THE GREAT PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER

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GREAT

KEY FIGURES (UP TO JUNE 2026)



Co-investment from private sector

AUD 6,634,021



Number of women with full-time and part-time jobs as a result of project support

1,467



Number of beneficiary women

9,958



Number of beneficiary households

14,726



Number of market actors supported to expand market access and/or improve supply chain resilience

625



Number of female entrepreneurs receiving supports for business development

500



Number of female entrepreneurs trained on leadership/management skills with GREAT support

369



Number of newly registered women-led businesses

1,954

LATEST NEWS



Joint Monitoring Mission in Lao Cai Province

GREAT and representatives from the Australian Embassy in Vietnam, had the opportunity to meet with lead partners and women entrepreneurs during a project monitoring visit to Lao Cai Province from 15-18 September.

It was a great chance to hear directly from the women entrepreneurs and local mentors of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership (WEL) project, learning about their progress, the challenges they face and the opportunities they see ahead. Through WEL, women entrepreneurs are building stronger leadership skills, improving their revenue, and gaining greater confidence to expand their businesses.

Read more

Take a good photo. Tell a real story. Let people see the change.

From 17-18 September, over 30 GREAT partners in Son La came together for a two-day training to learn how to turn everyday project experiences into stories that inspire.

The participants came from GREAT-supported projects including hospitality skills training, tourism destination management, and behaviour change in agriculture and tourism. Many of them are ethnic minority women (EMW) who are building businesses and creating new opportunities for themselves, their families, and communities.

Read more



LATEST PUBLICATIONS



Sector brief: Supply Chain Inclusive Innovation

Son La Province possesses immense agricultural potential, with over 85,000 hectares dedicated to high-value fruit trees such as mango, longan, plums, and coffee. The province has successfully established 201 safe agricultural supply chains and 216 production unit codes for exporting, positioning itself as a key agricultural hub for Northwest Vietnam. Local government policies strongly focus on high-tech agriculture and organic standards to meet demanding domestic and international markets, including the EU and China. These strengths provide a solid foundation for developing inclusive supply chains that integrate smallholder farmers into higher-value commercial markets.

Read more

Sector brief: Developing Good Agriculture and Collection Practices – World Health Organisation (GACP-WHO) Panax in Son La Province

Son La Province possesses over 50,000 hectares of land at altitudes above 1,400 meters, offering ideal ecological conditions – cool temperatures, high humidity, and thick humus – for high-quality panax. Market demand for this "national product" is surging, yet domestic supply remains extremely limited. Strong policy support from central and provincial levels further encourages investment in this high-value medicinal plant.

Read more





Sector brief: Behaviour Change for Inclusive Markets (BC4IM)

EMW and people with disabilities (PwD) are vital contributors to the economic development of Northwest Vietnam, including Son La and Lao Cai. They bring experience and capabilities, as well as an underutilised workforce that can advance business innovation and growth. However, in these provinces, both EMW and PwD continue to face deeply embedded social norms, stigma, and informal power structures that discriminate and restrict their meaningful participation in sectors that have great potential, including bamboo shoots and tourism. Despite positive national trends, EMW and PwD contend with significant structural barriers, including language obstacles and limited access to capital.

Read more

"HER VOICE" SERIES

“Her Voice” series is a collection of films that follows the transformative journeys of EMW in Son La and Lao Cai. With GREAT's support, they have strengthened their skills, shifted their mindsets, and taken meaningful steps towards creating positive and sustainable change for themselves, their families, and their communities.



Rising from the bamboo shoot

In Gia Hoi, Lao Cai, Dao women are transforming their livelihoods through their active participation in developing bamboo shoots. With support from the GREAT Program, bamboo shoot farmers including EMW upgraded their farming and processing skills, invested in innovative processing equipment, and secured stable buyers for their bamboo.

The flow of change

Once a hidden gem used only for local baths, the natural Bo Am hot spring in Phu Mau Village, Van Ho Commune, Son La Province has transformed into a thriving tourism destination, welcoming up to 3,000 visitors per month during peak seasons.

Supported by the GREAT Program, Ms. Ngan Thi Nga, a Thai ethnic woman, has stepped up as a confident leader of Tat Nang Tourism and Agriculture Cooperative to run the hot spring.





Sowing happiness from medicinal plants

For generations, many families in Song Khua, Son La relied on traditional crops that brought modest returns. Today, medicinal plants are opening the door to new opportunities for the local community.

For Ms. Mui Thi Ha and many other EMW, switching from maize to medicinal plants brought more than just a better harvest. Her first motherwort yield doubled her family's income, strengthened their livelihood, and gave them hope for a brighter future.

GREAT FEATURED ON VTV



Ms. Ngan Thi Trang, Director of Van An Agriculture and Forestry Cooperative, a Tay ethnic minority woman from Lao Cai, was featured in the VTV1's “Good Morning” program in July, highlighting her inspiring journey and achieving positive changes.

Watch the feature to understand more about how Ms. Trang has empowered herself through knowledge, transformed her business, and created positive impacts in her community after participating in the GREAT-supported Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership project.



The achievements of the GREAT Program Phase 2 after two years of implementation were featured on VTV1 – Vietnam Today in May. Watch the feature to learn more about this meaningful milestone made in promoting women’s economic empowerment in Son La and Lao Cai provinces.



Ms. Vi Thi Thu Ha, a Thai ethnic minority woman from Moc Chau, Son La, and a participant of the GREAT Program, was featured on VTV3’s “Digital Women” program in May.

Join us in watching this report to understand more about her daily work, her passion for organic vegetable farming, and the meaningful changes in her business approach and performance after participating in GREAT’s digital transformation project.

GREAT SNAPSHOTS



Launching of the 2025 DCCI Lao Cai

Under the message “Lao Cai is committed to improving the business environment based on the voice of businesses,” the 2025 DCCI (Department and Commune Competitive Index) launched in September assesses the quality of governance and public services, while creating an objective channel for businesses to share their experiences, challenges, and expectations.



Tourism study tour in Thailand

In June, the study tour to Thailand brought together 24 provincial and local tourism officials from Son La and Lao Cai to strengthen their capacity in inclusive destination management and explore practical solutions to advance women’s economic empowerment, particularly among ethnic minority women, in the tourism value chain.



Promoting inclusive supply chain innovation workshop in Son La

The workshop in May brought together more than 100 participants. It shared research findings on agricultural supply chain innovation in Son La and explored inclusive business models and solutions to strengthen EMW’s participation. Discussions also highlighted key 2026 trends, including digital transformation, processing, traceability, green development, stronger supply chain linkages, logistics, digital management, and financial support.

GREAT SNAPSHOTS





Digital skills training courses

With GREAT's support, STG-iViet organised digital skills training courses from April to June to strengthen the capacity of project partners and beneficiaries in using digital tools in Son La and Lao Cai. The training also helped foster online learning habits, knowledge sharing within communities, and the gradual adoption of technology in work and everyday life.

Digital transformation study tour

In July, the GREAT-supported Inclusive Digital Acceleration Program (IDAP) project completed a four-day study tour to Southern Vietnam for 43 participants, including women entrepreneurs and local service providers working in agriculture and tourism sectors in Son La. As a result of this initiative, participants returned with practical tools, stronger networks, and renewed confidence to apply digital and green solutions in their businesses and communities to help them increase income and expand their businesses.



Training program for business mentors

The training in July brought together 16 local business mentors from Lao Cai and Son La. Through a combination of interactive learning and practical exercises, participants were equipped with approaches to assessing business development needs and leadership capacity, while strengthening their skills in active listening, empathy, and mentoring enterprises to make informed decisions that respond to market needs.

KEY COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

Sector	Activities
Cinnamon	• Training on producing cinnamon sticks and cinnamon tubes for producers in Lao Cai • Build capacity and organising study visits for members of the Executive Committee of the Lao Cai Cinnamon and Star Anise Association
Bamboo shoot	• Prepare Bat Do bamboo shoot nurseries in Minh Luong, Van Ban, and Chieng Ken communes in Lao Cai • Training for bamboo cooperatives and producer groups in Son La on cooperative management and operations, purchasing, bamboo shoot boiling processes, and technical supervision of production and harvesting
Medicinal Plants	• Develop a pilot 1-hectare medicinal plant nursery model in To Mua, Son La • Develop a medicinal plant pre-processing workshop in To Mua, Son La
Panax	• Launch the panax nursery in Xim Vang, Son La • Support planting panax for 55 farming households in Xim Vang, Son La
Provincial Policy Support	• Implement the DCCI survey and assessment, preparing the evaluation report, and organising a conference to announce the 2025 Lao Cai DCCI results • Launch on 2025 DCCI Son La report • Assessment report on the implementation of the National Target Programs and agricultural value chains (2021-2025), with recommendations for solutions from 2026-2030 in Son La
Digital Transformation	• Strengthen digital transformation services by local service providers • Provide strategic training for lead enterprises in digitalising their value chain
Digital Inclusion	• Support lead businesses to develop online production training materials and video clips for medicinal plant, bamboo shoot, and panax in Son La, and cinnamon in Lao Cai • Training of Trainers (ToT) for on-spot digital mentors selected from lead enterprises and basic digital skill training for producers in the medicinal plant, bamboo shoot, and panax sectors in Son La, and the cinnamon sector in Lao Cai
Vocational Hospitality Training	• Build capacity of lecturers at Lao Cai College in delivering new course content and teaching methodologies • Pilot and enhance new and revised training programs and courses for EMW
Tourism Destination Management	• Facilitate consultations between businesses, government agencies, and communities, especially EMW, to advance inclusive tourism development in Lao Cai • Organise a study visit to Thailand for project stakeholders in Son La
Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership	• Coaching for women entrepreneurs from start-ups and growing businesses in Lao Cai and Son La • Connect local mentorship services with women entrepreneurs in Lao Cai and Son La
Access to Finance	• Refine training materials on financial management for cooperatives and household businesses
Inclusive Supply chain	• Workshop on supply chain innovation and design support to nine selected supply chains in Son La • Assess and select six target supply chains in Lao Cai
Behavior Change	• A learning visit to Xuan Nha Bamboo Shoot Cooperative, a successful model in Son La • Two community events in Muong Bu & Muong Chien communes to promote workload sharing within households in the bamboo shoot sector
General	• Value for Money assessment for WEL projects Son La and Lao Cai • Operationalise three case studies on the themes: WEE and agency through increased market access; the business case of women's inclusion; and changing gender and social norms affecting EMW

KEY UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Sector	Activities
Cinnamon	• Training farmers not involved in specific lead firms value chain on sustainable production and processing cigarette and tube cinnamon sticks and integrate sustainable cinnamon production requirements into village regulations and forest protection • Strengthen capacity of Cinnamon and Anistar Association Capacity
Bamboo shoot	• Transfer nursery business models, market-based sector development approaches for involved and interested commune People's Committees, Centres for Agriculture Services, and cooperatives in Son La and Lao Cai • Develop inclusive and market-based bamboo shoot sector development plan for Lao Cai
Medicinal Plants	• Prepare and obtain GACP-WHO certificate for medicinal plantation area in Son La • Participate in promotional trade fairs
Panax	• Form new producers groups and plant three hectares of panax in Son La • Prepare and obtain GACP-WHO certificate for panax plantation area in Son La
Provincial Policy Support	• Capacity building for selected departments and local authorities on their gender-responsive action plans for service improvements for 2025 DCCI and 2026 DCCI • Implement the DCCI survey and assessment, preparing the evaluation report, and organising conferences to announce the 2026 DCCI in Son La and Lao Cai results • Strengthen capacity of commune agriculture workers for selecting business plans for developing value chain, and supporting roles to value chain actors in different stages of development
Digital Transformation	• Provide training and coaching for new local digital transformation service providers on business model development and service provision for MSMEs • Support lead businesses to pilot implementation of value chain digitalisation
Digital Inclusion	• Support on-spot digital mentors to provide basic digital skills guidance to group members • Provide coaching on public training providers on digitalising selected training products and develop partnership between commune leaders and cooperatives for agriculture product branding and sales
Vocational Hospitality Training	• ToT for potential local trainers and support operation of training hubs and blended training hubs in Son La, including identifying partners/locations, supporting infrastructure improvements, and providing mentoring • Training for EMW students and provide post training support for employement and startups in Lao Cai • Refine new curricula and training for courses targeting EMW job seekers and entrepreneurs in Lao Cai
Tourism Destination Management	• Support the provinces in developing a "Strategy and Action Plan for Inclusive and Sustainable Destination Management" in Lao Cai and Son La • Co-design and develop product development plans for each pilot site in Lao Cai and Son La
Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership	• Strengthen capacity for business innovations for local business mentors and link them to national mentors networks and observe coaching at national startup contests • Provincial workshop to disseminate lessons learned about the WEL ecosystem and local business mentorship services
Access to Finance	• Develop a two-level financial education module linked to value chains and integrated with e-learning • Integrate financial literacy into annual plan of Son La Women's Union and promote integration into Program 2415 and 01
Inclusive Supply chain	• Technical support and business mentoring for 15 supply chain partners to enhance inclusion of EMW producers in Son La • Establish ecosystem for supply chain service providers and buyers in Son La
Behavior Change	• Review and develop tailored inclusive governance structure plans for three selected cooperatives in Lao Cai and Son La • Develop series of training and mock dialogues to strengthen leadership capacity for EMW in Lao Cai and Son La
General	• Develop a series of disability knowledge products • Conduct GEDSI capacity building on improving partners' ability to identify, implement, and document evidence of inclusive market systems changes • Conduct project endline surveys • Collect information for case studies focused on bamboo, digital transformation, and tourism • Build capacity for partners on financial management including anti-corruption, fraud training, safeguarding, and closing out in line with updated DFAT and Cowater policies and procedures • Develop a series of communications success stories through videos, articles and media coverage • Support partners to develop and implement project closeout plans • Develop and finalise program closeout plans • Organise program closing workshops in Lao Cai and Son La

KEY QUOTES



"For Vietnam to achieve its goal of becoming a high-income country by 2045, women must be able to fully participate in social and economic activities. This includes ensuring that women have access to business opportunities, run businesses, and provide more income for both their communities and their families."

Ms. Renee Deschamps, Deputy Ambassador of Australia to Vietnam

"Since the GREAT Program was implemented in the commune, the villagers' farming methods have changed significantly from fragmented production to centralised production in household groups and cooperatives. This has contributed to improving the lives of the people, and in particular, the program has helped Dao ethnic women and other minorities in the commune become more confident, participate more actively in production, eradicate hunger and reduce poverty, and increase individual and household income in the commune."

Mr. Hoang Le Huy, Chairman of the People's Committee of Gia Hoi Commune, Lao Cai Province





"Ms. Ha is a pioneering women's union member in economic development and has made significant contributions to the local economy. She has also inspired ethnic minority women to develop their household economies. In the coming time, we will continue strengthening communication efforts and promoting models like Ms. Ha's to more women, while also creating opportunities for them to learn from these models in order to improve their economic development."

Ms. Ha Thi Ngan, Chairwoman of the Women's Union of Van Son Ward, Son La Province

"Partnering with the GREAT Program and its consultants in 2025 breathed new life into our cooperative's management mindset. It gave us the strength to boldly transform how we think, produce, and conduct business."

Ms. Hoang Thi Tham, Deputy Director of the 26-3 Green Agricultural Cooperative, Son La Province





"From the training course, I gained a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of how a business operates. In particular, learning about design thinking has transformed my approach: putting customers at the center and starting with their needs and challenges to design better products."

Ms. Hoang Thi Vuong, a business mentor from Sa Pa, Lao Cai Province

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