June 2020) due to GREAT’s ability to rapidly adjust and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and, in some instances, reduce or mitigate the risk. The easing of restrictions led to increased market activity in Vietnam’s north-west, GREAT’s target region, and Vietnam’s national economy began to rebound at the same time, with GDP growth estimated at 2.9% for the year. While GDP growth was its lowest in decades, Vietnam was one of the best performing economies globally.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of trained women having new knowledge and skills in agriculture, processing, tourism and business</td>
<td>11,879</td>
<td>18,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women joining a cooperative or a business network (such as a collective group or group of common interest)</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>3,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women provided with productive resources and inputs with GREAT support</td>
<td>1,789</td>
<td>6,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women with increased income</td>
<td>10,917</td>
<td>14,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women appointed to take a leadership position in GREAT-supported collective groups</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women beneficiaries reported having increased confidence</td>
<td>87% in agriculture 73% in tourism and agri-tourism</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of women beneficiaries of gender targeting interventions participating in household financial decision making</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of policy dialogues between government and businesses in which women participate</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value (in USD) leveraged from GREAT supported enterprises/cooperatives as a result of co-investment with GREAT</td>
<td>USD 1.81</td>
<td>USD 2.25 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹The GREAT Program reports against annual targets committed by Cowater International to DFAT as detailed in GREAT’s Annual Work Plan.

1 www.timvest.ch.
GREAT has 52 investments in its portfolio and a range of implementing partners including business, non-business (government agencies, NGOs and research organisations) and innovation partners. Key new developments in partnerships over the reporting period included:

- Two new partnerships were developed: CODAS (innovation) and Kisstartup (digital transformation to support COVID response)
- SNV’s Partnership Agreement was amended to support provincial COVID-19 recovery planning
- Two projects were up-scaled - Center for Rural Economy Development (CRED) Bamboo and Muong Kuong speciality rice.

Between July and December 2020, two new partnerships were developed, one was amended to support provincial COVID-19 recovery planning and two were up-scaled.

Up to December 2020, AUD 14 million of GREAT’s partnership funding had been committed, representing 77% of the programs partnership agreement budget. The 2020-21 budget was revised in light of COVID-19 impacts and, from July-December 2020, AUD 2 million of partnership agreement funds were disbursed, representing 31% of the financial year budget.
COVID-19 Impact and Response

COVID-19 continued to have an impact on partner project implementation during the reporting period, with 20% of agricultural and 16% of tourism activities delayed. COVID-19 was mentioned as a challenge 188 times in partner reports between July-December 2020. Specific challenges included:

- Certification processes (e.g. organic tea, cinnamon) have been delayed as international auditors cannot travel to Vietnam.
- Needing time to organise training following social distancing restrictions being lifted.
- International experts being unable to enter the country.
- Trade fairs for tourism and handicraft businesses being cancelled and not re-scheduled.
- Study tours both within Vietnam and internationally needing to be postponed.
- Changing market conditions making it difficult to implement activities.
- Businesses have had to scale down due to declining market demand (e.g. for vegetables) or shift to new products or new business models (such as handicrafts and tourism); and
- Policy consultation workshops (District and Department Competitive Index (DDCI) initiatives) were cancelled during the social distancing period.

Most of these delays disproportionately impacted women as they are often less able to access information, study tours and training than men. Partners in the tourism sector and the passionfruit and vegetable value chains were particularly impacted due to changing market conditions. At the household level, an estimated 66% of agricultural beneficiaries encountered difficulties due to COVID-19-related interruptions to production and crop-sales. Tourism was even more impacted, with 78% of tourism beneficiaries reporting an impact due to COVID-19, with a higher rate for women (79%) compared to men (73%).

Evidence from GREAT’s Midline Longitudinal Study and project level midline survey found the impact on household income varied by sector, with approximately half of the households’ income increasing and half declining. Nevertheless, on average, there was a net increase in project-related income of VND 10.24 per household in 2020.

The Midline Longitudinal Study also found that Muong and Thai women reported increased stress from loss of income. Reports by women on the increase in violence reflected emerging and anecdotal evidence globally, that COVID has exacerbated the stressors and triggers for violence against women. Comprehensive data to verify the situation in Vietnam is not available, apart from reports by a few non-government service providers.

More positively, GREAT’s tourism, medicinal herbs and rice projects saw men and women earn incomes closer to home, rather than migrating to secure income. This helped reduce household stress.

GREAT’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan is focused on agricultural and tourism sector support, improving access to finance, business continuity, increasing digital literacy for ethnic minority women and address gender-based violence.

Table 2 outlines key activities in the reporting period, and more detailed COVID-19 updates can be found at: https://equality.aus4vietnam.org/covid-19-response-and-recovery/great-covid-19-update.

We grow vegetables, but we did not do well. I am worried because if I am infected with COVID-19, I don’t have money for treatment. In the village, people offer local alcohol to pray to heaven and earth for blessings, and to hope COVID-19 does not come. (Interviewee, Dao community)

1GREAT Project Level Midline Assessment Draft Report, Mekong Research Development Institute, February 2021.
2Ibid.
3GREAT Midline Longitudinal Study Report, University of Minnesota (December 2021), p24.
5Ibid, p70.
Table 2: Key COVID-19 response activities in the reporting period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner activities have been severely disrupted and business profitability impacted. This impacts the ability of businesses to source products from women or to enrage women as employees.</td>
<td>GREAT worked closely with all partners to assess strategies and work plans. A capacity assessment of 10 businesses that were heavily impacted by COVID-19 was conducted.</td>
<td>Six businesses are currently receiving GREAT consultant support to pivot to new markets and improve supply chain management capacity. Support will be extended to other business partners provided they demonstrate a commitment to adapt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential greater risk of gender-based violence due to social isolation and lockdown.</td>
<td>Engaged local non-governmental organisation CSAGA to implement campaign.</td>
<td>Women’s Unions in Son La and Lao Cai trained on gender-based violence and communications techniques. One full-day training for GREAT, Project Management Unit (PMU) and partners on gender-based violence prevention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourism market has collapsed. This has particularly impacted community-based tourism destinations, home-stay owners and service providers that rely heavily on the international market.</td>
<td>COVID-19 recovery campaigns conducted in Sapa, Moc Chau and Bac Ha as well as COVID-safe business training.</td>
<td>In Moc Chau, Action on Poverty facilitated cooperation amongst approximately 20 domestic tour operators to develop and launch a combined product targeting the domestic market. These tour operators have formed a new business alliance and to date have sold more than 1,000 tour packages to community-based tourism destinations in Moc Chau. In Ta Phin Village in Sapa, DCI Sapa has developed the destination, including improved landscaping and food menus and two shorter trekking routes targeting the domestic market. Households have been supported with a loan to improve homestays tailored to the domestic market as well as to develop agricultural inputs such as local chicken and vegetables to supply the tourism market. Ta Phin has attracted large school groups from Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi with over 500 visitors experiencing the destination. In Bac Ha, CRED has profiled the destination though a family visit of tour operators and media and developed marketing collateral for the domestic market as well as a trekking map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 has highlighted the digital divide between men and women and Kinh and ethnic communities</td>
<td>GREAT is helping to harness digital technology to support households with Kisstartup engaged to support digital transformation.</td>
<td>Partners needs assessment conducted and businesses/cooperatives selected to be part of a structured mentoring program to transform their business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural markets have been disrupted which has flow-on impact to market demand for women and men farmers.</td>
<td>SNV supporting COVID-19 recovery plans.</td>
<td>Initial round of consultation conducted, and policy entry points identified. Timelines to align with provincial planning has been agreed with the Departments of Planning and Investment and Agricultural and Rural Development in both provinces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability of households to repay loans (GREAT supported revolving funds and formal finance).</td>
<td>Review revolving fund and formal credit repayment capacity of farmers and home stay owners and formulate action plan/support mechanisms.</td>
<td>Initial assessment completed. GREAT is in final stages of recruiting two micro finance consultants to provide support to partners and provide recommendations on loan deferrals/write offs and alternative use of GREAT revolving funds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress Update: Empowering Local Women

How the GREAT Program Empowers Women

GREAT applies a three-pronged approach to women’s economic empowerment:

### Reach
- Engage women in all project activities
- Invite women as participants with a focus on engaging ethnic minority women
- Understand women’s aspirations and challenges
- Reduce barriers to participation including language
- Make sure at least 50% of the members are women

### Benefit
- Improve women’s economic condition
  - Access to assets
  - Access to financial services
  - Access to support services
- Ensure that women benefit from project activities
- Design services taking into account gender specific needs and preferences (e.g. technical training in local languages, use of ET)
- Address policy constraints
- Promote gender responsive business cases
- Promote disability inclusive business cases
- Build capacity of local service providers (e.g. Women’s Unions) to provide gender services for businesses

### Empower
- Strengthen ability of women to make strategic life choices and put these into action
  - Decision making
  - Self-confidence
  - Capabilities
- Enhance women’s decision-making power in households
- Advocate for workload sharing in the household
- Leadership skills training and coaching for women
- Networking for knowledge and experience sharing
- Advocate for equal, safe and flexible working environment for women
- Address gender-based domestic violence and child abuse

- Women with increasing decision-making power over production, income, etc.
- Workload balance
- Women in leadership
- Prevalence of gender-based violence

- Number or proportion of women participating in project activities:
  - Attending training
  - Joining a group
  - Receiving inputs and services
- Sex-disaggregated data for outcome indicators such as:
  - Productivity
  - Income
  - Assets
Benefit: Improve women’s economic conditions

Improving Knowledge and Capabilities

Since the start of GREAT, women have gained new technical knowledge across all product sectors, giving them a sense of confidence and new opportunities for productive work and livelihoods. Based on the project level midline survey, an estimated 71% of women trained are applying their new knowledge and skills.

Job creation

To December 2020, an estimated 834 jobs (210 full-time jobs and 624 part-time jobs), have been created for women, including 772 jobs for ethnic minority women.⁷

Improving Household and Women’s Income

Out of the 15,629 households participating in Program activities, 9,082 generated accounting profit from GREAT-supported products in 2020, equating to 15,414 women with increased income.⁸ In total, GREAT-supported products in 2020 generated increased income of AUD 16,715,850.⁹

On average, each household in the agriculture and tourism sector earned an accounting profit of AUD 937 from GREAT-supported products in 2020. As estimated, the total accounting profit of all 15,650 households participating in the program in 2020 was AUD 14,667,536. An estimated 54% of agricultural households recorded a profit and 30% of tourism households.

Figure 5 illustrates the different stages of uptake of GREAT’s interventions by beneficiaries, from accessing training, applying what was learnt, accessing resources and generating income. In total, 79% of women trained reported applying the training, with 65% of these women accessing resources such as seedlings or finance. A total of 93% of those applying the training generated increased income from production and/or tourism services.

Figure 1 Intervention uptake by beneficiaries

The Midline Longitudinal Study noted that where women were earning money from their productive work, they were using it to improve their households by buying time-saving machines and goods for themselves and their families. For example, Dao women who sold cinnamon and bamboo shoots reported improving their homes and buying clothes for themselves. Women were increasingly making decisions to reallocate their time and income to new products and to invest or re-invest income into production. Women were able to make decisions about production and income-use even when overall income did not increase, because working in these productive activities and earning gave women greater influence in these decisions.

¹This was a slight decline from the previous six months with the impact on COVID-19 impacting partners ability to maintain staff.
²Accounting profit is used to verify the indicator for the number of households with increased income as it takes into account expenses and depreciation. The number of women with increased income was estimated by multiplying the number of households gaining accounting profit by 1.4. The result is attributable to GREAT’s support.
³The project level midline assessments identified the average accounting profit per household was AUD 1,069 from GREAT supported products in 2020. The total figure was calculated by multiplying the 15,629 households participating in the 34 projects included in the project level midline assessments by the average income. The exchange rate of AUD-VND exchange rate is 17,827 as of May 14, 2021.
Empower: Strengthen the ability of women to make strategic life choices and put these into action

Change in women’s roles and status
Evidence from the Project Level Midline Survey shows that training positively impacted both male and female perceptions of women’s roles and employment opportunities. Across all sectors, women’s participation in project activities, training, social groups and production shifted norms and expectations of women toward greater equality and wellbeing. Women were supported by GREAT partners to engage in production, to participate in social groups, and to attend trainings so they could gain knowledge at levels higher than before. Men regarded women’s contribution to the household as placing less stress on them socially and economically. They had greater respect for their wives when they observed their partner’s increased knowledge and community engagement.

Wellbeing
Women felt more socially supported because of their participation in project activities, especially women’s growing and/or savings groups. These groups provided an opportunity to learn and share with others and to undertake more activities outside the home. Women who participated in these groups felt happier and more confident, with some reporting increasing their knowledge and literacy.

Confidence
An estimated 87% of women in agriculture and 73% in tourism expressed their confidence in at least one aspect of production or service provision.

Decision-making
Women across all product sectors are involved in household decisions with 100% of surveyed women reporting being involved in decision making on both regular household and large household expenses, this was up 80% from the baseline. This equates to 21,919 women who are participating in the Program reporting involvement in decision making on regular household or large household expenses.

Positively, women have also been increasingly involved in production decisions in new sectors and making decisions about use of income, including investing in productive activities.10

Workload sharing
Midline data showed that women’s increased workload in production shifted men’s involvement – increasing their role in housework, cooking and childcare.

Leadership
GREAT is helping young women to find their voice in their household and community. The Midline Longitudinal Study identified that increasing incidences of women (especially young women) taking on leadership roles helps to shift awareness in favour of more equitable gender relations in the home and community. However, “...these women need to be supported in sharing their perspectives and in responding to generational norms that may challenge younger women’s roles.”11 Leadership outcomes vary across different ethnic groups with young Nung women taking on leadership roles in agricultural groups due to good literacy skills. New leadership roles for Dao women in the vegetable and medicinal herb cooperatives has resulted in increased status in their household and with other women.

To December 2020, 1,194 women had been appointed to be group leaders. The Project Level Midline Assessment identified that 73% attended group management. The vast majority (77%) of women surveyed in the project level baseline intended to continue in the leadership position; this was higher than their male counterparts (65%).

10 Data from project level midline and baseline surveys.
11 GREAT Midline Longitudinal Study Report, University of Minnesota (December 2021), p.31.
Progress update: Improved Business and Sector Performance

This section presents the sector and business performance of GREAT supported value chains and businesses.

Business Performance

Business performance presented a mixed picture due to the economic conditions throughout the reporting period, however there was evidence of economic recovery despite a second COVID-19 wave, with GREAT business partners reaching 94% of planned targets.

Production areas expanded: In total, 28 projects reported a total production area of 7,743 ha in the July-December period, achieving 119% of the planned results. The cumulative total subsequently reached 17,820 ha (16,130 ha planned) at the end of the reporting period. Major expansions were seen in cinnamon, tea and ramie – sectors with strong market demand that also heavily engage women. With passionfruit, progress was slow due to a virus that impacted the vines and a drop in the market demand. Out of 27 businesses, 21 met their expansion target in the reporting period.

Volume of agriculture produce sourced: Businesses sourced 20,349 tonnes of produce from farmers, achieving 120% of the planned target in July-December 2020. Seven businesses exceeded their target and nine sourced less than the planned volume. There were no significant trends across sub-sectors except vegetables where there was an oversupply due to reduced demand with closure of schools, cafes and restaurants.

Seedlings produced and sold to the markets: Nine projects across ramie, medicinal plants, bamboo shoots and vegetables expanded the nursery areas to 42 ha in the July-December period, achieving 100% of the planned target. This includes eight women-led nurseries under the Fresh Studio project in Moc Chau. This was a 21% increase compared to the previous reporting period. An estimated 5.65 million seedlings were sold between July and December and nine businesses accounted for 98% of the seedlings produced. Vegetable and medicinal plant partners performed well, however only 20% of the planned target for ramie seedlings was reached in Lao Cai. This was due to a lack of proper nursery techniques and skills by current household-based nurseries. GREAT has now attracted an additional private sector partner to support seedling production.

Market expanded and revenue increased: Market disruption caused by COVID-19 forced most partners working in tourism, tea, vegetables, medicinal plants and passionfruit to target new markets, particularly domestically. Positively, this created new opportunities for organic tea, herbal bath products and cinnamon.

A total of 25 out of 29 businesses (GREAT partners and within partner supply chains), including three in tourism, achieved increased revenue in this reporting period compared to the first six months of the year. Eleven businesses exceeded their planned target. This illustrated that the majority of businesses were able to rebound due to pivoting to new markets, product diversification and improved business operational efficiency driven by GREAT support.

Products designed to meet organic quality standards such as tea, cinnamon and bamboo shoots maintained good market demand. Market demand and price are the most important factors motivating businesses to expand production areas and engage with more women.

Across all sub-sectors, the accumulated revenue for enterprises, cooperatives, collective groups and business households exceeded VND 259 billion to December 2020. Tea, medicinal plants and vegetables generated the highest revenue.
Sector Performance

Linking producers and enterprises/cooperatives:
To December 2020, 5,296 contracts for sourcing were signed between enterprises/cooperatives and producers or production groups, representing 91% of the end-of Program target.

Access to Resources: To date, 11,936 women have been provided with productive resources and inputs through GREAT investments. This includes agricultural inputs such as seedlings and fertiliser, as well as finance. Realisation of the target for ethnic minority women (59%), is lower than for women in total (66%), with GREAT and partners continually needing to address barriers to reaching ethnic minority women.

Market Improvements: In each sub-sector, GREAT’s activities have directly or indirectly resulted in market improvements such as an increased number (and types) of value chain participants, availability of additional supporting functions and services to meet the constraints of households and women specifically, and a strengthened enabling environment including new policies and standards. For example:

- In the vegetable sector, quality seedlings and other inputs are now more available locally. Farmers have access to new knowledge on advanced vegetable production techniques through field schools organised with lead farmers by Fresh Studio. Out of 871 farmers accessing seedlings and training via Fresh Studio-supported local nurseries, 84% are women.

- In tea, production areas and organic tea exports have expanded, with a greater range of local and international markets now being accessed and local processing facilities upgraded. Tea harvesting equipment is being introduced to reduce women’s work burden and cost of harvesting. A Participatory Guarantee System is also being applied to small scale production areas to significantly lower certification costs. New support services are being developed to build regional highland tea branding.

- In the bamboo shoot sector, an organic value chain has been developed involving lead company Yen Thanh, two new local cooperatives and nine collective groups. Through GREAT support, the sector in Son La has evolved from harvesting from the forest and simple processing for the domestic market to planting bamboo and processing for high-end export markets. This is creating sustainable income for ethnic minority women living in remote areas.

Upscaling and Replication: There is strong evidence of upscaling in bamboo shoots, tea and ramie sub-sectors, particularly in Son La province. For example, the bamboo shoot plantation area will be expanded from 100 pilot ha to 1,000 ha in Van Ho district, largely using government funding. The business linkage models between Yen Thanh and Kim Boi
Companies with local farmers will be upscaled by district authorities and private sector partners to four districts - Sop Cop, Song Ma, Bac Yen and Mai Son - to produce bamboo shoots targeting higher end markets. In Lao Cai, bamboo shoot cultivation will be expanded to seven communes in Van Ban District by district authorities, with private sector investment in processing facilities to create higher value products.

Similarly, the ramie value chain model will be rapidly expanded to Sop Cop, Song Ma, Phu Yen and Muong La districts in Son La Province with new private sector investment. An Phoc, the lead buyer of ramie has started engaging more proactively in sector coordination meetings with local authorities and cooperatives to speed up the expansion of the farming areas as well as improve the supply of quality seedlings in both provinces.

In cinnamon, Tam Hoi Cooperative exports cinnamon from Bao Thang and is adopting the GREAT supported organic cinnamon value chain model for export. The Lao Cai Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will help support the cooperative in farmer training for cinnamon plantations and harvesting. With the assistance of GREAT, Olam (a global spice giant), has signed a sourcing contract with local cooperatives.

The ecosystem for e-commerce is rapidly developing in GREAT’s two target provinces. With improved support from relevant departments, qualified service providers for e-marketing, e-payment, transportation, and logistics such as Viettel Post, Vo So, Sendo and VBSP have provided services in the provinces. Government agencies such as the Department of Cooperatives in both provinces have become more active in providing support on product registration to producer groups. They are enabling potential producer groups to engage in e-commerce business models. Specific results achieved in this reporting period for e-commerce market system development include:

- 67 producer groups and cooperatives with appropriate agriculture products (e.g. specialty rice, dried food, herbal bath) selected and strengthened. Out of 67 cooperatives, 31 cooperatives have female leadership.
- 109 commercial contracts (including 75 contracts for online business and 34 contracts for offline business) between cooperatives and 4 e-Commerce platforms signed, of which, 25 online commercial contracts were signed by female leaders.
- 34 contracts between producer groups/cooperatives and Food Hubs signed; (for example: fresh vegetables and fruits, spices, tea, chilli sauce, dried food).
- Two supported cooperatives are in the final stage of obtaining private sector financial investment.
Over the reporting period, GREAT built strong momentum on policy objectives, particularly in helping to influence the NTP-SEDEMA 2021-2030, which is one of the key ‘pillars’ to influence poverty reduction policy at a national and local level. Through the Department and District Competitive Index in both provinces, the Program is supporting an improved and more inclusive business environment.

To date, 1,865 women have been involved in policy dialogue, 1,262 are ethnic minority women, or 27% of the end-of-program target. A total of 1,135 sub-provincial policies, regulations, plans or guidelines in the agriculture and tourism sectors have been newly developed or revised with GREAT inputs and/or support, exceeding the end-of Program target of 995.

### National Level

GREAT has largely invested in policy influencing at a national level via the following partnerships with CARE and UNDP:

- Provision of experts to the Social Affairs Committee under the National Assembly to advocate for the issuing of Resolution 120/QH13 on the Investment Policy for the NTP-SEDEMA.
- Input and expertise to the Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) drafting working group for the design of NTP-SEDEMA on Component 3.2 on production development.

A series of recommendations supported and advocated by GREAT, in conjunction with other development partners, were all adopted in the final NTP-SEDEMA feasibility study report submitted by CEMA to the National Assembly and included:

- Empowering local government to determine local priorities.
- Market-based approaches including co-investment with private sector and sector selection based on market opportunities.
- Enabling greater community involvement in decision making and participation in project delivery compared to previous NTP’s. e.g. infrastructure.
- Gender-mainstreaming being adopted across the 10 projects within NTP-SEDEMA.
- Removal of bottlenecks in allocating and managing public recurrent and investment budget for production activities and infrastructure.

GREAT supported the UNDP through a partnership agreement, to review and prepare a new National Assembly resolution on Promoting Multidimensional, Inclusive and Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2021-2030 (Resolution 76), in conjunction with MOLISA and the National Assembly. A key recommendation from the review was to include additional poverty dimensions such as nutrition, education, employment and dependants to encourage a shift from output-based to outcome-based government support policies. This provided an important basis for the recent Government Degree 07/2021/NĐCP dated 21 January 2021 on raising the multi-dimension poverty bar to be closer to the minimum living standard, allowing an additional 3.03 million women, including 1.29 million ethnic minority women in near poor households, being eligible for government support.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) Based on the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2018.
Provincial, District and Sector Level

In total, 16 projects are helping to formulate or improve policy documents, including at the sector level. A snapshot of these is outlined below.

### Table 7: Policy Activities and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Engagement of Women</th>
<th>Intended WEE Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District and Department Competitiveness Index (DDCI).</td>
<td>Action plans developed to support business environment. Feedback on gender responsive gaps for 12 action plans provided.</td>
<td>Women entrepreneurs included in consultation. The DDCI measures gender dimensions.</td>
<td>Improve the business environment including for women entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting policy for the development of Bodhi trees to produce benzoin.</td>
<td>Policy Document [No. 99 / PNN-NLN dated 20/10/2020] approved by Van Ban District to support the expansion of the production area to 23 communes.</td>
<td>Ethnic minority women actively participated in policy seminars.</td>
<td>Increase sustainable income opportunities for ethnic minority women though engaging in Bodhi tree cultivation and harvesting of benzoin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development to support the inclusive development of tourism and attract investment.</td>
<td>Policy in draft form.</td>
<td>Ethnic minority women participated in consultation workshops.</td>
<td>Improved access for visitors to border areas, generating increased income for local communities. Increased income opportunities for ethnic minority women through becoming onsite guides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving support services and cooperative regulations in Lao Cai.</td>
<td>Resolution No. 26/2020 / NQO-HDND dated 4/10/2020 on Promulgating Regulations to support the development of the agricultural sector in Lao Cai for the next five years including budget allocation approved.</td>
<td>Women leaders (cooperative and producer groups) participated in policy formulation.</td>
<td>Increase income for ethnic minority women farmers in Lao Cai.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Literacy

Literacy and education are foundational to empowerment for women as they support basic dignity for women and provide access to other opportunities/resources. Consequently, it needs to be accounted for in models and assumptions and thought given to how GREAT and other women’s economic empowerment programs can effectively address these issues, including through the role of technology, producer groups and training.

Gender-Responsive Business

In order to integrate gender and market-based interventions, we need to better understand the incentives for businesses to be gender-responsive, particularly in the context of Lao Cai and Son La where many businesses are not connected to international supply chains which have expectations around sustainability and inclusion.

Engagement of Men

If involving men can support women’s access and agency (though intra-household relations/decisions, support in knowledge utilisation), how can we identify when it also might constrain it by reinforcing unequal roles, impacting women’s voice or decisions? Some social norms can be supportive, and some can be constraining, and we need to identify when and which social norms work for empowerment. The project level midline survey also identified a perception gap, where women believed they had the power to make decisions but men were less likely to believe that women had the ability to make major household decisions. This also highlights the importance of knowing how and when to engage men in women’s economic empowerment projects to create the environment for women to be involved in decision making, to address workload sharing and reduce the risk of gender-based violence.
A major achievement in this reporting period was the coaching of 49 departments and districts to improve the quality of action plans developed under the Department and District Competitive Index project. Analysis of gender responsive gaps for 12 Action Plans were conducted. This is resulting in practical actions to improve the enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.

GREAT has supported digital transformation in the agricultural sector with 15 agribusinesses introduced to an app to improve production planning and management. This app makes it easier for farmers to apply quality standards and has reduced input costs by an estimated 30-40% and the time needed for land preparation and data entry and monitoring by group leaders. A new digital solution was identified that will deliver practical technical training to farmers at a relatively low cost, improve information transparency (company requirements and inputs) whilst supporting businesses and group leaders to better manage production processes. Video clips on each step of the production process in several ethnic minority languages will be available to enable women who do not speak or read Vietnamese language to apply the training effectively.

Private and public dialogue via sector-steering groups had a strong focus on addressing COVID-19 and supporting innovation in the sector. In the vegetable sector for example, sector-steering has encouraged companies to invest more in post-harvest facilities such as cold storage and to densify crops to meet the needs of domestic buyers. A new sector group for ramie (a product similar to hemp used for textiles and with considerable potential to create increased income for women) has been established to drive growth and address constraints in this emerging sector.

GREAT’s partner network of gender experts has continued to provide support to coordinate activities including joint gender equality campaigns and learnings/knowledge sharing. Training was provided to all partners on GREAT’s WEE approach and mainstreaming gender within business and targeted value chains.

In this reporting period, GREAT provided training to partners in Lao Cai and Hanoi on inclusion of people with disabilities in GREAT’s project supply chains, this followed on from training in Son La in June 2020. This was facilitated by IDEA, a local Disability Services Organisation. In total, the three workshops attracted 110 participants including partners and PMUs. GREAT has engaged IDEA to provide mentoring support to partners, that have identified opportunities to better engage people with disabilities in their project activities. For example, Action on Poverty are already developing a plan to engage people with disabilities within the tourism sector in Moc Chau.
Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning

Monitoring, evaluation, research and learning activities are all on track with some modification to timing and approaches due to COVID-19. Key activities included:

- Project level midline survey fieldwork for 34 projects completed
- Systemic market change assessment analytical framework developed
- Success story training completed, followed by production of success stories
- Joint monitoring mission to 11 projects in Lao Cai and Son La
- Training on project performance assessments for the two PMUs
- Midline Longitudinal Study Report completed
- Knowledge management action plan and first knowledge product developed (GREAT's Market System Development [MSD] approach which was published on BEAM Exchange)
- Support to the DFAT-commissioned Midterm Review of the GREAT Program
- Online and offline Reflect/Refocus workshops with the PMUs, Steering Committee members and all partners
- MIS upgraded with a key performance indicator module and a real-time reporting app developed.

Communications

Over the reporting period, GREAT’s communications helped to amplify key WEE messages and increase the visibility of the Program and DFAT with beneficiaries, government agencies and broader stakeholders. The Communications Plan and website were updated, and a range of new products produced including:

- Province and District Profiles developed.
- A pilot photovoice campaign was launched with two CRED projects.
- A video telling the story of Red Dao Community Cooperative to explain GREAT’s WEE approach.
- Partnering for Change profiles and social media coverage for individual projects
- There was increased media coverage with 19 articles in the reporting period, against an annual target of 15. This included substantial national coverage.