

## SECTOR BRIEF

# VOCATIONAL HOSPITALITY TRAINING

### About GREAT

The Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT) program is building the social and economic resilience of ethnic minority women in Northwest Vietnam. GREAT partners with the private sector, government agencies and civil society to unlock opportunities for women's economic empowerment in the agriculture and tourism sectors. Funded by the Australian Government, GREAT is delivered in partnership with the Provincial People's Committees of Son La and Lao Cai provinces. GREAT began in 2017 and is a 10-year program with an investment of AUD 67.4 million.



### Bridging the skills gap for ethnic minority women in tourism

Tourism is a significant and fast-growing sector in Northwest Vietnam, serving as an increasingly important source of income and contributing to the empowerment for the many ethnic minority women working in the industry. These women play a vital role as employees or entrepreneurs in various sectors like homestays, food services, handicrafts and more. Both domestic and international tourist numbers are growing and the Government of Vietnam has identified the sector as a priority for investment and promotion.

The region is particularly proud of its cultural diversity and actively encourages the celebration and protection of ethnic minority culture, such as languages, festivals and traditional performances, handicrafts, local cuisine and unique identifiers such as clothing and architecture. With careful planning and targeted measures to empower ethnic minority women and their communities, this cultural diversity presents a significant opportunity for economic growth through sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives.

Rebounding after the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism and hospitality sectors in Lao Cai and Son La are experiencing a surge in demand, creating both employment and business opportunities for skilled workers, including many ethnic minority women. However, these sectors currently face a substantial human resource gap, estimated at between 20% to 40% depending on the specific business. This gap underscores the urgent need for trained personnel to support sector growth.

Vietnam's regional and international competitiveness in tourism is dependent upon its ability to enhance the quality of its offerings,

particularly in hospitality. The limited access to formal training for ethnic minority women, including those with disabilities, and in the sector remains a significant challenge to the competitiveness of Northwest Vietnam. Addressing gaps in technical as well as soft skills, and the customer service experience, are crucial to meet the growing demand for skilled workers and ensuring ethnic minority women and their communities lead tourism solutions and benefit from the expanding tourism economy. This presents an opportunity for targeted skills development initiatives to build a sustainable and inclusive workforce in both Son La and Lao Cai.

# GREAT AND VOCATIONAL HOSPITALITY TRAINING SERVICES

## Work to date

The prevailing vocational training service market remains dominated by multi-month duration courses, many of which are theory-heavy and poorly aligned with industry needs. This can be discouraging for potential ethnic minority women trainees due to the cost and value for money of training on offer. In its first phase, GREAT worked to strengthen the quality and consistency of hospitality and tourism training services of Lao Cai College through:



Awareness raising in local communities of potential career paths in tourism and mobilising community and family support for ethnic minority women to participate in the tourism labor market



Training of College trainers and strengthening training standards and accreditation



Developing demand-based, new and improved training courses, curricula and content targeting hospitality skills of ethnic minority women entering the hotel, restaurant and service industries, including supporting training delivery partnerships with local businesses

## Moving forward

GREAT Phase 2 is continuing to support the quality and targeting of training services for ethnic minority women. It supports both public and private service providers to test and develop commercially viable and sustainable courses and delivery models that address the technical as well as accessibility needs of ethnic minority women and people with disabilities. In both Son La and Lao Cai, GREAT aims to strengthen the relevance and accessibility of vocational hospitality training through a set of mutually supporting interventions including:



### Identifying skills demand and priorities amongst ethnic minority women

Working to strengthen sector and community linkages to ensure that emerging skills training courses and content are demand-led, accessible for ethnic minority people, women and people with disabilities, and address current and emerging needs of employers and entrepreneurs. Industry responsive skills training, including curricula, training methods and format, is crucial for long-term sector competitiveness and will empower ethnic minority women to seize emerging opportunities as the sector evolves and grows. Strengthened market research capacity will also better understand the hospitality and service skills priorities, 'soft' skills needs, and affordability preferences of ethnic minority women, including appropriate course durations and formats.



### Enhancing skills training quality and awareness

Building the supply-side capacity to meet the needs of ethnic minority women and sustain relevant, targeted services remains the priority for GREAT 2. To ensure high-quality service delivery, the program includes skills training for faculty staff at Lao Cai College and a network of business-based training partners in various locations in Son La to provide practical hospitality skills. This training will complement the online and offline training delivered by REACH, GREAT's private sector partner. This support will enhance training quality through improved training skills, standards and methods. By building a strong sector reputation, GREAT aims to build confidence, and willingness of ethnic minority communities, including women and women with disabilities, to invest in hospitality training services.

Improved service quality is being supported through enhanced marketing and promotional activities. These are designed to promote specific courses and skills development opportunities while also raising the profile of tourism and hospitality as a valid, safe and beneficial career for ethnic minority women and girls, including those living with disabilities.





### Supporting training delivery model innovation and sustainability

GREAT is collaborating with both public and private sector organisations to enhance service delivery innovation. In Lao Cai, its ongoing partnership with Lao Cai College is targeting the development of more market-driven training programs and the establishment of fee-for-service models, including innovative blended financing. This initiative aims to support the College's diversification and commercialisation by testing and supporting new courses and business models that strengthens the resilience of the College as well as the courses it offers.

In Son La, GREAT is supporting an innovative private sector delivery model where a network of local business alumni and partners provide practical, on-site skills training for ethnic minority women at or near their homes, complemented with online and offline classroom-based training. The program focuses on highly practical, task-based courses that equip women with specific skills for ongoing employment or business purposes.

## PARTNERS

GREAT is working with REACH Vietnam in Son La, and with Lao Cai College and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in Lao Cai to support the vocational hospitality training for ethnic minority women in both provinces.

These lead and technical partners will:

- 1 Lead overall project design, management and reporting
- 2 Conduct training needs assessment, research and product identification
- 3 Develop skills training content, material and delivery platforms
- 4 Establish mechanisms for ongoing sector linkages, skills monitoring and referencing
- 5 Implement effective outreach and promotional strategies, campaigns and material
- 6 Strengthen training standards and staff capacity
- 7 Test and develop viable service delivery models designed to sustain training services targeting ethnic minority women trainees





## EXPECTED RESULTS



Enhanced employability, entrepreneurial and leadership capacity and resilience amongst ethnic minority women engaging in the tourism and hospitality sector by increasing capabilities, job opportunities, income levels and/or business profitability.

Development of more sustainable training service delivery models targeting ethnic minority women trainees by both public and private service providers.

Better quality and more relevant, sustainable and accessible training services and delivery targeting the evolving technical and 'soft' skills needs of ethnic minority women employees and entrepreneurs.

Increased confidence amongst ethnic minority women entrepreneurs and workers in the tourism sector through greater business and decision making capabilities and strengthened status, roles and contribution to household and community development.



### Safeguarding priorities

The tourism sector poses critical safeguarding risks to ethnic minority women and their communities, particularly in ensuring a safe working environment for women and girls employed in the sector and protecting both cultural and natural environments impacted by tourism. The project will ensure that appropriate safeguarding awareness, training and mitigation measures are embedded in all training activities, and that responsible tourism is integral to the skills offered ethnic minority women trainees.



### Contact information

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