



TETRA TECH
International Development

Mid Term Review: Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture & Tourism (GREAT) Program

Report on Findings: 2 July, 2021

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Acronyms

CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOPO	End-of-Program Outcomes
EVAWG	Eliminating violence against women and girls
GE	Gender equality
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GoV	Government of Vietnam
GPFD	Government Partnership for Development
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MC	Managing Contractor
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDF	Market Development Facility
MIS	Management Information System
MSD	Market Systems Development
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NTP-SEDEMA	National Target Program for the Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas 2021-2030
PAF	Performance Assessment Framework
PMU	Project Management Unit
RAG	Red-Amber-Green
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
Tetra Tech	Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
WEE	Women's economic empowerment

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Executive Summary

This is the final report for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT) Program ('the Program'). The Program is an AUD 33.7 million initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Commencing in December 2017, the first phase of the initiative was planned to conclude in December 2021. The program is managed by Cowater International (the Managing Contractor) through a main project office in Hanoi, and provincial offices with counterpart Vietnamese Government Project Management Units (PMUs) in Son La and Lao Cai. DFAT's contract with Cowater allows for an extension of the Program, subject to performance, for a further 6 months in the first phase and five years in a second phase. This is an extended Executive Summary to outline the Program's background and the MTR's findings and recommendations.

Program background

The GREAT Program's goal is to improve the social and economic status of ethnic minority women living in northwest Vietnam by increasing their beneficial engagement in agriculture and tourism markets. This goal is to be achieved through three end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs):

1. Women living in local communities have increased capacity, space, and choices to beneficially engage with agriculture and tourism businesses.
2. Private sector actors in the agriculture and tourism sectors supported to innovate to more profitably and sustainably trade with more women entrepreneurs and operate in gender-sensitive ways.
3. Government agencies reinforce policies and enact plans, regulations, and services that enable more inclusive socio-economic development.

GREAT's approach is twofold: a) Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GE); along with b) Inclusive Market Systems Development (MSD). To deliver these strategies, GREAT takes a results-based, adaptive management approach with an emphasis on supporting partners to innovate and deliver outcomes. At the time of the MTR (March/April 2021), the program had a portfolio of 52 projects implemented by partners from the private sector, government, and non-government sectors.

MTR purpose and approach

This Mid-Term Review has been commissioned by the Australian Embassy in Vietnam to 1) Assess program implementation to date; 2) Make recommendations for improvement; and 3) Provide analysis to inform DFAT's decision on extending the program for an additional five years.

The MTR is being conducted by a team of four evaluation professionals from Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd, consisting of two Australian-based international consultants and two Hanoi-based Vietnamese consultants. Given the restrictions of COVID-19, the international consultants worked on the review remotely, with the Vietnamese consultants responsible for fieldwork.

The MTR involved the collection of data over March-April 2021 through document review, remote consultations with key stakeholders, and in-country fieldwork in the Program's two provincial sites of operation. The MTR interviewed 94 stakeholders (remotely and face-to-face) and conducted 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries (8 FGDs for women, and 7 for men).

The MTR Terms of Reference contains a total of 35 questions grouped under seven categories of: 1) relevance; 2) effectiveness; 3) efficiency; 4) impact; 5) sustainability; 6) risk management; and 7) monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning. The main report provides findings in response to each question. A summary is provided below.

Findings

The first phase of the GREAT Program is producing results that are beginning to contribute to the initiative's ambitious long-term goal to *improve the social and economic status of ethnic minority women living in two provinces of northwest Vietnam*. The Program has developed a large and diverse portfolio of 52 sub-projects in tourism and agriculture sectors. GREAT has effectively supported these sub-projects

through the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Program is pioneering a delivery model that is new to government and other stakeholders in Vietnam and integrates two substantial approaches—1) inclusive market system development (MSD) and 2) women’s economic empowerment /gender equality approaches (WEE/GE). The implementation of these approaches has been challenging. However, the GREAT Program has learned from experience and has been refining approaches to improve effectiveness. A new, work-in-progress ToC structured around addressing constraints in priority sub-sectors provides a clearer strategic focus, which maximises the MSD approach. The Program has succeeded in building strong government and other stakeholder ownership over the MSD approach in phase 1 but support for WEE/GE remains mixed. Partly to address this issue, the Program has also refined its WEE/GE approach, developing a framework specific to the situations of ethnic minority women in Vietnam, called the “Reach, Benefit, Empower” tool. These new approaches combined with the learning from phase one, captured in the MERL system and qualitative research studies, provides a strong foundation from which the Program could narrow strategic focus and take results to scale to achieve significant future impacts.

The remainder of this section summarises findings and recommendations for each of the seven categories in the MTR Terms of Reference.

1. Relevance

GREAT remains highly relevant to Australia’s strategic policy framework and Vietnam’s development priorities. The Program remains as much, if not more, relevant to the situation of ethnic minority women in the northwest of Vietnam, given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on this group.¹ The MSD and WEE/GE approaches remain highly relevant to the core problem the Program is addressing.

The GREAT Program has successfully cultivated strong Government of Vietnam interest in MSD approaches—working with the private sector to enable ethnic minorities to better participate in markets to improve their incomes—as a more effective alternative to the “charity-oriented approach” previously taken by the Government of Vietnam to developing ethnic minority areas. This is evidenced by the government’s inclusion of a focus on market systems in the new generation of National Target Programs (NTP). One of the main limitations on GREAT’s effective application of the MSD approach has been the Program’s restricted geographic focus. The markets and value chains that involve ethnic minority women extend beyond the seven districts in two provinces where GREAT has been working in phase 1. The MTR notes and supports the recent decision of the GREAT Steering Committee to expand the Program’s focus to all districts in these two provinces. However, given the Program’s success in piloting the MSD approach in phase 1, impact could be maximised in phase 2 by re-defining GREAT’s focus on target sub-sectors with the scope to work beyond the two current provinces to maximise systemic market change and improve the situations of ethnic minority women.

The GREAT Program has faced challenges in cultivating government and other stakeholder interest in WEE/GE, particularly at the district and commune level. While there have clearly been examples of the empowerment of women, feedback from interviews suggests that understanding and support for the Program’s WEE/GE approach is uneven among government officials. There is a common negative perception that WEE/GE means women are given economic advantages over men. Some stakeholders contrasted GREAT’s approach with the government’s gender equality policies which focus on increasing the number of women in leadership roles and on committees etc rather than economic advancement. The role and contribution of men within GREAT is not very visible. However GREAT has developed a new framework for WEE that is simpler and clearly related to the context of Lao Cai and Son La.

GREAT’s “Reach, Benefit, Empower” framework is a simpler tool than the “Six dimensions of WEE” framework previously used, which makes it more useful for building stakeholder understanding and ownership of the Program’s women’s empowerment approaches and objectives. International thinking

¹ As reported in: a) p. 8 GREAT Progress Report, July-December 2020; b) p. 12 Gender and the labour market in Viet Nam: An analysis based on the Labour Force Survey, International Labour Organisation, March 2021, p. 12 and c) interviews conducted MTR field research.

on WEE/GE has developed significantly since the program commenced.² GREAT is well-positioned to contribute to this thinking along with other DFAT-supported programs, like the MDF³.

Recommendations:

1. The Program to prepare a position paper for consideration by DFAT and the Steering Committee on the options (benefits and costs) for how the Program could be redefined around target sub-sectors, value chains, or thematic areas where there is the best potential impact for ethnic minority women. The paper proposes (a) a reduced number of sub-sectors on which to focus (where phase 1 evidence shows there is the most potential for market systemic change to the benefit of ethnic minority women) and (b) an appropriate inclusive MSD implementation approach. In developing the approach, the Paper could look at whether the Program would be more effective in achieving systemic sub-sector/ market change if it had the flexibility to operate beyond the current two provinces. **Long-term (phase 2)**
2. The Program to review and re-design approaches and activities for building Vietnamese stakeholders' understanding and support for women's empowerment, using the Reach, Benefit, Empower framework and the Program's other recently developed tools/approaches. For example, the Program could consider better aligning its approach with Vietnam's National Strategy for Gender Equality⁴ and creating more visible roles for the Vietnamese organisations responsible for its implementation, including the Women's Union, MOLISA, and DOLISA. The Program should seek to tactically support the subnational governments (Son La and Lao Cai) responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality, but maintain its current level of ambition for WEE/GE. **Long-term (phase 2)**

2. Effectiveness

The MTR judges overall program effectiveness as "good" based on a review of progress against 10 indicators of success identified in GREAT's design document (page 26). Half of these indicators have clear performance targets, but half do not.

The MTR finds:

- GREAT is on track to achieve 3 out of 5 of the indicators with clear performance targets (see table 1 below). These are the indicators against which GREAT has mainly been reporting progress through regular Program reports⁵. GREAT is *not* on track to achieve targets related to a) increased incomes and b) jobs for women, but the MTR finds these targets are unrealistic (as also concluded by the Program in the first year of implementation).
- GREAT has contributed to positive changes compared with baseline data (where available) in 3 out of 5 of the program's other success indicators.⁶ For example, in relation to the indicator for changes in gender roles and norms, there has been a 10-20% positive change from baseline data in the number of hours of income-generating work being undertaken by women and women's participation in household decision-making⁷ (see section 2.2). Some changes are directly driven by program activities (e.g. recruitment of women in leadership positions) and the sustainability of the changes is uncertain. Activities related to the other two indicators, which do have targets, were still being

² Concepts for WEE are continuously emerging based on lessons from implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and accompanied with new guidance for implementation. For example see recently launched USAID guidance: <https://banyanglobal.com/banyan-global-announces-launch-of-the-womens-economic-empowerment-and-gender-equality-wiki/>. Also see work by the Centre for Global Development, which similar to GREAT, highlights the need to integrate into assessments of WEE measures of broader social wellbeing, changes in terms of Violence Against Women, and the importance of developing ways to reach extremely disadvantaged women. [What Does it Take to Empower Ultra-Poor Women? | Center For Global Development \(cgdev.org\)](https://www.cgdev.org/publication/what-does-it-take-to-empower-ultra-poor-women), 2019

³ Australian Aid Market Development Facility [Women-at-Work-Web.pdf \(marketdevelopmentfacility.org\)](https://www.marketdevelopmentfacility.org/), 2020

⁴ For example, the Program could align with the 3 new economic and labour targets in the new Strategy. Over the longer-term, the Program could seek to play a role in supporting rural women's transition out of subsistence agriculture.

⁵ In progress reports, GREAT refers to these 5 indicators as "contractual indicators", however only 2 of these indicators (a) increased incomes and b) jobs for women] are linked to the contract as "program outcome achievement" milestones for payment of part of management fees.

⁶ These indicators either completely lack targets or, if included, the targets are not meaningful. See Section 2.2

⁷ From the Project-level Midline Assessments

implemented at the time of the MTR and information was not available. GREAT will report the results in the upcoming progress report.

However, the MTR also finds that the 10 indicators of success do not meaningfully measure the extent or significance of Program impacts. The problems with these indicators are that they measure results at different levels (from low-level outputs to long-term outcomes), some do not meet the SMART criteria, and some targets are unrealistic. In addition, the Program also reports against two other sets of indicators (eg. The Performance Assessment Framework⁸ and ToC results), which are not aligned with the 10 success indicators. These multiple sets of indicators create confusion over Program objectives.

Table 1: Progress against Program’s 5 performance indicators with targets

Outcome area and indicator	Target	Progress	On track/Off track
<p>Outcome area: Women-led or co-managed households, groups, or cooperatives in outer areas have greater income</p> <p>Indicator: The incomes of 40,000 self-employed women farmers and small entrepreneurs are significantly improved across Son La and Lào Cai.</p>	40,000	15,414	Offtrack
<p>Outcome area: More agriculture and tourism businesses conduct more profitable business with women, and particularly women from ethnic minorities</p> <p>Indicator: 4,000 full-time equivalent positions for women are created in fulfilling and safe off-farm formal waged employment</p>	4,000	834	Offtrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: Over \$US6.0M in private sector investment is leveraged for business opportunities that are profitable, sustainable, and inclusive</p>	USD 6 m	USD 5.35 m	Ontrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: 80 per cent of women beneficiaries’ self-report increased confidence, enthusiasm, and self-esteem, and these changes are plausibly attributed to their engagement with GREAT</p>	80%	80%	Ontrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: The number of women leading or co-managing formal businesses increases by 15% compared with 2016 figures.</p>	15%	14%	Ontrack

The Program’s original ToC does not set out a clear strategic focus and no longer reflects operational realities and learning. Several stakeholders interviewed commented that the ToC was “highly ambitious, intricate, and confusing.” The implementation approach taken at the start was unclear. Rather than take a facilitation approach as typical of MSD programs⁹, GREAT used a competitive grant-making

⁸ The Performance Assessment Framework is developed through the annual work planning process as a primary tool for measuring progress toward achievement of outcomes (see Annex E). The PAF includes some indicators from the 10 success indicators including a) Number of women with increased income; b) Number of women beneficiaries reported having increased confidence c) Value (in USD) leveraged from GREAT supported enterprises/cooperatives as results of co-investment with GREAT. However, the PAF also includes indicators from a list of standardized DFAT indicators to enable consolidated global reporting for DFAT.

⁹The design proposed a number of different approaches to be deployed under each of the Program’s three objectives but did not examine the compatibility of these approaches nor outline how they would work together (much of this work has been done by the MC team in implementation). For work under objective 2, the design specified use of “Markets for the Poor” (M4P) principles (p.35) as did the Schedule of Services in the Head Contract (section 6.3) (M4P is term for the approach as it was initially developed and applied on UKAid program. As the approach has been applied more broadly, the term “markets systems development approach” has been used). Consistent with the M4P approach, the design proposed that the program would “adopt facilitation, brokering and leverage roles, using funds/ resources to stimulate market responses from local and national stakeholders, thereby improving its sustainability” (p.14) with focus on “stimulating market systemic change” (p.63). At the same time, the design proposed a challenge

mechanism to identify partners and projects that fitted under the three outcome areas of the ToC. A primary driver behind this approach was the extremely high targets set in the GREAT design document for the number of partners to be engaged under each of the three outcome areas. The consequence was the creation of a project portfolio siloed under outcomes areas, along with a scattered focus across nine agricultural sub-sectors and multiple projects in different parts of the tourism sector¹⁰. The very large size of the portfolio (currently sitting at 52 partners) makes it difficult for the program to strategically promote collaboration and synergies between projects to ensure that the “whole is greater than the sum of its parts”.

The Program’s new work-in-progress ToC promises to significantly strengthen GREAT’s strategic focus and effectiveness, building on the Program’s successes and learning in phase 1. This success includes that most sub-projects are achieving their outputs, and the Program has influenced the development of more value chains that better include ethnic minority women (as producers, suppliers, processors, etc), and introducing two new and challenging approaches (MSD and WEE/GE) in poor areas of Northern Vietnam.

The new ToC is still a work-in-progress but promises to be much more effective in driving the program’s strategic focus (see Annex C). It is simpler and establishes MSD as the Program’s driving strategic approach, embedding WEE/GE through the “Reach, Benefit, Empower” tool. Consistent with the MSD approach, the new ToC seeks to focus on identified constraints in making targeted markets/sub-sectors/value-chains more inclusive of ethnic minority women. The Program has already “retro-fitted” existing projects around their sub-sector focus and put in place sound structures, such as sub-sector working groups and committees¹¹, to facilitate collaboration and learning. The current systemic change study will contribute to further strengthening this approach. Moreover, the diversity of GREAT’s current portfolio provides a rich laboratory of project experiments from which the Program is well placed through its MERL system to capture learning, and narrow focus to take the best projects to scale.

Recommendations

3. The Program to finalise:

- a) development of the new Program-level ToC. The current version is a work-in-progress but is on the right track. In particular, the MTR supports the focus on targeted sub-sectors, and supporting ethnic minority women to engage in these sub-sectors through an approach that seeks to combine MSD and WEE/GE; and
- b) development of sub-sector strategies, using an MSD approach (with their theories of change), to nest under the new program ToC. The sub-sector strategies to:
 - Focus on the "triggers" for systemic, inclusive market change that promotes WEE/GE for sub-sectors that have the potential to scale up.
 - Contain explicit objectives and strategies for how to promote synergy and learning between complementary projects.
 - Consider how men need to be engaged in the Program, their role in and contribution to women’s economic empowerment and gender equality
 - As a part of determining the sub-sector focus, review all the Program’s sub-projects to identify those with the best potential for scale-up in phase 2
 - Articulate aid delivery modalities that are more supportive of these strategies (see efficiency)

fund model following DFID’s Vietnam Challenge Fund (p10, 26 &90) to be used alongside the M4P approach, when the two approaches are distinct and not easily compatible.

¹⁰ At the time of the MTR in March/April 2021, there were 11 current tourism projects under Program Objectives 1 and 2. This included 6 in community-based tourism, 2 that combined agriculture and tourism, 1 in souvenir development, 1 in large hotel hospitality and 1 in e-commerce.

¹¹ The MTR does not have data to assess the functioning of these committees but agrees with it in-principle. The Program’s Systemic Market Change Assessment Study made some positive observation on the performance of these committees.

Recommendations

NOTE: In developing the sub-sector strategies, GREAT could benefit from assistance from a professional who is independent or semi-independent from the program team who brings relevant technical expertise¹² and could provide a fresh set of eyes. **Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)**

4. The Program to:
 - a) Propose to DFAT more realistic phase 1 targets for current indicators, by updating Cowater's February 2019¹³ assessment of the original program and contractual targets, and by using the same methodology, to identify what partners are realistically able to achieve in the remainder of Phase 1. DFAT to discuss and agree on revised phase 1 targets with the MC. (**Short-term**)
 - b) Following the finalisation of the new Program ToC, propose new phase 2 indicators and targets. DFAT to discuss and agree to these with the MC. **Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)**

3. Efficiency

The GREAT Program had a slow start and, just when momentum was building, the program was disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. In the Inception Phase, the Program conducted a good analysis of the specific challenges and opportunities to support ethnic minority women in each province (in the Provincial Engagement Strategies). But the use of an unwieldy grant-making mechanism to allocate resources to these opportunities was not the most efficient approach. The Program could have better promoted objectives with a more efficient, dynamic process for allocating resources at the start.

However, the program's rapid response to COVID-19 in the first half of 2020 demonstrated the strength and depth of the program's relationships with partners and other stakeholders, understanding of the local context, and flexible management processes. Recent program management further demonstrates good use of resources: project outputs are largely being met, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19; and risks are being proactively identified and managed¹⁴. This recent management record shows that the program could manage resources flexibly and efficiently under an MSD approach.

Recommendations:

5. The Program to strengthen allocative efficiency by revising processes to allocate funding to sub-projects consistent with MSD and a sector-based theory of change. Provide grants to fewer partners within a balanced sector-sub portfolio approach. This could include a mix of:
 - Larger grants to take proven concepts to scale/achieve more predictable results
 - Smaller grants for innovative projects with more unpredictable but potentially transformative results.

The grant selection mechanism to make greater use of a "managed" selection process: where partners are identified through a purposeful selection rather than an open and competitive process, though competitive processes may be appropriate in some situations. **Long-term (phase 2 implementation)**

6. The Program to strengthen dynamic efficiency by:
 - Revising management processes to facilitate quicker, evidence-based decisions on whether a sub-project should be continued, changed, or stopped. The evidence for these management decisions could include information on whether assumptions are holding, as well as progress on key indicators.
 - Developing more flexible grant arrangements, including a) facility for an initial pilot phase, with progress dependent on demonstrated results; and b) making funding available to support partners

¹² The MTR sees expertise in MSD program design and facilitation of ToCs as essential, with expertise in a relevant sub-sector would be desirable. The Program should also ensure sufficient WEE/GE expertise is available to support this process.

¹³ GREAT, Assessment on Theory of Change, Assumptions and Contractual Indicators, 15/02/2019

¹⁴ Based on an analysis of progress reported in Program reports for the two periods, January-June, 2020 and July-December, 2020.

Recommendations:

to design projects (including assessing WEE issues for new sectors). **Long-term (phase 2 implementation)**

7. The Program to review and revise the management team structure to:
 - Ensure the right skills to play the role of facilitator and broker (consistent with an MSD approach):
 - Strengthen the Program Team's current levels and structuring of GESI expertise, building capacity and confidence to promote and support gender-inclusive MSD across the whole team, with a strong GESI adviser to lead and support them **Long-term (phase 2 implementation)**

4. Impacts

GREAT sub-projects are only 2.5 years' duration, so do not have sufficient time to realise impacts relating to the Program goal: *improving the social and economic status of ethnic minority women in Northwest Vietnam*. Nonetheless, GREAT is developing evidence through its Program Longitudinal Study, Project-level midline assessment, and Systemic Market Change Assessment study that demonstrates important progress, albeit uneven, across all six dimensions of WEE¹⁵ and the market systems change framework.

The MTR examined the Program's progress toward impacts through six sub-project case studies. Examples of emerging impacts from these studies include CRED Bamboo's success embedding changes in gender norms within production processes, securing District government support to expand production areas, and seeing new producer groups emerging to link with the value chain. The Lao Cai College Hospitality training program is transforming women's outlooks and roles by providing tailored, market-driven training that builds women's confidence and provides employment opportunities, despite the impact of COVID-19. The Program's progress after sub-projects have only two years of implementation (out of the 2.5 years) and considering the challenges faced by ethnic minority women, lays a solid foundation for achieving significant impact over the full five years in a second phase.

However, the number of beneficiaries reached on most sub-projects remains relatively small. The reason is that ethnic minority women are difficult to reach because they live in small and remote communities. One way to address this challenge is through digital technology initiatives that support women's access to finance and bring the significant potential for scaling impact. This was identified as a need and opportunity in several Program reports (including the Provincial Engagement Strategies and the Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report). The Program has recently been piloting relevant sub-projects. One pilot is for an App that provides female farmers with simple, user-friendly guidelines on farming techniques in different ethnic minority languages. Another pilot is building e-marketing and e-business strategy skills among 20 collective groups and cooperatives to help transform business models and address the digital divide.

Recommendations:

8. The Program to consider strategies to better incentivize businesses to engage on WEE by identifying and promoting successful business models of WEE engagement that other businesses could adopt. **Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)**
9. For the End of Program final report, the MC to provide more qualitative information on the significance of the change, pulling together and summarising the rich information in the three qualitative studies. For example, not just whether there has been an income increase but the details (ie. Significant) of the level of increase in different sub-sectors. (See also recommendations under MERL below.) **Short-term (phase 1)**

¹⁵ The program's recent Reach Benefit Empower framework incorporates and builds on the Six Dimensions of WEE, which remain relevant to assessing change in WEE for GREAT.

Recommendations:

10. The Program to continue piloting current projects in digital technology and financial access for learning how to scale reach in phase 2. **Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)**

5. Risk management

The Program has sound risk management processes and has demonstrated its effectiveness in identifying fraud and other financial issues. The Program's risk management capacity provides a strong foundation for taking and managing more calculated risks required to achieve stronger impacts in the future. One small, but important point, is that the MTR could not see reference to DFAT's most recent social and environmental safeguards policies in GREATs Standard Operating Procedures Manual (dated June 2018) (namely DFAT's Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy, updated March 2019; and the Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy which was launched in April 2019).

Recommendations:

11. The Program to review and update Procedures Manual to ensure compliance with DFAT's social and environmental safeguards policies. **Short-term (phase 1)**

6. Sustainability

The sustainability of Program benefits is linked to the achievement of the End of Program Outcomes (EOPO), which lays the basis for enduring changes in how markets operate and the empowerment of ethnic minority women, as well as transformational changes in gender and social norms. Government policies and actions play an important role in activating and maintaining both economic and social changes.

The Program's three large studies¹⁶ are identifying positive evidence that GREAT is on track to achieve sustainable changes. For example, the Project-level Midline Assessments Study found that an estimated: 83% of beneficiaries/households expect to continue with project-related production/service without support; 48% know someone looking to emulate business models; and 49% are seeking a loan to engage in project-related production or access a service¹⁷. While the Systemic Market Change Assessment Study also found some evidence for market change, at interview some government stakeholders expressed concern that further support after the end of the program was needed to sustain GREAT's work in developing new value chains (particularly the vegetable value chain in Van Ho).

Government ownership is the main area where the Program's approach to sustainability could be strengthened. While the Program's overall objectives strongly align with the Government of Vietnam's policies, understanding, and ownership of strategies to promote WEE/GE remains uneven across government and are lacking at lower levels.

Recommendations:

12. In line with the Program's new sector-based ToC, the Program to review and revise GREAT's Policy and Advocacy strategy to a) identify key government counterparts at different levels (national, provincial, district) that are central to Program objectives (b) assess their current levels of understanding and support for WEE/GE and other Program elements (eg MSD) (c) define broadly expected outcomes (in terms of changes in attitudes and behaviours of key government counterparts) (d) develop specific influencing strategies (with different roles for the MC, sub-project partners, DFAT, etc) e) develop a measure to assess policy change outcomes **Long-term (to be developed in phase 2 following finalisation of new ToC)**

¹⁶ The three large studies are: 1) Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report; 2) Project-level Midline Assessments; and 3) the Systemic Market Change Assessment Study

¹⁷ The MTR does not have access to the raw data to provide a gender breakdown

7. Monitoring, Evaluation Research, and Learning

GREAT's MERL system collects a significant amount of data at both Program and sub-project levels which is captured in an impressive, multi-functional MIS. At the sub-project level, the MERL system is well set up to effectively monitor individual sub-project progress, mainly concerning project budget expenditure, work-plan delivery, and risks. The system enables GREAT to effectively administer its large current portfolio and report progress to DFAT on a six-monthly basis. However, the system could be strengthened by providing clearer and simpler information to inform management decisions on whether a sub-project should be continued, changed, or stopped (see recommendation 6 above).

At the Program level, the MERL system is set up to aggregate results to report against progress against program indicators and targets. As outlined in the Effectiveness section, above, the weakness is the existence of multiple sets of indicators (for MC performance, the Performance Assessment Framework, and the ToC) which are not all aligned and create confusion over the Program's objectives. Moreover, some of the program's indicators are not useful for measuring the significance of the change.

In addition, feedback from interviews suggests that the rich data collected in the MIS could be better utilised to tell the Program's performance story. Going forward, the development of a clearer and simpler Program ToC under which different interventions are linked in terms of how they are addressing sub-sector constraints/issues will help address this challenge. Restructuring the MERL system around revised ToCs at program / sub-sector levels will enable the Program to confirm the important data to be collected and how it will be used in the future. In addition, as part of developing revised ToCs, the Program could capitalise on the wealth of data in the current MIS, mining this to provide the evidence base for the Program's future work (for example, looking at how men are benefiting from the Program in comparison with women).

Results-based management is strongly embedded in GREAT's overall Program management, supporting the concerted focus on program indicators and targets. However, MERL's concerted focus on sets of indicators (at Program and sub-project levels) will be better balanced with GREAT's recently strengthened approach to collaboration, learning, and adaption alongside GREAT's new, more specific, sector/market focussed ToC, the development of the GESI Implementation Strategy and the development of the Knowledge Management Plan. With the refinements mentioned above, the MTR believes the Program's MERL system has the potential in the future to support the iterative adaptive management, collaboration, and learning process that *"goes beyond just changing the details of how activities are implemented, to include changes to the types of activities, the strategies and even the intended outcomes and how the theory of change is understood."*¹⁸

Recommendations:

13. The Program to:

- provide data and analysis at the End of Program Report (from Program qualitative studies) to the extent possible on how men have been integrated into the Program and how their behaviours are changing (or not);
- develop new indicators and targets for the new Program and Sector ToC's to assess how men's behaviours and ender norms are changing. Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)

14. The Program to develop criteria to define what good value for money looks like for phase 2, and how the Program will be assessed against these criteria. (NB. DFAT's new Performance Assessment tool provides useful guidance). **Short-term**

15. The Program to restructure the MERL system around the new Program-level ToC as well as sub-sector level ToCs (see Recommendation 3). The MERL system to include:

- At the Program and sub-sector levels: mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators (a) that enable the measurement of the significance of change and provide the flexibility and adaptiveness required for an MSD program¹⁹ **Long-term (phase 2)**

¹⁸ From page 3, Rogers, P. and Macfarlan, A. (2020). What is adaptive management and how does it work? Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptive Management Working Paper Series, Number 2, September

¹⁹ For example, see <https://beamexchange.org/resources/1198/>

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- At the sub-project level: Measures to inform decisions on whether to stop, continue or scale-up
 - At the Program level: clear alignment of indicators that are used for different purposes (for overall MC program performance, the annual MC performance (Performance Assessment Framework) and the ToC) ***Long-term (phase 2)***
-

Introduction

This is the final report of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT) Program ('the Program'). The Mid-Term Review was conducted by a team of four evaluation professionals from Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd, consisting of two international consultants based in Australia and two national consultants based in Hanoi. This Introduction provides background information on the program and summarises the focus, approach, and limitations. The remaining sections of the report present the findings and recommendations under the seven categories of questions contained in the MTR Terms of Reference (ToR), namely: the five OECD DAC²⁰ criteria of 1) relevance; 2) effectiveness; 3) efficiency; 4) impact; and 5) sustainability; and two additional categories for 6) risk management and 7) monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning. The report provides findings against each of the 35 questions and sub-questions contained in the ToR under these seven categories.

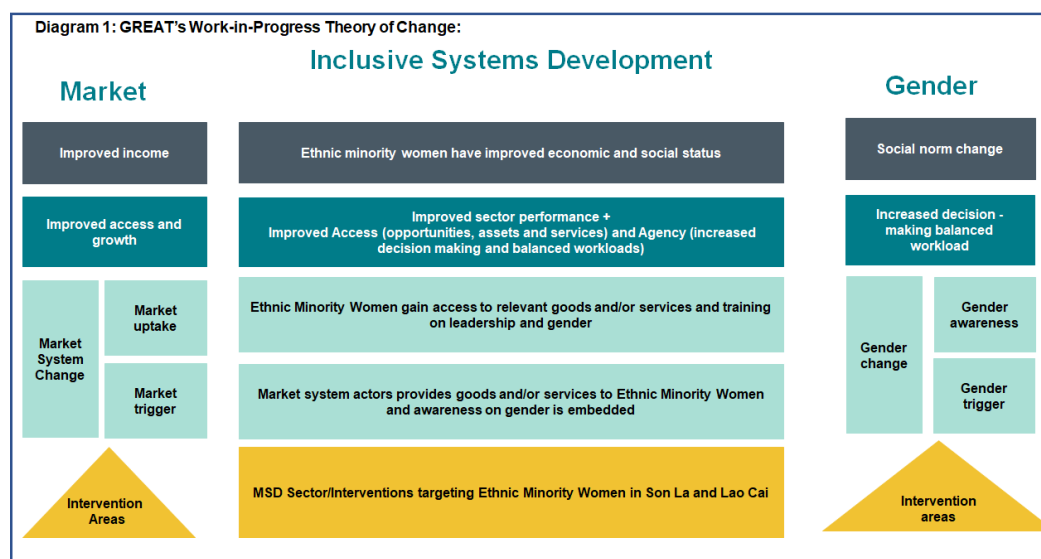
Program background

The GREAT Program is an AUD 33.7 million initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which seeks to empower ethnic minority women in the Son La and Lao Cai Provinces. The Program was originally designed to be implemented over five years with a potential second phase of five years and six months, subject to performance in the first phase. A delay in program start saw the first phase reduced to four years. The Program commenced in December 2017 and is due to finish in December 2021.

The Program goal is to improve the social and economic status of women living in northwest Vietnam through increasing their beneficial engagement in agriculture and tourism markets. This is to be achieved through three end-of-program outcomes:

1. Women living in local communities have increased capacity, space, and choices to beneficially engage with agriculture and tourism businesses.
2. Selected private sector actors within the agriculture and tourism sectors supported to innovate more profitably and sustainably trade with more women entrepreneurs & operate in gender-sensitive ways.
3. Government agencies reinforce policies and enact plans, regulations, and services that enable more inclusive socio-economic development.

The Program's theory of change (ToC) is in the process of being significantly revised from the original in the design document (see Annex D).²¹ The diagram below represents the current work-in-progress ToC.



²⁰ OECD DAC stands for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Criteria, which is recognised internationally as providing good criteria for assessing international development interventions.

²¹ GREAT Update power-point, presented by Phil Harman to the MTR Team, 2nd February 2021

GREAT's key delivery approaches are:

- Inclusive Market Systems Development (MSD) along with Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI);
- Results-Based Management; Partnership; Adaptive Management; and Innovation.

The program is managed by Cowater International through an office in Hanoi, in close coordination with Vietnamese Provincial Government Project Management Unit (PMU) offices in both target provinces. GREAT's highest decision-making body is the Program Steering Committee. The Vice-Chairmen of Lao Cai and Son La Provincial Peoples' Committees and DFAT's Counsellor co-chair the annual meeting of the Steering Committee. The Program has a current portfolio of 52 implementing partners (as of March/April 2021), including private sector actors, governmental and non-governmental organisations, mass organisations, and research institutions.

Review objectives and intended users

As per the Terms of Reference, the MTR has 3 objectives, each with different primary intended users:

Objectives	Primary Intended Users
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess program implementation to date, with a particular focus on the appropriateness of the program's scale, scope, implementation approach, and Theory of Change (TOC) (including the assumptions and end of program targets); 2. Develop, from the assessment, lessons, and recommendations for improvement/adjustment for the remainder of the current phase of the program, and a potential design refresh should a second phase move forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Embassy in Vietnam: Head of Mission and Deputy Head of Mission, Counsellor, First Secretary, and Senior Program Manager. • Foreign Minister Office (of Australia) • DFAT Gender Equality Branch (for learning purposes) • Managing Contractor, including its Representative, GREAT Program Team Leader, and implementation team • Government of Vietnam: Co-Chairs and members of the Steering Committee of the Program, relevant central Ministers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Provide analysis to inform DFAT's management decision on whether and how to exercise an option to extend the program for an additional five years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Embassy in Vietnam, Counsellor, First Secretary, and Senior Program Manager.

Approach

The MTR approach and method are outlined in the Review Plan (19th March 2021, see separate document). The key data collection methods were a review of documents and the GREAT MIS (see Annex B); remote consultations with key stakeholders (Annex A); and in-country fieldwork in the Program's two areas of operation: Son La and Lao Cai Provinces. The MTR interviewed 94 stakeholders (remotely and face-to-face) and conducted 15 focus group discussions with beneficiaries in both provinces (8 FGD for women beneficiaries and 7 FGDs for men beneficiaries). As part of the review, the MTR developed an Aide Memoire following fieldwork, case studies of six sub-projects (a separate document) and facilitated two workshops with DFAT and the Program Team on findings and recommendations.

There are three main limitations of the MTR.

First, the COVID-19 situation limited opportunities for a face-to-face consultation. The international members of the review team were unable to visit Vietnam and the review was heavily reliant on the Vietnamese team members for data collection.

Second, while fieldwork included valuable focus-group discussions with beneficiaries, the review was limited in being able to obtain primary data on how ethnic minority women have experienced and

benefited from the Program. The MTR has drawn extensively on the Program's three qualitative studies²² for this data.

Third, the review is limited by resources, which are relatively constrained for assessing such a large and complex program.

1 Relevance

Main question: Assess whether the Program is contributing to implementing Australia's strategic policy framework and addressing Vietnam's development priorities.

GREAT remains highly relevant to Australia's strategic policy framework and Vietnam's development priorities. The MSD and WEE/GE approach also remain highly relevant to the needs of GREAT's target beneficiaries. Recommendations are made to strengthen these approaches further.

1.1 DFAT's Aid policy frameworks

Does the program align with Aid policy frameworks, including but not limited to the Aid Investment Plan in Vietnam, DFAT's gender equality and women's empowerment strategy (including Australia in Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2020), the Operational Framework for private sector engagement in Australia's aid program, the Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response?

The Program remains highly relevant to the following key DFAT policies:

- **Aid Investment Plan in Vietnam** (2016-2020, but remains current): The Program was designed²³ to align with the third objective: *Promoting women's economic empowerment, including ethnic minorities*
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy** (February 2016): The Program's end of investment Outcome One mirrors the corporate strategy's second priority, *Promoting women's economic empowerment*, which is aimed at addressing the barriers stopping women from participating in the economy equally to men
- **Australia in Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy** (2016-2020), which outlines specific measures to promote women's economic empowerment, many of which relate to the Program's activities, including those to increase: women's employment opportunities; share of women-owned businesses in the economy; and women's access to, control over and use of productive resources and markets.
- **DFAT's Operational Framework for private sector engagement in Australia's aid program.** The Program's end of investment outcome two reflects the objective of Australia's private sector engagement framework: *to deliver on shared interests - increased development impacts and sustainable commercial returns - critical for a stable and prosperous region*. Moreover, the Program is applying approaches articulated in this framework for embedding private sector organisations as program partners and supporting them to achieve economic growth while reducing poverty
- **DFAT's Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response.** The Program's work to promote the inclusion of ethnic minorities, especially women, in economic growth directly supports Australia's development response efforts. The Program has also pivoted in several areas and developed activities specifically to help program beneficiaries respond to the impact of COVID-19.²⁴

1.2 Vietnam's development priorities

Does the program align with Vietnam's development priorities in the current and next development periods?

The focus of the Program continues to be highly relevant to helping the Government of Vietnam address the "unfinished agenda" of their rapid economic growth: promoting more inclusive growth, improving domestic productivity, and reducing the poverty of ethnic minorities, particularly ethnic minority women, who now make up most of Vietnam's poor. The Government of Vietnam has recently re-confirmed these priorities in the next generation of national target programs:

²² These are: the Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report; Project-level Midline Assessments; and the Systemic Market System Change Assessment Study

²³ See GREAT IDD, August, 2016, particularly Annex 5: Gender Equality, Ethnicity and Women's Economic Empowerment

²⁴ See GREAT Progress Report, July-December 2020.

- **National Target Program (NTP) for the Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas 2021-2030.** This program seeks to promote development through improving market institutions, promoting human resources, and building infrastructure. GREAT has influenced the design of this program to enhance decentralisation, promote market-based approaches to economic development, and increase community participation in strategy development and implementation, with a more rigorous focus on gender issues for ethnic minority communities and women's economic empowerment (NB the other NTP programs also have relevance to the Program).
- **National Assembly resolution on Promoting Multidimensional, Inclusive and Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2021-2030 (Resolution 76).** Through this resolution, additional government support is to be provided to 3.03 million women including 1.29 million ethnic minority women in near-poor households
- **National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2021- 2030.** This includes targets directly relevant to the Program, particularly: increasing the number of female business owners; reducing the number of time women spend on unpaid housework; increasing services for women experiencing domestic and gender-based violence; increase salary-based jobs for women; and reducing the ratio of female labour in the agricultural sector. These targets need to be considered in developing the Program's Phase 2. For example, the Program may need to consider increasing occupational training and developing the processing industry to create more salary-based jobs for women.

1.3 Relevance to target groups

Is it (the Program) relevant to the needs and the existing assets of target groups?

The Program remains as much, if not more, relevant to the needs and assets of ethnic minority women in the North-West of Vietnam. Since the Program's design in 2016, rates of poverty reduction for Vietnam's minorities have not kept pace with those for the Kinh population. In 2012, representing some 15% of the population, ethnic minorities made up 42% of Vietnam's poor. By 2020, they are expected to make up 60%²⁵. Ethnic minority women remain among the most disadvantaged of Vietnam's social groups. The Program has demonstrated how opportunities in tourism and agriculture can be seized, leading to the economic advancement of ethnic minority women. Support to ethnic minority women has become even more important, given they have been more adversely impacted by COVID-19 than men.

1.4 Relevance in changing operational context

Has the operational context of the program changed? To what extent have the changes impacted the program's relevance to Australia's and Vietnam's priorities? To what extent has the program responded to changes?

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the Program's operational context. The GREAT Program has proven highly responsive to these contextual changes.

The tourism market has been the most severely disrupted by COVID-19, with international tourism virtually stopped²⁶, but several agricultural markets and value chains have also been badly impacted (eg. passionfruit and vegetables). By the end of June 2020, the revenue of 10 out of 16 of the Program's business partners was below target (the tourism businesses were well below, and some were in the negative). However, most in agriculture were still planning to honour contracts at least partly with farmers.²⁷ The Program reports²⁸ that over 2020 the impact on beneficiaries at the household level has been very uneven. While 66% of agricultural beneficiaries reported experiencing difficulties from interrupted crop production and sales over the last six months of the year, an estimated 54% still recorded a profit. In tourism, 78% of beneficiaries reported being negatively impacted in the last six months of 2020 (with women more likely to be impacted than men) but the estimate is that 30% have made a profit. Overall, as with the rest of Vietnam, COVID's impact on women has been worse than that on men. In the Program's Project level Midline Survey, Muong and Thai women reported increased stress from loss of income and increased domestic violence.²⁹

In May 2020, the Program developed a COVID-19 Response Plan (see above) to assist partners and beneficiaries cope with the economic shocks, increased risks of gender-based violence, and gender and

²⁵ Page 7, World Bank, Country Partnership Framework, FY2018-22, May 2017

²⁶ International arrivals to Vietnam in 2020 were down by 78.7% from the previous year www.en.nhandan.org.vn (quoted in Program Progress Report, July to December 2020, page 8)

²⁷ Page 33-34, Program Progress Report, January to June 2020

²⁸ Ibid, page 16 and 23

²⁹ Ibid, page 16

related forms of inequality (eg digital divide). In a June survey of business partners, GREAT found that 54% of business partners were adapting to new market conditions (including pivoting to new markets). They also found partners were utilising technology (eg. Zalo, an online messaging video call app) to lower marketing and sales costs and coordinate across supply chains. The Program's Progress Report for the second half of 2020 shows significant improvements compared to the first half of the year³⁰. The Program reported that 25 out of 29 business projects³¹ had increased revenue between July-December 2020, compared with the previous reporting period. Other initiatives include campaigns to prevent gender-based violence, assist tourism and agriculture businesses to pivot to new markets, and support businesses and cooperatives to adopt digital technology (eg. Kisstartup). The Program's latest GESI strategy strongly addresses the post-COVID environment and challenges.³²

1.5 Relevance of program approaches to target groups

Are the framework and approaches (WEE, MSD, and GESI mainstreaming) by the program relevant to target areas and beneficiaries?

The Program's central approaches are highly relevant to GREAT's target areas and beneficiaries. These approaches (a) directly address the Program's core problem that ethnic minority women continue to be economically excluded from Vietnam's otherwise impressive economic development (which continues even despite COVID-19) and socially excluded because of the persistence of adverse social and gender norms despite broader progress on gender equality, and (b) have contributed to delivering economic and social benefits for beneficiaries.

Inclusive Market Systems Development (MSD): The GREAT Program has successfully cultivated strong Government of Vietnam interest in a market systems development (MSD) approach involving working with the private sector and enabling ethnic minorities to better participate in markets to improve their incomes, as a more effective alternative to the "charity approach" the government previously took to developing ethnic minority areas. The inclusion of a focus on market systems in the new generation of NTP (as above) is further evidence of the degree to which this approach has become accepted within the government's thinking.

Moreover, the evolution of the Program from design through implementation further highlights the relevance of the approach. In the Inception Phase, GREAT conducted an in-depth analysis of market systems but at the start of implementation, the focus was on building a portfolio of implementing partners using a challenge fund model. This model was effective in generating a diverse range of projects but was not effective in building portfolios (or sub-portfolios) of projects contributing in different strategic ways to address identified problems/issues within a particular sub-sector (see efficiency and effectiveness sections). More recently, to leverage complementarity across projects in the portfolio to maximise systemic impact, GREAT has begun "retro-fitting" projects around identified sub-sector issues or themes.

Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEE/GE) mainstreaming: The Program was designed with an ambitious goal of economic and social empowerment³³ of ethnic minority women. This goal was ambitious for two reasons. One was that it required tackling entrenched gender and cultural norms. A risk identified in the design and regularly reported in the progress reports was that: *"Fundamental gender norms are so entrenched that GREAT cannot make a purposeful change to social and psychological perceptions. Instead, we move economic empowerment without changing norms"* (p. 56). The design recognised that such empowerment could take *"ten or more years to materialise"* (p.63). The second was those approaches for delivering this holistic approach to empowerment were yet to be developed. The design explored a WEE approach because it was designed to articulate with MSD approaches but noted that in applications elsewhere this approach had been less effective in promoting the social dimension (p.81) and the Program would need to test and develop its approaches during implementation (p.81).

While recording some notable achievements in women's empowerment, the Program has faced challenges in cultivating government and other stakeholder interest in WEE/GE. The MTR views these

³⁰ Page 35 op. cit.

³¹ 6 of these businesses are currently receiving consultant support from the Program to pivot to new markets and improve supply chain management capacity. Support will be extended to other business partners provided that they demonstrate a commitment to adapt. Page, 17, op. cit.

³² GREAT's GESI Intervention Plan to Reach, Benefit and Empower Women: July 2020-June 2021 &

³³ This is consistent with DFAT's WEE approach

challenges as reinforcing the relevance and importance of the program continuing to actively promote women's empowerment. The limited government support for WEE in particular was demonstrated by the response of government interviewees. While government interviewees in the capital of Hanoi understood and were supportive of WEE, many of those in the provinces and districts were much less so (they felt the Program approaches were overly technical and designed by foreign experts, so were not locally owned or culturally appropriate). The MTR believes many of these stakeholders have not been significantly involved in the Program, but their attitudes may be reflective of those in government and the community more broadly. One of the concerns relates to the perception that WEE means women are being given economic advantages over men. Some stakeholders contrast WEE with government policies relating to gender equality which they associate with government targets for the number of women in leadership roles and on committees etc.

During implementation GREAT has been testing various approaches. The new WEE/GE framework the Program has developed (the Reach, Benefit, Empower framework, see Annex C) looks promising for addressing the challenges above. The Program began by trying to apply the 6 dimensions of WEE mentioned in the design document but found this unhelpful for explaining the concept to stakeholders as it was too complicated and appeared too theoretical. The Reach, Benefit Empower (RBE) framework builds on and nuances the 6 dimensions, presenting them as they relate to concepts of Access and Agency and recognising a continuum as marginalised women build their capability towards empowerment. This framework also responds to critiques of the 6 dimensions of WEE which note that concepts of broader wellbeing (specifically in terms of Violence Against Women) are absent. The Program's Longitudinal Study: Midline Report (December 2020) has recently critiqued this framework for excluding key aspects of empowerment relating to women's aspirations and wellbeing.

The emphasis on Reach in the RBE framework is especially important in demonstrating the need for specific efforts to ensure the extreme poor can benefit from MSD approaches. Left only up to the market, these groups would be unlikely to be able in or benefit directly from MSD without some form of community/ household level intervention. In making extremely poor and disempowered women visible within the framework, GREAT responds to broad criticisms globally that WEE approaches do not support very poor women.³⁴ It aligns with the growing understanding that a 'graduation' approach is needed to bring ultra-poor and extremely poor women into WEE interventions. The Reach Benefit Empower framework is a well-designed framework and tool for implementation that offers utility beyond Vietnam. GREAT is well-positioned to engage with and contribute to this learning as do other DFAT-supported programs, like the MDF.³⁵

1.6 Recommendations

How might a potential design refresh enhance the relevance of the program to Australia's strategic policy framework and development priorities in Vietnam, including in the light of COVID-19?

The MTR found that the Program is already highly relevant to stakeholders and beneficiaries and should continue the current thinking and work to refine directions and approaches. The program is highly contextualised, carefully researched, and has responded to relevant information identified.

Recommendations:

1. The Program to prepare a position paper for consideration by DFAT and the Steering Committee on the options (benefits and costs) for how the Program could be redefined around target sub-sectors, value chains, or thematic areas where there is the best potential impact for ethnic minority women. The paper proposes (a) a reduced number of sub-sectors on which to focus (where phase 1 evidence shows there is the most potential for market systemic change to the benefit of ethnic minority women) and (b) an appropriate inclusive MSD implementation approach. In developing the approach, the Paper could look at whether the Program would be more effective in achieving systemic sub-

³⁴ For example, Centre for Global Development [What Does it Take to Empower Ultra-Poor Women? | Center For Global Development \(cgdev.org\)](#), 2019.

³⁵ Australian Aid Market Development Facility [Women-at-Work-Web.pdf \(marketdevelopmentfacility.org\)](#), 2020

Recommendations:

sector/market change if it had the flexibility to operate beyond the current two provinces. **Long-term (phase 2)**

2. The Program to review and re-design approaches and activities for building Vietnamese stakeholder's understanding and support for women's empowerment, using the Reach, Benefit, and Empower framework and the Program's other recently developed tools/approaches. For example, the Program could consider better aligning its approach with Vietnam's National Strategy for Gender Equality³⁶ and creating more visible roles for the Vietnamese organisations responsible for its implementation, including the Women's Union, MOLISA, and DOLISA. The Program should seek to influence and connect with the national body responsible for the Strategy (Gender Equality Department) as well tactically support the subnational governments (Son La and Lao Cai) responsible for implementation rather than diluting its message on the importance of WEE/GE. **Long-term (phase 2)**

2 Effectiveness

Overarching question: Assess whether the program is on track to achieving its stated objectives.

GREAT is on track to achieve most of the 10 indicators identified in the design document as the basis on which to judge the Program's success³⁷ (based on evidence in Progress reports and the Program's three large studies). However, the MTR finds that (a) these indicators do not do meaningfully measure the extent or significance of Program impacts and (b) the existence of multiple sets of indicators (eg. 10 success indicators, PAF indicators, ToC indicators) of varying quality, creates confusion over Program objectives. The Program's new work-in-progress ToC promises to significantly strengthen GREAT's strategic focus and effectiveness, building on the Program's successes and learning in phase 1. This success includes that most sub-projects are achieving their outputs, and the Program has influenced the development of more inclusive value chains that better engage ethnic minority women and introducing two new and challenging approaches (MSD and WEE/GE) in poor areas of Northern Vietnam.

2.1 Program logic and theory of change

To what extent is the program's logic and theory of change robust and applicable? To what extent do the program's assumptions hold true in the context of program implementation?

The Program's original ToC no longer fully reflects the Program's operational realities and learning. Moreover, several stakeholders interviewed commented that this ToC was "highly ambitious, intricate, and confusing." However, the Program's new work-in-progress ToC provides a clearer picture of how change is expected to happen through MSD approaches that are focussed on sub-sectors and integrate WEE/GE approaches. The MTR recommends the further development of sub-sector ToCs to nest under the Program ToC and provide practical plans for action.

- a) **Program logic.** The MTR finds that Program's original goal "*Women living in North-West Vietnam have improved social and economic status*" remains appropriate (noting that the Program has only worked in Son La and Lao Cai in phase 1). However, below this level, the structure of the original ToC (ie based around three End-of-Program Outcome (EOPO) pillars) and outcomes (ie. Immediate, intermediate, and EOPO) could be revised to promote the development of complementary portfolio interventions. The original ToC logic incentivised the separate pursuit of each of the three EOPO 'pillars' through distinct activities that were not conducive to collaboration across pillars. This siloed approach was exacerbated using the challenge fund delivery model (with separate funds for EOPO

³⁶ For example, the Program could align with the 3 new economic and labour targets in the new Strategy. Over the longer-term, the Program could seek to play a role in supporting rural women's transition out of subsistence agriculture.

³⁷ See page 26, GREAT Design Document. In addition, the Program tracks progress against a) 10 Performance Assessment Framework Result Indicators, agreed with DFAT on annual basis, and b) 20 Theory of Change Result indicators. Some of/indicators in these two sets of results are the same as the above "baseline" result areas.

1 and 2), and indicators with high targets for the number of partners to be engaged under each pillar (approximately 80 across all objectives proposed in the Design Document, see efficiency Section 3).

- b) Program assumptions.** The MTR has reviewed the MC's assessment of the original ToC assumptions conducted in 2019 (see Annex D) and agrees with most of the conclusions reached (see Annex D). Most of these assumptions continue to be valid. They are pitched at a general level, which is appropriate for the Program-level ToC and will be useful to inform the new ToC. However, in developing sector-level ToCs, more specific assumptions will be important. These could be used as part of the assessment of whether to stop, continue, or scale-up support in that sector.

In developing new ToCs at Program and sub-sector levels, the Program has also rich information from the Program MIS and researches on which to draw. In particular:

- the Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report has already been used to inform work to develop the Reach Benefit Empower framework and the revised GESI Strategy (December 2020).
- the Systemic Market Change Assessment study currently underway is generating contextually detailed and relevant information to inform the work-in-progress theory of change.

There is also the opportunity to base the new ToC on joint gender and market systems analysis to identify 'bottlenecks' to WEE and economic development within sectors, targeted strategies to address these, and appropriate targets and indicators. With GREAT identifying gender inequality as one of the fundamental challenges to development in Son La and Lao Cai, gender analysis should be embedded within the market analysis by default. However, to ensure that this is the case, this intention should be made explicit. The twin-track approach to addressing gender inequality³⁸, widely recognised as a strategic and practical response by DFAT and others, involves a combination of gender mainstreaming to ensure gender-inclusive development, together with targeted gender-specific initiatives which address deep-seated challenges that constrain results in terms of both development and gender equality outcomes. While all MSD activities should therefore be gender-inclusive, GREAT will also need targeted initiatives, including addressing harmful gender norms. More thinking is needed to articulate this important work, which has the potential to advance thinking around WEE/GE beyond just the GREAT Program's work in Vietnam.

2.2 The extent of achievement of objectives

To what extent are the program's intended objectives being met?

The MTR judges overall program effectiveness as "good" based on a review of progress against 10 indicators of success identified in GREAT's design document (page 26). Half of these indicators have clear performance targets, but half do not.

The MTR finds:

- GREAT is on track to achieve 3 out of 5 of the indicators with clear performance targets (see table 1 below). These are the indicators against which GREAT has mainly been reporting progress through regular Program reports³⁹. GREAT is *not* on track to achieve targets related to a) increased incomes and b) jobs for women, but the MTR finds these targets are unrealistic (as also concluded by the Program in the first year of implementation).
- GREAT has contributed to positive changes compared with baseline data (where available) in 3 out of 5 of the program's other success indicators.⁴⁰ For example, in relation to the indicator for changes in gender roles and norms, there has been a 10-20% positive change from baseline data in the number of hours of income-generating work being undertaken by women and women's participation in household decision-making⁴¹ (see section 2.2). Some changes are directly driven by program activities (e.g. recruitment of women in leadership positions) and the sustainability of the changes is uncertain. Activities related to the other two indicators, which do have targets, were still being implemented at the time of the MTR and information was not available. GREAT will report the results in the upcoming progress report.

³⁸ [Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au), 2016.

³⁹ In progress reports, GREAT refers to these 5 indicators as "contractual indicators", however only 2 of these indicators [a) increased incomes and b) jobs for women] are linked to the contract as "program outcome achievement" milestones for payment of part of management fees.

⁴⁰ These indicators either completely lack targets or, if included, the targets are not meaningful. See Section 2.2

⁴¹ From the Project-level Midline Assessments

However, the MTR also finds that the 10 indicators of success do not meaningfully measure the extent or significance of Program impacts. The problems with these indicators are that they measure results at different levels (from low-level outputs to long-term outcomes), some do not meet the SMART criteria, and some targets are unrealistic. In addition, the Program also reports against two other sets of indicators (eg. The Performance Assessment Framework⁴² and ToC results), which are not aligned with the 10 success indicators. These multiple sets of indicators create confusion over Program objectives.

Table 1a): Progress against GREAT's 5 performance indicators with targets

Outcome area and indicator	Target	Progress	On track/Off track
<p>Outcome area: Women-led or co-managed households, groups, or cooperatives in outer areas have greater income</p> <p>Indicator: The incomes of 40,000 self-employed women farmers and small entrepreneurs are significantly improved across Son La and Lào Cai.</p>	40,000	15,414	Offtrack
<p>Outcome area: More agriculture and tourism businesses conduct more profitable business with women, and particularly women from ethnic minorities</p> <p>Indicator: 4,000 full-time equivalent positions for women are created in fulfilling and safe off-farm formal waged employment</p>	4,000	834	Offtrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: Over \$US6.0M in private sector investment is leveraged for business opportunities that are profitable, sustainable, and inclusive</p>	USD 6 m	USD 5.35 m	Ontrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: 80 per cent of women beneficiaries' self-report increased confidence, enthusiasm, and self-esteem, and these changes are plausibly attributed to their engagement with GREAT</p>	80%	80%	Ontrack
<p>Outcome area: Women-led and co-managed businesses increase significantly</p> <p>Indicator: The number of women leading or co-managing formal businesses increases by 15% compared with 2016 figures.</p>	15%	14%	Ontrack

⁴² The Performance Assessment Framework is developed through the annual work planning process as a primary tool for measuring progress toward achievement of outcomes (see Annex E). The PAF includes some indicators from the 10 success indicators including a) Number of women with increased income; b) Number of women beneficiaries reported having increased confidence c) Value (in USD) leveraged from GREAT supported enterprises/cooperatives as results of co-investment with GREAT. However, the PAF also includes indicators from a list of standardized DFAT indicators to enable consolidated global reporting for DFAT.

Table 1(b): Progress against GREATs 5 performance indicators without clear targets

Outcome area / indicator	Progress	Measures*/ Progress summary
<p>Outcome area 1: Women have a more pervasive and a more recognised role in decision making and leadership in the family, the community, and the agriculture and tourism sectors</p> <p>Indicator: Measurable changes in gender roles and norms occur within the families of GREAT beneficiaries. (Broader community and societal changes in roles and norms will tend to take much longer). Agriculture and tourism businesses find greater enabling environment support</p>	+	<p>1.1 Percentage of women reporting their participation in decision making (various types of decisions)</p> <p>a) Project-level midline Survey: 100% of women surveyed involved in decision-making (regular and large household expenses); up from 80% baseline. However, only 70% of men said women were involved; only 57% for large expenses. (p.21)</p> <p>b) Longitudinal Study: Generally, “women have an increasing role in production decisions & decisions about the use of income” but also documented differences between ethnic groups (p. 16)</p>
	+	<p>1.2 Task/time allocation by women and men (to measure workload sharing).</p> <p>a) Project-level midline Survey: Women’s time in income generation increased from 6.9 to 7.5 hours per day, but time spent on personal & household chores dropped from 4.2 to 3.7 hours (p.22)</p> <p>b) Program Longitudinal-midline Report: Generally, women are doing more work in economic production, but this is being shared with men. In most ethnic groups there has not been much change in who is doing domestic work, though some men were doing more work perhaps associated with being at home more because of COVID-19 (p.19)</p>
	+	<p>1.3 Changes in the 6 domains of WEE + aspirations & well-being (Program Longitudinal-midline Report p11-20):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to opportunities: improved tech knowledge; need more financial and digital tech knowledge • Access to assets: In bamboo shoots, medicinal herbs, cinnamon, tea, and tourism—need more access to finance; In rice, tea and vegetables—need access to more transparent information about markets & contracts • Economic advancement: women’s productive work has enabled them to influence household use of income • Decision-making: shared decision-making on productive and most household decisions • Workload & Roles: Women & men shared productive work, and men increasingly help with household work and child-care; women’s leadership of groups allowed for increased knowledge and respect but also needed more support/training. • Social norms: younger women & men have more equitable relationships & • less violence; men valued women’s involvement in productive work & earning incomes • Wellbeing: mental wellbeing negatively affected by the loss of income & health concerns (except cinnamon, tea) • Aspiration: Women wanted stable income and not so much work; women wanted to be able to educate their children, and travel/visit others.

Outcome area / indicator	Progress	Measures*/ Progress summary
<p>Outcome area 2: Agriculture and tourism businesses find greater enabling environment support</p> <p>Indicator: 80% of agriculture and tourism businesses report improved communication and access with Government regulators and administrators</p>	not available	<p>Collected through the DDCI survey.</p> <p>Cannot update at this time. The DCCI results have just been published and relevant indicators will be reported in the next Progress Report.</p> <p>NOTE: District/Provincial authorities hold regular meetings with business activities. One of the Program's activities is aimed at improving the quality of dialogue between business and government in these meetings.</p>
<p>Outcome area 3: Increased consensus on the areas of policy or service delivery that could be improved to ensure more inclusive growth at the commune and provincial levels</p> <p>Indicator: A majority of Agriculture and Tourism stakeholders confirm that sector plans and strategies adequately address issues that are critical for inclusive sector growth.</p>	not available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above for 7
<p>Outcome area 3: Increased consensus on the areas of policy or service delivery that could be improved to ensure more inclusive growth at the commune and provincial levels</p> <p>Indicator: Significant progress is made in five or more areas relating to policy or policy implementation for the agriculture and tourism sector in the Provinces.</p>	+	<p>Projects' contribution to policy (provincial and sub-provincial) included in the project's results chain and captured in MIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Projects are aiming to directly contribute to policy development (contributions range from conducting initial studies to inform policy to drafting new policies) (Source 4. Project's Policy Development Update_2021.02.04) • Significant progress in contributing toward 7 policy areas, ranging from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government Actions Plans: for departments in districts governments to improve the business enabling environment - New Regulations: to support agriculture de-development in Lao Cai - The new policy approved: to support the expansion of Bodhi tree production (for Benzoin) in Van Ban district (Source: Progress Report, July-Dec, 2020 p.32-33)
<p>Outcome area 3: Increased consensus on the areas of policy or service delivery that could be improved to ensure more inclusive growth at the commune and provincial levels</p> <p>Indicator: Provincial partners (Government and the Private Sector) influence national policy through an evidence-based</p>	+	<p>GREAT Policy and Advocacy Strategy identifies expected national policy changes. (Going forward evidence will include changes tracked/made to policy documents based on GREAT advocacy).</p> <p>Two key national-level results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced the final NTP-SEDEMA Feasibility Study Report to include recommendations relating to market-based approaches, gender mainstreaming, government decentralisation, etc • Influenced new National Assembly Resolution on Promoting Multidimensional, Inclusive and Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2021-2030 (Resolution 76) – this has led to an additional 3.03 million women, including 1.29 million ethnic minority women in near-poor households being eligible for government support.

Outcome area / indicator	Progress	Measures*/ Progress summary
understanding of the impact		

*Note: measures in this column as advised by the GREAT Program Team Leader. The MTR has made the progress rating base on the evidence summarised in the last column.

The Program reports against the achievement of objectives in "Progress reporting against contractual indicators" and the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) agreed with DFAT each year. As summarised in Table 1a, the program is tracking strongly in terms of private sector leverage, confidence for women, and the increase in women-led business. However, it is not on track to reach targets related to increased income for women or the creation of jobs. Since the inception phase, GREAT has flagged that it was unlikely to meet these targets.

GREAT's most recent report on achievement against its PAF is included in Annex E. It shows that the Program is exceeding its annual targets in terms of the number of women with increased incomes (15,414 against a target of 14,737) and the percentage of women involved in household decision-making (100% against a target of 50%). 87% of women in agriculture interventions and 73% of women in tourism report greater confidence, against a target of 80%. Strong results are also reported against access to training and opportunities, participation in collectives, policy dialogues, and leadership positions⁴³ considering cumulative whole-of-program results. The utility of these targets and indicators is discussed further in Section 2.4, below.

2.3 Challenges to the achievement of objectives

What have been significant challenges for the program to achieve its expected objectives?

Challenges for the program to achieve its intended objectives include: a) the short time-frame for implementation; b) the disruption caused by COVID-19; c) target beneficiaries (ethnic minority women) with high levels of disadvantage and few opportunities; d) the entrenched nature of adverse gender and social norms toward ethnic minority women; and e) limited geographic scope for implementing an MSD approach. These challenges are elaborated below:

- a) **Reduced timeframe:** Due to start-up delays and other factors, the program will effectively have 2.5 years to implement sub-projects, which is well short of the 5-year time over which the program was originally intended to be implemented. Moreover, for half this implementation period, social and economic life in Vietnam has been disrupted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in gender norms and also the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge amongst women living in poverty takes time to achieve in the best of circumstances, as does the development of more inclusive value chains/markets. With the introduction of the updated GESI Strategy and the Systemic Market Change Assessment Study, the program appears to be on the cusp of jumping off the initial, foundational changes, to achieve more tangible results.
- b) **COVID-19 disruption:** For half of the time of sub-project implementation, social and economic life in Vietnam has been disrupted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic undermined opportunities for information-sharing and learning that were crucial for GREAT to promote understanding of ideas that were new for many participants and stakeholders (in MSD and WEE/GE). The sub-project case studies conducted as part of the MTR found that the pandemic has undermined the impacts in several cases (eg. DDCI, Greenfarm vegetable project, etc) and potentially limited opportunities for individual projects to link together, build on effective approaches and increase results. Project reporting noted that partner activities were severely disrupted, with business profits reduced and the collapse of the tourism sector, which was also evidenced in the MTR case studies and undermined the achievement of targets in terms of job creation and income. For example, the MTR fieldwork found that companies such as Greenfarm were not able to buy the anticipated quantities of vegetables planned from producers and that current Lao Cai College trainees did not expect to find employment during the pandemic.

⁴³ GREAT's figures are based on project-level midline surveys. However, it is worth noting that in fieldwork conducted for the MTR, several women were unsure why they had been appointed to leadership roles or what these roles involved; at another location the MTR team did not find the expected number of women leading collectives.

- c) **Beneficiaries with high levels of disadvantage and few opportunities:** The Program is working with ethnic minority women from 9 different ethnic groups. As acknowledged in the design document, this is a challenging group to work with given their: a) high levels of poverty (they are among the poorest groups in the country); b) low levels of education and literacy (well below the rest of the population with most not fluent in Vietnamese); and c) location in remote, small communities dispersed across difficult to access mountainous areas where economic opportunities are limited.
- d) **Entrenched gender and social norms.** Among government officials and other Program stakeholders from the majority Vietnamese population, support and understanding for women's economic empowerment were uneven. At the national level, some stakeholders raised concerns that the use of terms like WEE in the Program design was culturally insensitive. The use of these terms was taken as evidence that the Program was largely designed by foreign experts using language that was complex and confusing.⁴⁴ At the Provincial level, stakeholders commented that they did not understand how to 'do' WEE (eg see the DCCI case study), and concern was also expressed that WEE initiatives excluded men. Despite this, at the community level at least, the program has achieved areas of success in terms of changes in norms and behaviours, which was evidenced in the CRED Bamboo Shoots project. However, this project is only working with 250 households⁴⁵, and the Program has noted the challenges in taking this project to scale.
- e) **Limited geographic scope:** It was difficult for the Program to reach scale and promote market systems due to the limited number of districts imposing boundaries on markets. This may have reflected that stakeholders lack understanding of the Program's inclusive business and MSD approaches at the design stage.

2.4 Relevance of program targets to objectives

Given these challenges and changes in the operational context, are the program targets still relevant compared to the program's objectives? How should the program's current targets be adjusted and complemented by alternative targets and measures?

The Program is collecting information on at least three sets of result **indicators** and **targets** to measure:

- a) Overall phase one progress: the set of 10 original "baseline" result indicators drawn from the Program design (see section 2.2). This includes 5 contractual result indicators with targets, and another 5 non-contractual results, most without targets.
- b) Annual Program performance: a set of 10 Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) result indicators and targets set up on annual basis for DFAT to assess the MC's performance over the year (many of the same indicators are in place over several years). The current PAF indicators/targets include three of the contractual indicators.
- c) Progress against indicators in the Program ToC.

While there are some common indicators across the three different sets, there are several indicators that are unique to one set only. These multiple intersecting sets of results create confusion over the Program's objectives. This could be addressed by streamlining results and clearly explaining the purpose of each set of results and showing how they align with and link with each other (see section 7 on MERL and recommendations).

Given that the Program ToC is being revised, this section focuses on the relevance of the first two sets of result indicators and targets.

⁴⁴ These comments do not necessarily reflect lack of stakeholder engagement in the design process. The design document states that there was "significant engagement with Vietnamese stakeholders between December 2015 and June 2016" and provides a list of these engagement activities (p. 1). Rather these comments could reflect that there was some general resistance to GREAT because: a) the Program was introducing new concepts that were challenging to Vietnamese stakeholders (particularly in relation to WEE), which a complex and confusing ToC (with a lot of new development jargon) made it more difficult to communicate; and b) the Program introduced an MC to deliver the Program, when Vietnamese officials are used to managing donor funding directly, which could have made it harder to build stakeholder ownership. In the context of such initial resistance, the Program is addressing both of these challenge through the new, simpler ToC and WEE/GE approach ("Reach, Benefit, Empower) and concrete plans to build stronger government relationships.

⁴⁵ Project Brief, Centre for Rural Economy and Development (CRED)

a) 10 original “baseline” result indicators and targets:

The MTR finds that the 10 original “baseline” results are partially relevant to GREAT’s original objectives but could be strengthened and better aligned with other Program results. Designing results indicators for a new Program like GREAT is difficult because there is limited evidence of what works (in the intervention’s particular operational context) upon which to base these indicators. Result indicators only provide an indication of what has happened. To be meaningful, a set of indicators is required to measure different key parts of an intervention.

One of the strengths of the Program’s original set of 10 baseline result indicators is that they combine qualitative and quantitative indicators that relate to each of the Program’s three End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPOs). However, the result indicators are not always presented as a set in Program reporting, with the focus on the 5 contractual indicators as the primary measures of GREAT’s overall success. All these 5 contractual indicators are quantitative and are related to only two EOPOs (1 and 2). While they lack relevance because they provide only a limited picture of the Program’s achievements, they do meet the SMART criteria for developing indicators.

The strength of the other five non-contractual results is that they relate to all three EOPOs and include qualitative indicators for the more difficult to measure, but centrally important, objectives of the Program relating to changing behaviours and norms. The weaknesses are that the formulation of these indicators do not meet SMART criteria⁴⁶. The indicators do not measure the most important parts of GREAT’s original ToC and do not capture information on the significance of the change. For example:

- Result indicator 6 (“*Measurable changes in gender roles and norms occur within the families of GREAT beneficiaries*”) is too broad, although the Program is measuring this through more specific indicators (see Table 1b).
- Result indicator 7 (“*80% of agriculture and tourism businesses report improved communication and access with Government regulators and administrators*”) is a low-level change that is not very meaningful in relation to the Program’s objective of changing the policy and regulatory environment.
- Result indicator 9 (“*Significant progress is made in five or more areas relating to policy or policy implementation for the agriculture and tourism sector in the provinces*”) does not define what is meant by “significant progress”.

The MTR finds that the targets for the 5 contractual indicators distract from the Program’s systemic change objectives contained in the Program’s goal and EOPOs (which is being sharpened in the new work-in-progress ToC). This is particularly the case for the two contractual indicators that the Program is not on track to deliver, increased incomes, and jobs for women. A recent synthesis review of DFAT’s MSD programs⁴⁷ found that these two indicators were often used as key ‘headline’ MSD indicators but were not meaningful indicators of progress toward systemic changes that address underlying causes of poor market performance and inclusivity.

The MTR proposes that information on increased incomes and jobs is still important to collect if the targets are realistic. The MTR agrees with the MC’s assessment (February 2019)⁴⁸ that the numerical targets in these two areas are unrealistic and were not soundly based on the design. The design based these targets firstly on what had been achieved on MSD programs in other countries.⁴⁹ However, these programs had been running much longer than GREAT and, as the design acknowledges (p.26), were being implemented in contexts quite different from Vietnam’s socialist market economy. Second, the targets were based on the experience of UKAid’s Vietnam Business Challenge Fund, but this program is not comparable to GREAT as it provided large grants to businesses with the scope to support projects across Vietnam (without the challenge of including Vietnam’s most disadvantaged social group in one part of the country).

The MTR has reviewed the MC’s assessment of Program indicators targets conducted in February 2019⁵⁰ and endorses the methodology applied, namely that numerical targets are based on the targets

⁴⁶ Though these criteria are better suited to quantitative indicators

⁴⁷ Wamer, B and Loveridge, D, 2020, Synthesis Review of DFAT Funded Market Systems Development Initiatives.

⁴⁸ GREAT, Assessment on Theory of Change, Assumptions and Contractual Indicators, 15/02/2019

⁴⁹ Namely, the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chains (CAVAC) program; the Market Development Facility (MDF) in Fiji, PNG, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka and Pakistan; and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Promoting Rural Income through Support for Markets in Agriculture (AIP-PRISMA).

⁵⁰ *ibid*

the Program has agreed with partners at the sub-project level. The MTR recommends that GREAT update this document, using the same methodology, as a sound basis for developing realistic targets for the remaining duration of phase 1. For the development of alternative and complementary targets see section 7 on M&E.

b) 10 annual PAF result indicators and targets

The MTR finds that the 10 current PAF result indicators are most relevant to GREAT's objectives but could be strengthened and better aligned with other Program results. The indicators are mainly quantitative (counting number of beneficiaries etc) and mostly relate to the output level as appropriate for assessing annual performance (eg. concerned with measuring the number of beneficiaries receiving training or program-funded inputs etc though there are also some higher-level indicators relating to increases in women's confidence and decision-making).

Provided the PAF targets do not become the sole measures of program performance, they can be relevant and useful in showing progress toward achievement of outputs necessary for achieving outcomes. In the current year, most of the PAF targets are behind target, reflecting the disruption caused by COVID-19. However, in setting indicators and targets, there is still a risk of distorting the Program's focus on high-level objectives. For example, PAF indicator 9 ("*Number of policy dialogues between government and businesses in which women participate*") is not SMART⁵¹. The indicator had remarkably high targets for 2020-21 (72 dialogues) which the Program is already exceeding (113 achieved to date). This indicator is effectively setting incentives for quantity rather than quality. The indicator does not define whether the policy dialogue is meaningful (that is, is it contributing toward changing a policy and addressing underlying causes of poor market performance and inclusivity?) or whether women can meaningfully participate (that is, did women just attend the discussion, how many attended, did they speak-up, lead the discussion? etc).

The MTR recommends that the PAF indicators could be further strengthened by ensuring all indicators aligned with and support the Program's outcomes.

2.5 Policy dialogue

How effective was policy dialogue in influencing partners (governmental agencies, private sector, and civil society) and supporting the achievement of expected outcomes?

The Program's effectiveness in policy dialogue is mixed. The strengths are the Program's work with two individual partners, UNDP and CARE, to successfully influence significant national-level policy change. The weaknesses are the lack of strategic focus of policy work across the Program's diverse portfolio, which includes 21 partners that are mainly seeking to influence sector-related policy at the province/district levels.⁵² The Program's mixed effectiveness reflects the lack of clarity in the original ToC about the kind of policy influencing results being pursued and how these were expected to contribute to the Program's goal and EOPOs. However, greater clarity is being provided with the Program's new ToC, which enables a more strategically focussed approach that clearly defines how partners can complement each other in contributing to policy influencing work.

The Program's two most successful national-level sub-projects were focused on policies to reduce poverty and empower ethnic minorities, including women. This involved work with:

- CARE to influence the NTP-SEDEMA design by providing substantial inputs into how to overcome bottlenecks to local-level implementation encountered during previous national target programs. This sub-project involved identifying and networking with the most influential actors at national and provincial levels and building strong relationships at the national level with the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI).⁵³
- UNDP to support the National Assembly and MOLISA to review and prepare a new National Assembly Resolution on *Promoting Multidimensional, Inclusive and Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2021-30* (Resolution 76). This Resolution changes the government's understanding of poverty to include multiple additional dimensions (relating to nutrition, education, employment, and

⁵¹ The MTR was advised that this indicator was developed at the request of DFAT to feed into a global DFAT PAF.

⁵² From GREAT's "Project Policy Development Update, as of December 2020".

⁵³ p.31-32, GREAT Progress Report, July-December 2021

dependents) and promote poverty reduction policies focussed on outcomes rather than outputs. This Resolution has informed a recent Government Degree 07/2021/NDCP (21 January 2021) to raise the multi-dimension poverty bar to be closer to the minimum living standard. The Program estimates that this change had led to an additional 3.03 million women, including 1.29 million ethnic minority women in near-poor households being eligible for government support.⁵⁴

At the province and district level, the Program has been supporting policy influencing initiatives in diverse sub-sector areas. While some of the individual sub-projects have been effective, the Program is missing opportunities for greater impact by building leverage and complementarity between sub-projects working at different levels (district, provincial, national). Moreover, the WEE/GE impacts of this work are unclear.

The Program has been supporting 18 sub-projects to influence policy in the diverse sub-sectors in which GREAT is engaged, including community-based tourism, 6 agricultural sub-sectors, the DDCI, and e-commerce⁵⁵. To support and monitor this work, the Program has developed a good process⁵⁶ to ensure that (a) the policy change will address a market constraint, (b) the policy development process includes women and that (c) the sub-project will add value to the overall process.

The Program’s most recent progress report highlights four positive sub-project results that are expected to contribute to women’s economic empowerment:

Table 2: Province and district-level policy influencing results

Result	Level	Process and benefits for ethnic minority women
Action Plans developed	District & Province	12 districts/departments (in Lao Cai Province) have been supported to develop a gender-responsive Actions Plan for improving the business environment (under the District and Department Competitiveness Index sub-project).
Draft Policy developed	District	Moc Chau District Government drafted a new inclusive tourism development policy to attract investment. The GREAT sub-project facilitated policy consultation processes to enable the participation of ethnic minority women. Increased tourism to the district is expected to lead to job opportunities for ethnic minority women as guides.
New Policy approved	District	Van Ban District Government approved a new policy document after the GREAT sub-project facilitated a policy development process inclusive of ethnic minority women. The policy supports an expansion of cultivation area for Bodhi trees enabling increased production of benzoin, which will lead to more sustainable and increased incomes for ethnic minority women.
New Policy and budget approved	Province	Lao Cai Provincial Government approved a new policy (Resolution No. 26/2020 / NQQ-HDND dated December 4, 2020) and budget, that supports several regulations designed to increase agricultural production in Lao Cai province, which is expected to lead to increased incomes for the farmer, including ethnic minority women. The GREAT sub-project facilitated women leaders (from Cooperative and Producer Groups) to participate in the policy consultation process.

The Program’s policy influencing work could be improved by changing the PAF policy dialogue indicator⁵⁷ and the associated tool for collecting information from partners. As mentioned above, as currently formulated, the indicator incentivises a focus on the number of interactions with the government and not the quality of these interactions. In revising these indicators, consider:

Significance of the policy dialogue process: which could range from 1) government agrees to discuss the issue; 2) government commits to act; 3) government acts (passes a new policy or making a budget allocation); 4) community monitor policy implementation and provide feedback to government

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ From GREAT’s “Project Policy Development Update, as of December 2020”.

⁵⁶ This process relates to Project Policy Development Update tool, which involved partners completing a template that update their progress and is aggregated in the GREAT MIS

⁵⁷ “Number of dialogues between government and businesses in which women have meaningfully participated”

- The degree to which women are meaningfully engaged: which could range from 1) women are present but largely as observers; 2) women voice their interests; 3) women take some leadership role in the process etc.

The development of the new Program and sub-sector ToCs provides an opportunity for the Program to develop a more strategic and effective approach to policy influencing based on achieving changes to identified constraints to the development of more inclusive markets.

2.6 Key delivery approaches

How effective were the program's approaches in delivering expected results?

To what extent has GREAT been able to integrate WEE and MSD approaches?

Complexity in the original ToC translated initially into a lack of clarity around the WEE and MSD approaches, which was compounded by the decision to fund projects under separate funds related to each of the program's three EPOs.

One of the criticisms of both MSD and WEE approaches is that they do not reach the poorest and most vulnerable community members, but in the context where GREAT works there is no alternative but to engage these groups. The Reach Benefit Empower framework responds to this challenge by articulating the significance of Reach, focusing on addressing barriers and challenges to women's access to opportunities. In terms of MSD, it remains challenging to make the business case for private sector partners to engage with extremely vulnerable women, but the MTR found that the CRED Bamboo case study provided one model, noting that it relies on a civil society organisation providing specific community or even household-level support to achieve change. This requires a specific investment in socially focused activities that complement interventions purely driven by market logic and incentives.

2.7 Key support approaches

To what extent have the combined approaches in collaboration, learning, adaptation, and results-based management been effective in allowing the program's steering and flexibility toward expected outcomes while controlling the risks?

The GREAT program has maintained its focus on the overall goal of economic empowerment for ethnic minority women and shown a readiness to respond to challenges within the local operational context. The program raised the challenges of meeting the initial results (contractual targets) following the baseline study and initial project selection and introduced the longitudinal study to gain greater understanding and evidence for changes in women's lives as a result of GREAT. GREAT also recognised and responded to partners' lack of confidence around the concept of WEE and collaboratively developed the Reach Benefit Empower framework with project partners and government stakeholders to communicate GREAT's goals in a way that made sense in the contexts of Lao Cai and Son La. Adapting to the disruption caused by COVID-19, the Program conducted several online reflect/refocus workshops to gain feedback on the effectiveness of gender interventions with PMUs and all partners in 2020. This informed the development of the revised GESI strategy. This strategy, along with the important studies the Program is currently undertaking, provides opportunities to further strengthen Program collaboration and learning in the future.

2.8 Most and least impactful

What have been the most/least impactful interventions by GREAT and why?

This question is covered below under section 4.1.

2.9 Recommendations

To achieve high-level outcomes and impacts in women's economic empowerment, what should be done differently in terms of programs and interventions, including but not limited to policy dialogue, inclusive MSD, combined approaches in collaboration, learning, adaptation, results-based management?

Recommendations

3. The Program to finalise:

- a) development of the new Program-level ToC. The current version is a work-in-progress but is on the right track. In particular, the MTR supports the focus on targeted sub-sectors, and supporting ethnic minority women to engage in these sub-sectors through an approach that seeks to combine MSD and WEE/GE; and
- b) development of sub-sector strategies, using an MSD approach (with their theories of change), to sit under the new program ToC. The sub-sector strategies to:
 - Focus on the "triggers" for systemic, inclusive market change that promotes WEE/GE for sub-sectors that have the potential to scale up
 - Contain explicit objectives and strategies for how to promote synergy and learning between complementary projects whether they are focussed on WEE/GE or MSD
 - Consider how men need to be engaged in the Program, their role in and contribution to women's economic empowerment and gender equality
 - As a part of determining the sub-sector focus, review all the Program's sub-projects to identify those with the best potential for scale-up in phase 2
 - Articulate aid delivery modalities that are more supportive of these strategies (see efficiency)

NOTE: In developing the sub-sector strategies, GREAT could benefit from assistance from a professional that is independent or semi-independent from the program team who brings relevant technical expertise⁵⁸ and could provide a fresh set of eyes. **Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2).**

4. The Program to:

- a) **Propose to DFAT more realistic phase 1 targets for current indicators, by updating Cowater's February 2019⁵⁹ assessment of the original program and contractual targets, and using the same methodology, identify what partners can achieve in the remainder of Phase 1. DFAT to discuss and agree on revised phase 1 targets with the MC (Short-term)**
- b) **Following the finalisation of the new Program ToC, propose new phase 2 indicators and targets. DFAT to discuss and agree on these with the MC. Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2).**

3 Efficiency

Main question: Assess whether the program is making efficient use of available resources to achieve objectives.

The MTR finds that the program could have allocated resources more efficiently and used them more dynamically at the start of the program to better promote objectives.⁶⁰ In the Inception Phase, the GREAT program conducted a good analysis of the very specific challenges and opportunities to support ethnic minority women in each province (in the Provincial Engagement Strategies). However, the use of a heavy and rigid grant-making mechanism to allocate resources to these opportunities was not efficient and it has been difficult for the program to alter the original budget allocation to partners (see section question 3.1 below). However, the program's dynamic response to COVID-19 and recent management of the program have demonstrated good use of resources: program outputs are largely being met, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, and risks are being proactively identified and managed

⁵⁸ The MTR see expertise in MSD program design and facilitation of ToCs as essential, with expertise in a relevant sub-sector would be desirable. The Program should also ensure sufficient WEE/GE expertise is available to support this process.

⁵⁹ GREAT, Assessment on Theory of Change, Assumptions and Contractual Indicators, 15/02/2019

⁶⁰ The MTR interprets this question as asking "how well the program turns inputs into outputs" and not whether the level of program resourcing is appropriate. The design of the GREAT Program recognised that the goal of transforming the social and economic status of women living in north-west Vietnam was ambitious and resource-intensive. This is because of the nature of the challenge, which includes that ethnic minority women are among the most disadvantaged social groups in Vietnam. Reaching this group is difficult because they are culturally heterogeneous (GREAT is working with more than 20 ethnic groups), many have limited literacy in Vietnamese language, and they live in widely scattered and remote locations across north-west Vietnam. The economic and livelihoods opportunities for ethnic minority women are very limited and vary in each location.

(see section 5 below). This recent management record shows that the program has the skills and systems to manage resources flexibly and efficiently under a market system development approach.

The MTR assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the program's efficiency as follows:

Element	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Large portfolio of small grants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity: GREAT is engaging in nine different agricultural sub-sectors as well as the tourism sector through a total portfolio of 52 project partners. The strength of this diversity of this portfolio was demonstrated in COVID-19, with the incomes of roughly half GREAT's beneficiaries increasing and half decreasing⁶¹ • Learning: the design emphasized that the Program would need to learn from implementation about the best way to support ethnic minority women engage in markets and improve their social and economic standing. GREAT has collected a wealth of information in the MIS, which is beginning to be utilised in learning products on its different sub-sector engagements. This wealth of information provides the basis for continued learning as well as building a solid evidence base from which GREAT can narrow focus and maximise impact in phase 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: harder to maintain strategic focus with such a large number of grants⁶² and difficult to build synergies to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts⁶³ • High transaction costs: meeting DFAT grant-making compliance requirements involves a significant number of transactions (for DFAT and MC) which is compounded given GREAT's original grant-making design (see below). • Cash-flow management is time-consuming and very hard to predict: With 52 direct project partners, each with multiple sub-partners, the Program is effectively funding around 150 partners, including some grassroots organisations. • Project portfolio difficult to influence once the grants have been awarded: this is a challenge of the particular grant-making mechanism adopted by GREAT at the start (see below).
<p>Cowater Program Team</p>	<p>Strong management team in place with good relationships: Aside from some early challenges, the Cowater Program Team has been fully in place, and managing the program in accordance with requirements. Moreover, as demonstrated by the program's quick COVID-19 response, the team has developed good relationships with an extensive network of government and community stakeholders, particularly in the provinces, essential for efficient and effective delivery of the Program.</p>	<p>The team could be better utilized: A large number of grant partners means that grant management remains a core focus of the Program management team. As the program refines its approach and theory of change to take a clearer inclusive MSD approach, there will be a review of the skills-set and structure of the team to ensure adequate skills in market technical areas, gender/WEE, as well as political skills in facilitation/, brokering.</p>

3.1 Time and resources

How efficient has the program been in terms of use of time and resources?

⁶¹ GREAT Progress Report July-December 2020

⁶² A report on some of UKAid's grant-making work concluded that the "larger [the grant-making] instrument and the more grants it provides, the more difficult is it to maintain a clear strategic approach" p. 11, ICAI, DFID's Empowerment and Accountability Programming in Ghana and Malawi, October 2013.

⁶³ The risk registers in all GREAT Progress Reports have acknowledge this risk, although the main approach to minimizing appears to have been to harmonize operational processes (eg grant contracts and funding procedures) rather than build complementarity around shared strategic objectives.

GREAT had a slow start and, just as implementation momentum was beginning to take off, the Program was disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. However, the Program's quick response to COVID-19 in the first half of 2020 has helped the recovery of many business partners in the second half of that year and demonstrated good efficiency in the use of time and resources. The program started in December 2017 but most of GREAT's programming activities (ie. the sub-projects) did not commence until March 2019, 15 months later. Partners had been implementing sub-projects for one year and were beginning to show results when the first wave of COVID-19 hit, and Vietnam went into a national lock-down (March-April 2020), causing many sub-project activities to be delayed or stopped. But, within two months, the Program had developed a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (May 2020) through which support was offered to half the program's partners to adapt to the COVID situation⁶⁴, and new Program activities were implemented to address social and economic stresses caused by COVID-19, including campaigns to prevent gender-based violence, the digital divide, and business finance needs. The Program's COVID response was rapid and relevant to the needs of GREAT's business partners and beneficiaries in both provinces. The response was also coordinated to align with the Government of Vietnam's Provincial and National responses⁶⁵ and reflects well on the strength of the program's relationships with partners and other stakeholders, understanding of the local context, and flexible management processes.

The major source of GREAT's inefficiency at the start was the reliance on competitive grant-making as the primary mechanism for deciding how to allocate program resources. GREAT designed and implemented a two-step competitive grant-making process⁶⁶. The process took 6-7 months to implement from the launch of the Call to the awarding of grants. This amount of time for implementation is standard for challenge funds but such mechanisms are usually developed for awarding grants of much higher value and longer duration than the relatively small grants of only 2.5 years' duration of GREAT. The model was transaction-heavy and resource-intensive, with different processes for non-business applicants (CSO and government), business applicants, and innovation fund applicants. The model seems to have been partly designed to meet extremely high contractual targets for the number of program partners, although it is unclear why the Program adopted an open and competitive process not generally considered to be consistent with market systems approaches. Given that the Provincial Engagement Strategies had already identified that there were few likely grantees, a 'negotiated' selection process, could have been more efficient at the start⁶⁷.

The Program's staffing and structure reflect the current operating model, with specialists in economic development and GESI working somewhat independently of one another and spread thinly to manage the wide portfolio of partners and projects. Staff demonstrated their commitment and skills throughout the MTR, but the current structure would need to be adjusted to allow staff to work as facilitators as in an MSD approach. Additionally, with only one GESI specialist for the Program, it is difficult for GREAT to provide support to the number and different types of partners whose capacity in WEE is developing from a low base. Other staff across the team demonstrated limited confidence with implementing or supporting WEE, presenting a further challenge to maximising the integration of WEE within market-oriented projects. The MTR did not assess the Program's work on disability inclusion but has been advised that the Program has provided training to all partners and engaged a local Disability Service Organisation to mentor partners implementing a sub-project designed to include people with disabilities in supply chains or business operations. Disability inclusion is also a part of GREAT's gender-responsive business work.

⁶⁴ Some of the Program's main COVID-19 response activities include: 1) reviewing business partner strategies and work plans to determine revisions required in the light of COVID-19 disruptions, undertaking organisational capacity assessments of 10 partners badly impacted by COVID, and providing 6 partners with technical assistance to pivot to new markets; 2) facilitating 20 domestic tour operators to develop and launch a combined product targeting the domestic tourism markets to make up for the decimation of the international tourism markets; 3) supporting digital technology start-up company to digitally transform a selection of GREAT business partners; 4) engaging SNV to support selected agricultural markets develop COVID-19 Response plans; 5) assessment of the financial needs of beneficiary households, leading to initial discussions with micro-finance specialists on the provision of support.

⁶⁵ These responses have included providing credit support, a tax holiday, promoting domestic tourism, and facilitating trade across the border with China (see page, 17 GREAT Progress Report Jan – June 2021)

⁶⁶ The original plan was to conduct two funding rounds but due to the response to the first call for proposals, a decision was made that a second call was not needed, (page 16, GREAT Progress Report January - June 2019)

⁶⁷ Open and competitive processes tend to be the default approach for grant selection mechanisms on development programs. The rationale is that competition allows the market to be tested, helps attract the strongest proposals and provides fairness for any interested organisation to compete for public funding. However, "negotiated" selection processes are well justified in certain circumstances where the likely grantees are few and already known, and competition is unlikely to generate the best proposals and may cause harm.

In contrast with GREAT's slow start, the program's COVID-19 response over 2020 was highly efficient. At the end of June 2020, COVID-19 had caused significant disruption to the Program: 24% of planned project activities had been stopped from March (p.10); and 59% of the activities of 47 partners were delayed over the April-June quarter (p.11). Partners working in the tourism sector faced more difficulties than those in the agricultural sector. Some 57% of all GREAT's business partners reported expecting their profits to decline. GREAT's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (May 2020) included a mix of strategies to address social, economic, and health impacts, including a "Call for EOI" process that was much quicker than the program's earlier grant-making process⁶⁸.

By December 2020, GREAT was reporting that most business partners were in recovery despite the second wave of COVID-19; with business partners reported to be reaching 94% of planned targets (page 16). While COVID-19 was still causing delays to projects, with 20% of agricultural and 16% of tourism activities delayed over the six months and financial disbursements behind budget,⁶⁹ GREAT's assessment was that the majority of projects were still likely (green) to achieve intermediate and end of project objectives, with 13 partners "possible" (yellow) to do so and only four partners "unlikely" (red) (page 12). However, the impact on beneficiaries remained significant: 66% of agricultural beneficiaries encountered difficulties because of COVID-19 interrupting production and crop sales, and 78% of tourism beneficiaries had been adversely impacted.

3.2 Funding and timeframe

Are the program's funding and timeframe sufficient to achieve expected outcomes?

The short duration of sub-projects is insufficient to achieve GREAT's goal of transforming the social and economic status of ethnic minority women in Vietnam's north-west. This goal is more suitable for the end of a 10-year investment (covering phases 1 and 2) as envisaged in the design document. Moreover, the end of program numerical targets (including a number of women with increased income and number with full-time jobs) have distracted from a focus on achieving the systemic changes that could trigger the program's goal and ultimately have an impact on a much larger number of women than those contained in numerical targets. This is a common problem in market systems development programs (as discussed in Section 2.4a).

The MTR does not have the data or resources to comment on whether specific funding levels are appropriate.

3.3 Aid Modality

What have been the advantages and disadvantages of the aid modality (Managing Contractor working in partnership with Program Management Unit from Vietnamese Government)?

To what extent is the program aid modality and its management, governance, and resourcing arrangements (through partnerships with government agencies, private sector, civil society) promoting value for money and efficient delivery of aid program resources?

GREAT's aid modality of the Managing Contractor working in partnership with the Program Management Unit (PMU) is necessary to allow the Program to be implemented. The advantage of the modality is that it helps to build government support and ownership for the new ideas that the Program is introducing (on WEE and MSD), which is essential if program outcomes are to be sustained and is a pre-requisite for delivering on-the-ground support in Vietnam. The challenge is that engaging with PMUs takes Program resources and time. Government interests and incentives need to be factored into GREAT programming, and Cowater through GREAT has demonstrated its capacity to develop the relationships necessary to do this. Feedback from interviews suggests that Government incentives and interest in supporting ethnic minority women and/or working through the private sector cannot be taken for granted, and the Program

⁶⁸ Page 14. GREAT Progress Report, Jan-Jun 2020

⁶⁹ 38% of the annual partner budget has been disbursed, though this was expected to improve significantly in the second half of the year (p.16)

needs a clear strategy for how to bring lower-level Government stakeholders on board with this agenda (see Section 6).

The GREAT Program is working with appropriate types of partners. Working with local business partners is essential for achieving sustainable market systems change. To increase the scale of impact, GREAT could look for larger business partners with strong links to domestic and international markets, including multinational organisations. Working with CSOs and NGOs is also essential given their understanding of gender equality issues and links to local communities.

The Program's governance arrangements are strongly supported by the Son La and Lao Cai Provincial People's Committees (PPC) and, in interviews, they demonstrated a high level of understanding and ownership over the program (in contrast with lower levels of government). The participation of the PPC leaders in the Program Steering Committee has served the program well in terms of facilitating program work in the two provinces. However, as the Program seeks to increase its ambition for national-level policy influencing and also possibly broadens the geographic scope beyond the two current provinces, formal inclusion of national government agencies (eg. CEMA and MARD) in the Steering Committee, could assist with scaling the program and maximising impact in phase 2.

3.4 Recommendations

To what extent should the current aid modality, governance, and resourcing arrangement be changed or adjusted to improve the program's efficiency?

Recommendations:

5. The Program to strengthen allocative efficiency by revising processes to allocate funding to sub-projects consistent with MSD and a sector-based theory of change. Provide grants to fewer partners within a balanced sector-sub portfolio approach. This could include a mix of:

- Larger grants to take proven concepts to scale/achieve more predictable results
- Smaller grants for innovative projects with more unpredictable but potentially transformative results.

The grant selection mechanism to make greater use of a "managed" selection process: where partners are identified through a purposeful selection process rather than an open and competitive process, though competitive processes may be appropriate in some situations. **Long-term (phase 2 implementation)**

6. The Program to strengthen dynamic efficiency by:
 - Revising management processes to facilitate quicker evidence-based decisions on whether a sub-project should be continued, changed, or stopped. The monitoring processes could include whether assumptions are holding, as well as progress on key indicators.
 - Developing more flexible grant arrangements, including a) facility for an initial pilot phase, with progress dependent on demonstrated results; and b) making funding available to support partners to design projects (including assessing WEE issues for new sectors). **Long-term (phase 2 implementation)**

7. The Program to review and revise the management team structure to:

- ensure the right skills to play the role of facilitator and broker (consistent with an MSD approach):
- Strengthen the Program Team's current levels and structuring of GESI expertise, building capacity and confidence to promote and support gender-inclusive MSD across the whole team, with a strong GESI adviser to lead and support them. Long-term (phase 2 implementation)

4 Impact

Main question: Assess (where feasible) whether the program produces positive or negative changes (directly, or indirectly, intended, or unintended).

The MTR approached the question of impacts beyond GREAT EOPOs by reviewing changes produced at the sub-project level rather than the Program-level. This approach is justified given the constraints on GREAT's effectiveness in achieving Program-level objectives, as outlined in Section 2. To review sub-project level impacts, the MTR looked at (a) the overall portfolio (from GREAT progress reports) as well as (b) six individual sub-projects, selected in close consultation with DFAT and the MC, and developed into case studies from fieldwork data and interviews as well as Program reports.⁷⁰ The MTR looked for changes relating to:

- systemic market change (as measured using the market systems change framework GREAT has applied, see Annex C); and
- enhanced ethnic minority women's engagement in market systems and social status more broadly (as measured using the six dimensions of WEE framework GREAT has also applied, see Annex C).

The MTR's overall finding is that the time for sub-project implementation (less than two years at the time of this review) has been too short to realise substantive impacts beyond GREAT's EOPOs, but the evidence is emerging that change is starting to happen. Moreover, GREAT's recent strategic adaptations promise to further strengthen these emerging impacts (namely, the new ToC; stronger inclusive MSD approach with a sub-sector focus (with working committees at this level), and revised WEE/GE approach (including the Reach, Benefit, Empower Framework and new GESI strategy).

A further, unintended impact is that GREAT has assisted in shifting government and even GREAT program staff attitudes towards Program's beneficiaries (ethnic minority communities, particularly women) as agents in their development. By engaging these beneficiaries in value chains, sub-projects have shown how this group positively responds to economic opportunities, which is helping to change existing attitudes (particularly noted in terms of support policies that take more of a development approach rather than a charity approach to ethnic minority areas).

4.1 Changes achieved

What are obvious changes (intended or unintended) evident from the program's activities? Include any positive/negative impacts from external factors.

a) Overall Portfolio

GREAT's Progress Reports show that while sub-projects are not reaching high numbers of direct beneficiaries, many are beginning to contribute to market changes and/or women's empowerment. Moreover, the continued progress of most sub-projects despite COVID-19 is significant.

At face value, the number of beneficiaries reached by most sub-projects is relatively small. By the end of 2020, across all sub-projects, the incomes of 15,414 women (7,798 households) had been increased, with 21,919 women reporting they are involved in decision-making on household expenses⁷¹. But, as discussed in Section 2.4, these changes are significant in the contexts of Son La and Lao Cai and have strong potential for scaling in the future, particularly in light of the Program's new ToC and the Steering Committee's decision to expand GREAT to all districts in both provinces. In addition, two recently commenced pilot sub-projects offer significant potential to increase reach in the future because they address constraints that cut across GREAT's sub-sectors, namely access to finance and digital literacy (see section 4.2).⁷²

Against the market systems change framework, most sub-projects fall into the "piloting phase" (that is, the Adopt and Adapt domains), but there are some sub-projects that are showing signs of triggering changes relevant to the "crowding-in" phase (that is, the Expand and Respond domains) (see Annex C). The Systemic Market Change Assessment study (currently in process) will provide more data on the nature of these market changes.

Against the six dimensions of the WEE framework, progress is being made across most dimensions as presented in Section 2.4. Challenges remain in addressing entrenched gender norms and attitudes

⁷⁰ See GREAT MTR Case Studies document 22/04/21

⁷¹ GREAT Progress Report, July – December 2020, p6; p21 with reference to the GREAT project midline survey 2020.

⁷² Market constraints that sub-projects are addressing include lack of access to a skilled (ethnic minority women) workforce, employment opportunities in agriculture and tourism, connections to markets and buyers. These factors are referenced in the GREAT design, project reporting and are supported by fieldwork observations.

towards women’s workload. The Longitudinal Study: Midline Report captures the diversity of women’s experience across different ethnic groups. The recent GREAT Progress report summarises how sub-projects are empowering and benefiting women in the below table.

How sub-projects are empowering women	How sub-projects are benefiting women ⁷³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing roles and status • Improving wellbeing • Increasing confidence • Increasing decision-making • Improving workload-sharing • Facilitating women’s leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolling women and households into production groups, service groups, collective groups, or Cooperatives • Linking women with the enterprise through product sourcing contracts. • Introducing female farmers to new agricultural standards to increase the value of products • Improving knowledge and capabilities • Job creation • Improving household and women’s income

b) Sub-project case studies

The below table summarises the changes for each of the six sub-project case studies (further detail is available in Annex F and the separate Case Studies document).

Case studies	Market Systems Changes (intended or unintended)	WEE Changes (intended or unintended)
1. Lao Cai College (LCC) Hospitality Skills Development and Job Access for Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market systems domains reached: Adopt; Adapt; Respond; Expand • Large hotels have indicated willingness to pay for training on a commercial basis • LCC is developing capacity and reputation as a training provider for ethnic minority women • Women are being employed which is transformational for them, though the sub-project reach overall is low (312 women, 185 ethnic minority women): 52 of 60 Course 1 trainees found a job (COVID-19 impacts limit employment for Course 2 trainees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches ethnic minority women through outreach and by demonstrating results • Increases women’s confidence to apply for jobs and the achievement of these women are serving to change community expectations around women’s roles (norms). • More work to be done on influencing changes in decision-making within households. • More work to be done on the fact that the sub-project serves to increase women’s overall workloads, although employers recognise the challenges
2. Spice for Equality - Lao Cai Cinnamon Project (SNV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market systems domains reached: Adopt; Adapt • Progress toward changing the cinnamon market, enable Vietnam to tap into global demand for quality certified cinnamon (being achieved in tandem with the other 2 sub-projects in the sub-sector) • Ethnic minority women producers are making investments to meet the demand of purchasers (companies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic minority women and men from a very disadvantaged area have increased access to opportunities and services • Women benefitting across WEE dimensions: increasing and using income, confidence, participating in decision-making; sharing the domestic workload with men (Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Study)

⁷³ Ibid, pp20-24

Case studies	Market Systems Changes (intended or unintended)	WEE Changes (intended or unintended)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companies are linking with producer groups beyond GREAT for certified cinnamon. The Provincial Government supports policies for expansion Signs of replication: A Bao Thang District cooperative is adopting GREAT's model Lao Cai DARD to support the training of farmers in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women less active than expected as cooperative leaders; entrenched views around women's roles, though participants noted that gender relations are changing (MTR fieldwork and Project-level Midline Assessment).
<p>3. District and Department Competitive Index (DDCI) Lao Cai;</p> <p>4. DDCI Son La</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective is to promote inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive economic measures to strengthen the business environment for inclusion and WEE Replication: The index has been adopted by 6 additional provinces Understanding of gender among provincial officials limited, however GREAT recently commenced training officials in gender-responsive planning COVID-19 significantly disrupted opportunities for learning in 2020. 	<p>Achieving objectives to promote a business environment inclusive of ethnic minority women by: ⁷⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger gender focus in the index survey tool. But yet to see if this will lead to stronger inclusion of gender issues in district/department action plans as intended. Increase of women's participation in dialogue, training, communication Local officials interviewed for the MTR need greater support to understand WEE.
<p>5. Market-driven Bamboo Shoots Production in Son La (CRED)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market systems domains reached: Adopt; Adapt; Expand The gender-inclusive business model includes community and household activities District People's Committee to invest to expand the bamboo production area New ethnic minority women producer cooperatives are emerging to supply Yen Thanh Company The sub-project has improved household livelihoods despite the economic impact of COVID-19; average income from project-supported products per household increased from 4 million in 2019 to 7 million in 2020⁷⁵ GREAT is supporting two sub-projects in this sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best-performing of the 6 MTR case studies in terms of addressing the broader dimensions of WEE Sub-project objectives integrate women's economic empowerment, inclusive business, and value chain development NGO-led initiatives work with households on gender roles and norms Increasing opportunities for women through skills training, assets, and services (labour-saving processing equipment), and income On track to generate greater income for ethnic minority communities Influencing more equitable decision-making within households

⁷⁴ From GREAT, Summary of project progress [29.PLB027 (DPI Lao Cai)] up to Q2 FY20/21 (October - December 2020)).

⁷⁵ Average income from project supported product per household is annual earnings from sale of project-related products and services (after deducting incurred expenses to generate the income). Both income from all sources and project-related income are adjusted to annual Consumer Price Index to truly reflect household's spending power.

Case studies	Market Systems Changes (intended or unintended)	WEE Changes (intended or unintended)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing social norms around women’s roles and women as leaders • Women’s workload is increasing; strong gender stereotypes related to women’s roles persist (Project-level Midline Assessment).
6. Expanding the value chain of safe vegetables in Moc Chau and Van Ho (Greenfarm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market systems domains reached: Adopt; Adapt; Respond; Expand – to be explored in market systems study • Greenfarm is adopting new practices supported by GREAT, as one of 5 sub-projects GREAT is supporting to work in the vegetable value chain in Son La • Producers and private sector partner (Greenfarm) are committed to growing the model despite COVID-19 setbacks in the vegetable market • Expand: Data suggests that buyers are increasing sourcing of safe vegetables from the target districts across the 5 projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressing toward the objective of increasing women’s capacity to better engage in the vegetable supply chain. • On the positive, support to female farmers to improve their productivity and marketing has resulted in a) women having increased confidence in their vegetable production skills and b) increased farming incomes • On the negative, a) evidence on how the sub-project has influenced women’s role in household decision-making and leadership is inconsistent (for example, the sub-project had appointed women as leaders of producer groups but some women interviewed did not understand the reason for their appointment or their role); b) women’s workload under the sub-project has increased; and c) the sub-sector has been severely affected by COVID.

4.2 Significance of Impacts

To what extent are the impacts of GREAT significant?

The MTR finds evidence that the significance of GREAT’s impact is moderately high but could be increased in phase 2 through a new ToC that better brings sub-projects together to focus on addressing specific sub-sector market constraints while finding opportunities for scaling the number of beneficiaries reached.

Direct beneficiary impacts: The results presented in section 4.1 above show that GREAT sub-projects are having a significant impact on the lives of direct beneficiaries reached, including increased incomes. However, beneficiary reach on most sub-projects is relatively small. Increasing the Program’s reach is difficult simply because ethnic minority women live in small and remote communities. One way to address this challenge is by focussing on constraints that are common across sub-sectors and propose solutions with a wide reach such as digital technology and access to finance.

The Program’s Provincial Engagement Strategies identified a lack of access to finance (and credit) as a significant constraint for female producers and enterprises. They suggested that the Program could pilot new mobile phone technologies to promote access to finance and value chain linkages (given 80% of ethnic minority women have access to mobile phones), and particularly applications that facilitate communication between groups that speak and read in different languages. In addition, the recent

Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report⁷⁶ identified women's lack of financial and digital technology knowledge as constraints on WEE (under the access to opportunities dimension).

The Program has recently been implementing many sub-projects that are piloting various technology solutions. One pilot is for an App to help companies manage their supply chains and provide technical knowledge to farmers working in the vegetable, bamboo shoot, and ramie sectors. The App will enable women to have equal access to production knowledge with simple, user-friendly guidelines on farming techniques, including in ethnic minority languages. Another pilot recently commenced as part of the Program's COVID response involves funding Kisstartup to build skills in e-marketing and e-business strategy skills among 20 collective groups and cooperatives to help transform business models and address the digital divide.

Systemic change impacts: The Project-level midline survey, the Program's longitudinal study (midline report), and the systemic change study all provide evidence of emerging long-term changes to how markets operate and the nature of gender norms (see sections 4.1 and 2.4). These changes could be highly significant because of their sustainability and wide reach beyond direct beneficiaries.

4.3 Recommendations

Recommendations:

8. The Program to consider strategies to better incentivize businesses to engage on WEE by identifying and promoting successful business models of WEE engagement that other businesses could adopt.
Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)
9. For the End of Program final report, the Program to provide more qualitative information on the significance of the change, pulling together and summarising the rich information in the three qualitative studies. For example, not just whether there has been an income increase but the details (ie. Significant) of the level of increase in different sub-sectors. (See also recommendations under MERL below.) **Short-term (phase 1)**
10. The Program to continue piloting current projects in digital technology and financial access for learning how to scale reach in phase 2. **Short-term (undertake in the remainder of phase 1 to inform phase 2)**

5 Risk Management

Main questions: Assess how risks are being managed and whether there is any need for improvement.

GREAT's program management processes integrate the management of risks at all levels with the need for only minor improvements to ensure currency with the latest DFAT policies relating to social and environmental safeguards.

5.1 Effectiveness and alignment with DFAT policies

To what extent has the risk management of the program aligned with DFAT's risk management policy? How are risks and safeguards being monitored at the partnership and the program levels? How effective were control and treatment measures in terms of managing identified risks?

GREAT has sound risk management processes, and the GREAT Team has demonstrated its effectiveness in identifying fraud and other financial issues. The GREAT Team identified two suspected cases of project-level fraud in the 2019 and 2020 calendar years. The cases were quickly identified, and

⁷⁶ DeJaeghere, J, Hue Le, Phuong Luong, Nga Ngo, Thanh Vu, Qualitative Longitudinal Study of Women's Economic Empowerment: Midline Report, December 2020.

action taken in consultation with DFAT to avoid loss of Australian government funds and minimise damage to the program's reputation and relations with the host government⁷⁷.

To assess GREAT's approach to risk management, the MTR reviewed processes outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures Manual (June 2018) and assessed performance through progress reports and stakeholder interviews.

GREAT's risk management processes apply at Program and sub-project partner levels. At the sub-project level, key processes are: a) sub-project selection processes which include assessment of project risks at the concept note stage; b) assessment of organisational risks of short-listed partner organisations through a comprehensive due diligence process; c) identification of key project risks and management measures in the form for DFAT's approval of funding; d) sub-contract agreements which clearly outline partners' responsibilities regarding financial management, conflict of interest, fraud control, and safeguarding measures; and e) training in financial management and reporting.

Most of the sub-project level risk processes are replicated at the Program level. Key processes include: a) partner selection and management (chapter 5); b) Program budgeting and financial management, including financial acquittals and reporting (chapter 4); c) fraud control in compliance with DFAT zero-tolerance policies (chapter 9); d) regular internal audit of non-business partners and external audits of business partners and d) maintaining a Program risk register and a RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rating summary of project risks against five criteria (both updated in six monthly reports). GREAT's risk processes are backed up by Cowater's risk processes.

The MC identifies partner financial mismanagement and suspected fraud as one of the Program's prime risks. The MC's operations team is well resourced with qualified financial staff to manage financial risks. In addition to the processes above, GREAT limits financial risk by disbursing funds to partners on a reimbursement basis where possible (16 partners are paid on this basis⁷⁸). Since March 2021, the MC has been rolling out a new financial reporting App developed for GREAT that will enable real-time financial reporting linked directly with the MIS. The purpose of the app is to facilitate faster acquittal turnaround time and automate verification of partner spend.⁷⁹

5.2 Recommendations

What changes should be considered to improve the risk management of the program?

One small, but important point, is that the MTR could not find reference to DFAT's most recent social and environmental safeguards policies in GREAT's Standard Operating Procedures Manual (dated June 2018), namely DFAT's Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy, updated March 2019; and the Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy which was launched in April 2019).

Recommendations:

11. The Program to review and update Procedures Manual to ensure compliance with DFAT's social and environmental safeguards policies. **Short-term (phase 1)**

6 Sustainability

Main question: Assess whether the benefits of the program will last after the funding has ceased and whether the program creates any systemic changes.

The sustainability of Program benefits is linked to the achievement of the EOPOs, which lays the basis for enduring changes in how markets operate and the empowerment of ethnic minority women, as well as transformational changes in gender and social norms. Government policies and actions play an important role in activating and maintaining both economic and social changes. As outlined in section 4, there are early signs of emerging market systems change. When sub-projects are assessed against the

⁷⁷ GREAT Progress Report (January to June, 2020), p60.

⁷⁸ MIS Extract GREAT's project list 2021-02-05

⁷⁹ P. 13, GREAT Progress Report (July to December 2020)

“market systems change framework” there is some evidence that changes in the “Respond” and “Expand” dimensions of the framework (which are signals of market systems change) are being triggered by some sub-projects.⁸⁰ There is also evidence of some changes across the six dimensions of WEE as well as the additional dimensions of “well-being” and “aspirations” (see section 2.4),⁸¹ although more time is needed to see a sustainable shift in gender norms. The Program’s new sector focussed ToC promises to strengthen the sustainability of emerging changes to market systems and WEE/GE. Government ownership is the main area where the Program’s approach to promoting sustainability could be strengthened. As outlined in section 1.2, while the Program’s overall objectives strongly align with the Government of Vietnam’s policies, understanding, and ownership of strategies to promote WEE/GE remains uneven across government and are lacking at lower levels.

6.1 Results and systemic change

**Are the results of the program likely to continue after the end of the program?
What is the program’s likelihood to create systemic changes? How does the MSD approach without subsidies to target groups contribute to the program’s sustainability?**

GREAT reports that, based on the Project-Level Midline Assessments Study, an estimated 83% of beneficiaries expect to continue with project-related production/services without the support and 48% know someone else looking to emulate business models (see below table). With 49% of households interviewed seeking a loan to engage in project-related production or access a service, the evidence suggests that sustainability is not affected by subsidies.

While many businesses supported by GREAT have experienced downturns in profitability due to the impact of COVID-19, the program reports that 25 out of 29 businesses (GREAT partners and supply chains) achieved increased revenue, and 11 exceeded their targets. This suggests that businesses have or will be able to rebound, in part at least due to GREAT support to improve business efficiency and access new markets. COVID-19, therefore, has not significantly undermined the potential for sustainability.

Based on a wide range of rigorously collected data, GREAT’s reporting is credible and broadly aligns with analysis undertaken by the MTR. It is however worth noting that some government stakeholders interviewed for the MTR were unsure whether value chains would be sustained, while other positive evidence shows the government taking action to support value chains to develop, such as approving and investing in land for further cinnamon production. Partners are also slightly exceeding GREAT’s investment across the 52 current projects, with the Program reporting AUD 14 million contributions from GREAT, as against AUD 14.4 million from partners.

July – December 6 Month Report Table 6: Sustainability and Scalability of Projects

Criteria	% of Midline Respondents
Sustainability: Continue with project-related production/service WITHOUT support	83
Sustainability: Looking for a loan for expansion of project-related production/service	49
Replicability: Know someone else looking to emulate the business model	48

Source: Project-Level Midline Study, January-February 2021

With GREAT’s sub-projects representing value chains that are inclusive of ethnic minority women and specific support for WEE, trends in women’s economic empowerment should continue alongside the businesses, if the focus on WEE is maintained. An estimated 87% of women in agriculture and 73% in tourism reported confidence in their technical knowledge in the Project-level Midline Assessment Study. It is more difficult to make clear statements about shifts in gender norms, with some variance between GREAT’s analysis of Longitudinal Study findings and the results of individual project midline surveys and

⁸⁰ See: The Program’s independent Systemic Market Change Assessment Study and the Program Team’s own assessment in “130421 GREAT’s project list system change” document.

⁸¹ See Program Longitudinal Study: Midline Report (December 2020); and the Project-level Midline Assessment Report (2021)

the MTR fieldwork. GREAT reports there have been shifts in all WEE dimensions across all sectors⁸², however, the MTR and midline assessments noted entrenched attitudes confirming women's conventional gender roles, and ambiguous data around the household division of labour and decision-making. Together, these sources show how complex it is to shift and attribute changes in norms and attitudes around gender roles, decision-making, and leadership especially where there are high levels of ethnic and cultural diversity.

6.2 Replication

Is the program creating systemic changes that can be replicated and adopted by other partners? What has been the level of buy-in of the program's approaches (MSD and WEE) from partners (Government agencies, private sector, civil society)?

The current MERL framework and indicators do not capture systemic change well, but the Program is conducting additional analysis to capture the potential for replication across different partners. Stimulating further market changes is one of the 6 upcoming priorities noted in the recent progress report.

As noted above under Impact, GREAT has conducted preliminary sector-based analysis against the systemic change framework for the vegetable, ramie, cinnamon, and CBT sectors and has identified potential areas for expansion and replication. For example, in Cinnamon:

- Adapt: ethnic minority women expand their production without support from the project
- Respond: major buyers expand sourcing from target districts and cooperatives
- Expand: other buyers set up local processing facilities, potentially with related technical services.

In a further analysis conducted for the MTR, GREAT noted 14 of 17 areas where activities and/ or sectors were creating changes in the Respond or Expand areas of the framework⁸³. For example: District People's Committees in 3 districts helping to fund expansion of bamboo shoots production to 5,000 ha, with cooperatives in 4 new districts establishing business linkages with companies in anticipation of trade; and in ramie, new seedling nurseries being established independent of GREAT. GREAT's premise is that inclusive business embeds WEE within market systems.

GREAT is also supporting the development of e-commerce, which is moving fast and strengthens information sharing and replication between partners.

Partners have demonstrated their buy-in through engagement in the project as implementers, participation in trainings, workshops, and reflections on WEE and market systems. GREAT's partners include government agencies, NGOs, and research organisations, and as noted above, are overall substantially invested in the Program.

6.3 Government ownership

Are GREAT's government counterparts demonstrating ownership?

Relationships at the Provincial level have developed through GREAT's implementation overseen by Provincial Management Units within the Provincial governments of Lao Cai and Son La. The Program Steering Committee also includes the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Culture, Sport, and Tourism. The strongest level of ownership found by the MTR was demonstrated by CEMA at the national level, which has been closely involved with GREAT on initiatives related to the NTP-SEDEMA and expressed a strong desire to work with GREAT in a future phase.

Provincial Engagement Strategies assessed that provincial governments had a keen interest to see greater private investment within their provinces, however, it has taken some time to win their support for the concepts of MSD and WEE. Initial decisions to limit the project's access to a small number of districts demonstrated a lack of understanding or commitment to an MSD approach, but this has shifted with the Decision in 2020 by the Steering Committee approving the expansion of the project into all

⁸² GREAT's Reach Benefit Empower framework is relatively new and incorporates the 6 dimensions of WEE. They remain a strong framework for assessing change in terms of WEE.

⁸³ 130421 GREAT's project list system change – analysis provided to MTR.

districts in Son La and Lao Cai. There was little engagement with district government counterparts found by the MTR, which was considered a weak point by some other project interviewees, however GREAT is addressing this, and the recent restructuring of the Program Steering Committee has included district representatives, which is expected to increase district understanding and buy-in.

There are still indications that government partners are not all on board with WEE. The MTR found that some government interviewees were concerned that WEE focuses only on women, that it is external or culturally inappropriate in northern Vietnam, that they did not understand it because it was overly technocratic and confusing, and that they did not know how to apply concepts in practice. The program continually refines its messaging around WEE and gender equality, including trainings, community events, and communications campaigns as identified through the GESI strategy. This area will need continued attention to ensure sustainable buy-in on WEE/GE, as well as on market growth.

GREAT notes that the Provincial Party Congresses in January 2021 confirmed that the provincial priorities remain inclusive growth, target sectors, and market-oriented approaches.⁸⁴

6.4 Wider impacts

What should be done to measure potential wider impacts by GREAT's interventions beyond targeted value chains or geographical areas?

While it is not their central purpose, the MTR sees the Program's three large studies⁸⁵ as extremely useful for identifying impacts beyond those which are the direct focus of GREAT sub-projects, particularly the Program's Longitudinal Study (which is tracking changes in a selection of households from different ethnic groups). These studies concentrate on GREAT's targeted value chains and geographic areas as is appropriate given the focus of the Program in phase 1. As the Program moves towards a new ToC based around sub-sectors, with a stronger focus on scaling up and systems change, there would be value in developing measures to assess the wider impacts of specific changes achieved. To maximise efficiency, such measures could take the form of studies to explore the wider impacts of a specific change observed (eg a market innovation, a new policy or regulation, etc), using an appropriate methodology (eg outcome harvesting).

6.5 Exit strategy

To what extent the program has a clear exit strategy?

The program does not have a distinct exit strategy and has in-principle approval for a 6-month no-cost extension to be formalised together with a workplan including activity streams towards a potential second phase⁸⁶. The MTR also notes that GREAT strategies for the achievement of systemic change would serve the purpose of an exit strategy.

6.6 Recommendations

What changes and adjustments should be considered to improve the program's sustainability?

Recommendations:

12. In line with the Program's new sector-based ToC, Program to review and revise GREAT's Policy and Advocacy strategy to identify: (a) key government counterparts at different levels (national, provincial, district) that are central to Program objectives; (b) assessing their current levels of understanding and support for WEE/GE and other Program elements (eg MSD); (c) defining the kinds of changes in understanding and support the Program is aiming to influence; (d) developing specific influencing strategies (with different roles for the MC, sub-project partners, DFAT, etc); (e) developing measures to assess change. **Long-term (to be developed phase 2 following finalisation of new ToC)**

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

⁸⁴ Progress Report, July – December 2020

⁸⁵ These are the Program Longitudinal Study, the Project-level Midline Assessment and the Systemic Market Change Assessment

⁸⁶ *ibid*

Main question: Assess whether the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) framework effectively measures progress towards meeting the objectives of each activity and the entire program.

GREAT's MERL framework and system⁸⁷ collect significant amounts of data on different dimensions of progress and results. However, the complex theory of change without sub-sector focus makes it difficult for the MERL system to collect information that easily communicates Program achievements.

At the Project level, GREAT's MERL system has been well set up to effectively monitor individual project progress. The original MERL framework was designed to monitor 50 to 80 different projects. The framework enables GREAT to effectively administer its large current portfolio and report progress to DFAT on a six-monthly basis. Through the detailed and efficiently administered MIS, GREAT can report on each projects' progress in implementing their workplan and actual budget spend, virtually in real-time. GREAT "RAG" rates (traffic lights) each project's progress against five high-level criteria, effectively creating a project dashboard from which implementation risks can be easily identified. However, the system could be strengthened by providing clearer and simpler information to inform management decisions on whether a sub-project should be continued, changed, or stopped (see recommendation 6 above).

The strength of the MERL system is its ability to aggregate results across a large and diverse portfolio of sub-projects to report against Program results and indicators. The challenge is the existence of several sets of indicators (serving slightly different purposes), with a reliance on quantitative indicators that are not useful for understanding the significance or quality of changes (see Section 2.4). This makes it difficult to understand progress toward Program objectives. The Program's three large studies provide rich qualitative information that is useful in understanding this progress, but the MERL system could be strengthened by the inclusion of some qualitative indicators to complement the quantitative indicators and contribute to the understanding of the quality and significance of progress (for example indicators of changes in behaviours and attitudes of beneficiaries and other key actors GREA is working with).

7.1 Mainstreaming of MERL approaches

To what extent have the results-based management, collaboration, learning, and adaptation been mainstreamed into the program management?

GREAT's results-based management approach was well mainstreamed into program management from the start of the program. The strength of GREAT's results-based management approach is that it is based around theories of change, at project and program levels. The weakness, as mentioned above, is the dominant focus on the measurement of quantitative indicators and limited quick qualitative data to support a flexible, adaptive management approach.

GREAT's approach to collaboration, learning, and adaption was not well mainstreamed into the program at the start. Adaptive management is defined as:

A systematic management approach for responding to situations of high uncertainty and rapid change. The approach provides an alternative to either giving up trying to plan or trying to use tools and processes intended for more well understood stable and predictable contexts. The management approach goes beyond just changing the details of how activities are implemented, to include changes to the types of activities, the strategies, and even the intended outcomes and how the theory of change is understood. It uses an iterative process of adaptation that is informed by indicative theories of change and contributes to revising them. Collaboration and learning are essential features for success.⁸⁸

GREAT's Program management processes were originally set up to administer 50-80 individual projects under three EOPO areas and were not set up to support adaptive management as defined above. As USAID guidance recommends, the important question on collaboration for development effectiveness is "Are we collaborating with the right partners at the right time to promote synergy over stove-piping?"⁸⁹ Stakeholder interviews suggest that until recently projects have largely been implemented as stand-alone initiatives with limited collaboration with other projects (despite projects' stakeholders expressing

⁸⁷ To assess the MERL system, the MTR examined the original MERL framework (June 2018), the MIS, the Knowledge Management Plan (July, 2020), the Knowledge Management Action Plan (January, 2021) and various related processes⁸⁷ discussed with stakeholders.

⁸⁸ From page 3, Rogers, P. and Macfarlan, A. (2020). What is adaptive management and how does it work? Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptive Management Working Paper Series, Number 2, September

⁸⁹ <https://usaidlearninglab.org/grq/understanding-cla-0>

an interest in such engagements). In principle, the MTR supports the Program's development of sector committees (consisting of partner representatives and other stakeholders) as a way for building synergy and contributing to system change. The MTR has not been able to collect specific data to confirm how well these committees function in practice, though there is some evidence of positive performance in the Systemic Market Change Assessment Study.

Face-to-face learning events that brought all program partners together (annual partnership forums) were held in the first few years of the Program followed by remote events with the emergence of COVID-19. While useful, the large and diverse size of the GREAT portfolio would make facilitating meaningful discussions and learning for all program partners difficult. These events were complemented with sector steering meetings, GESI network meetings, etc. The Program Team has also conducted regular reviews of sub-project ToCs with partners, raising critical issues emerging from these reviews in the Program's six-monthly "reflect and refocus" sessions. The longitudinal study and joint monitoring missions were also used to validate the assumptions underlying the Program ToC.

GREAT's approach to collaboration, learning, and adaption has been strengthened with GREAT's new, more specific, sector/market focussed ToC, the development of the GESI Implementation Strategy, and the development of the Knowledge Management Plan. GREAT has retrofitted projects around their sectoral focus and developed forums for collaboration at this level (eg. the sector working groups/committees) and facilitated learning and research focussed on sector thematic issues. It has also developed tools to better understand and communicate WEE through the locally contextualised Reach Benefit Empower framework, with its analysis around Access and Agency. The regular "reflect and refresh" workshops (conducted monthly with the GREAT Team and six-monthly with partners) is another good practice for mainstreaming collaboration, learning, and adaption, particularly if focussed on sub-program ToC for each of GREAT's sector/markets or thematic areas. Greater collaboration is also promoted through the GESI Strategy of 2020, which brings gender champions together across business and NGO projects to promote deeper thinking on key gender equality challenges.

7.2 Measuring results and generating evidence

To what extent have the M&E arrangements been effective in terms of measuring the results of the program at different levels and generating timely evidence for the program's learning and adaptation?

The Program's MERL system is effective in measuring quantitative results at the individual sub-project level and aggregating these up to the program level. Regarding the M&E arrangement at the sub-project level, the MTR endorses the observation in the analytical framework of the Systemic Market Change Assessment Study, as applicable across all sub-projects:

Results chain and indicators (Schedule 4.1) for all projects seem to be well designed for the sub-project but do not appear to include indicators related to systemic change - even at the level of adaption (i.e. one step beyond the project-supported activities itself). As such the project-level indicators being tracked are likely to offer limited insights on progress towards wider systemic changes. Are there other sub-sector level monitoring indicators that the program is tracking as well?⁹⁰

As indicated in the quote above, until recently the MERL system was not measuring results at the sub-sector level. Program level results are too high-level to be meaningful as they rely on aggregating very different kinds of results ("apples and oranges"). With GREAT's new ToC, a new mid-way level of results could be created which enables the aggregation of data that is "apples and apples" and enables the assembly of evidence for learning and adaption. See the discussion above.

7.3 Data use

To what extent has information generated by the Management Information System (MIS) and other MERL activities informed GREAT's partnerships management, learning, and communication, accountability purposes.

From the start, the MIS and related MERL activities have to a significant extent enabled GREAT to administer a large portfolio of projects and support accountability. In interviews, the GREAT team reports using the MIS on almost a daily basis to track the individual progress of sub-projects (eg financial data,

⁹⁰ From page 1, "Systemic market changes within GREAT" document

risk, key results), though there remains much data that is not regularly used for this purpose. The MIS and MERL activities are supporting learning and communication to a much greater extent since the production of the Knowledge Management Plan and the development of the new ToC.

7.4 Measuring significance of impacts

What should be done to measure the significance of impacts by GREAT's approaches and interventions?

The Program's three large studies are the main tools for measuring the significance of GREAT's impact in phase one. As mentioned above, the MTR finds these studies extremely useful for this purpose. However, for phase two, the Program's focus on, and understanding of, the significance of impact could be strengthened through the development of Program results and indicators that clearly define levels of significance. This requires results and indicators that build on those in phase one and:

- relate to the nature and quality of the change (eg. for REACH, # women who have engaged in formal producer groups *for the first time* or see the results indicators for policy influencing mentioned in section 2.5)
- can be analysed together to provide a fuller picture of the change (eg. # Women with increased income alongside # women with increased power to make decisions overspending).
- Also measure change for men beneficiaries at individual to community levels (covering attitudes, values, and norms around women's decision-making and leadership). While some indicators related to men's participation in the program are included in the overall program MERL, they are not visible in program reporting as they are not included in contractual targets. The limited amount of meaningful information in relation to men, particularly on changes in men's attitudes to reflect shifting gender norms, leaves the onus for change on women and does not provide triangulated evidence on systemic change related to gender⁹¹. It also provides a mistaken impression that GREAT will benefit only women and misses the opportunity to link stronger WEE and overall economic and social development.

7.5 Effectiveness of learning

To what extent have learning products generated by the program, including but not limited to the Longitudinal Research enhanced GREAT understanding and approach to promoting ethnic minority women's economic empowerment?

GREAT's approach to knowledge and learning over the last year has contributed to shifting the program's thinking considerably from the initial 'siloed' ToC to a systemic focus that deeply reflects the context of the program and the diversity of the target groups. The project's Longitudinal Study (baseline and midline surveys) has contributed to a nuanced analysis of accepted frameworks for WEE, highlighting the value of the concepts of Access and Agency in understanding empowerment (as opposed to participation). Importantly, it has also led to the inclusion of questions around women's wellbeing and aspirations, and specific questions around gender-based violence and its interactions with changes in women's income and agency. GREAT's reporting and GESI strategy reflect that the program is taking up this thinking. The program's revised GESI strategy is also a response to the Longitudinal Study, learning events, and interactions with partners.

7.6 Recommendations

What are key changes should the program make to the MERL strategy to measure the progress of expected results in the immediate period, and in a potential second phase?

Recommendations:

13. The Program to:

- **provide data and analysis at the End of Investment Report (from the MIS and program studies) on how men have been integrated into the Program, how they have benefited**

⁹¹ The Reach Benefit Empower framework, despite its strengths, also does not explore men's role in WEE, nor how the whole community including men benefits from WEE.

from program activities in comparison with women, and how their behaviours (or gender norms more broadly) are changing (or not);

- develop new indicators and targets for the new Program and Sector ToC's to assess how men's behaviours gender norms are changing. *Short-term (phase 1 for phase 2)*

14. The Program to develop criteria to define what good value for money looks like for phase 2, and how the Program will be assessed against these criteria. (NB. DFAT's new Performance Assessment tool provides useful guidance). *Short-term*

15. The Program to restructure the MERL system around the new Program-level ToC as well as sub-sector level ToCs (see Recommendation 3). The MERL system to include:

- At the Program and sub-sector levels: mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators (a) that enable the measurement of the significance of change and provide the flexibility and adaptiveness required for an MSD program⁹² *Long-term (phase 2)*
 - At the sub-project level: Measures to inform decisions on whether to stop, continue or scale-up
 - At the Program level: clear alignment of indicators that are used for different purposes (for overall MC program performance, the annual MC performance (Performance Assessment Framework) and the ToC) *Long-term (phase 2)*
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⁹² For example, see <https://beamexchange.org/resources/1198/>

Annex A Stakeholders consulted

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Name	Role	Organisation
David Gottlieb	Counsellor	Australian Embassy, Economic and Development Cooperation Section
Hoai Nam Nguyen	Senior Program Manager	Australian Embassy, Economic and Development Cooperation Section
Lucy Phillips	First Secretary	Australian Embassy, Economic and Development Cooperation Section
Mia Urbano	Senior Gender Equality and Social Development Adviser	Australian Embassy - Vietnam and Myanmar

Other Australian Agencies

Name	Role	Organisation
Nguyen Thanh An	Vietnam Country Manager	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

Program

Name	Role
Adrienne Jack	Director, Cowater
Bernadette Whitelum	Strategic Adviser, Technical Panel
Bui Thi Mai Hien	Operations Manager
Cao Dai Hung	Tourism Adviser, Technical Panel
Le Anh Tuan	Inclusive Business and Agriculture Adviser, Technical Panel
Linda Jones	Contractor Representative, Cowater
Hoang Quoc Khanh	Vice-Chairman – Lao Cai People's Provincial Committee
Le Hong Minh	Son La Vice Chairman PPC
Phil Harman	Team Leader
Le Thi Quynh Nga	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Manager
Richard Rastall	SNV – sub-project
Tran Thi Minh Phuong	Gender Specialist

Government of Vietnam

Name	Role	Organisation
Ha Viet Quan	Director External Relations Department, Director NTP-SEDEMA program	CEMA
Le Van Duc	Deputy Director of Crop Department	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Other donors and programs

Name	Organisation
Helle Buchave	Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank, Gender Pillar
Le Thi Sam	Women's Economic Empowerment through Agriculture Value Chain Enhancement (WEAVE)
Martin Henry Lenihan	World Bank, Ethnic Minority Pillar
Nguyen Tam Giang	Gender Specialist, World Bank, Gender Pillar
Phan Thu Huong	WEAVE

Stakeholders consulted – fieldwork

Program staff

Name	Role
Bien Quang Tu	Lao Cai Provincial Coordinator
Le Minh Duc	Monitoring and Evaluation staff member, Son La
Sa Van Duc	Son La Provincial Coordinator

Officials and private sector partners

Name	Role	Organisation
Cầm Thị Phong	Deputy Director	Son La DARD (GREAT Steering Committee member)
Dang Huyen Trang	Representative	Tay Bac university
Đặng Quốc Huy	Representative	Lao Cai AESC
Dinh Thi Ha	Representative	Son La Statistics Office
Đinh Trung Dũng	Director	Son La PCEMA
Hà Thị Duyên	Chairwoman	Chieng Khoa Women's Union

Name	Role	Organisation
Ha Thi Sang	Chairwoman	Van Ho Women's Union
Hà Thị Vui	Chairwoman	Tan Xuan Women's Union
Ha Van Trung,	Culture Division	Lao Cai Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism
Hoang Chi Thuc	President	Son La business association
Hoàng Quang Đạt	Head Master	Lao Cai College
Le Hong Phong	Coordinator	Lao Cai PMU
Le Thanh Dung	Representative	Son La PMU/DPI
Lê Thị Kim Dung	Tourism Economic Faculty	Lao Cai College
Mã Ân Hằng,	Deputy Director	Lao Cai Provincial Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs (and PMU Member)
Mai Thi Hanh	Staff member	Son La DPI
Mai Thi Hong Van	Vice President	Bac Ha District Women's Union
Nguyen Viet Cuong	Vice Director	Lao Cai Department of Planning and Investment
Nguyen Chi Dung	Representative	Lao Cai Office for Foreign Economic
Le Van Hoang	Representative	Lao Cai Office for Foreign Economic
Tran Van Hung	Head of General Division	Lao Cai Provincial Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs
Nguyen Van Khoa	Vice-Chairman	Bac Ha District People's Committee
Cao Van Vang	Representative	Youth Union of Nặm Lúc Commune
Duong Quy Vinh	Representative	Bản Cái Commune People's Committee
Hoang Thi Thu Ha	Representative	Women's Union of Nặm Lúc Commune
Do Thi Hoa	Representative	Women's Union of Bảo Nhai Commune
La Thi Khuong	Representative	Women's Union of Bản Cái Commune
Vi Thi Phuong	Vice president	Dong Sang Commune People's Committee

Name	Role	Organisation
Nguyen Thi Hoa	Vice-chairperson	Moc Chau District People's Committee
Thao Thi Tung	Vice-chairwoman	Lao Cai's Women's Union (and Steering Committee Member)
Nguyen Dinh Dung	Deputy Director	Lao Cai Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism (and Steering Committee member)
Nguyen Huu Truong	Deputy head of rural development sub-department	Lao Cai DARD
Nguyễn Khắc Bạo	Head of Tourism Division	Son La DCST
Nguyen Phuong Lan	Vice head, Policy Division	Lao Cai Provincial Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs
Nguyen Thanh Hai	Vice Director	Son La PMU
Nguyen Thi Lien	Representative	Son La Statistics Office
Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Hà	Economic Faculty	Lao Cai College
Nguyễn Thị Trang Nhung	Director Vice Director	Son La PMU Son La DPI,
Nguyen Trung Thanh	Vice Director	Bac Ha Agriculture Service Center
Nguyen Van An	Deputy head of Planning and Investment Division	Son La City office
Nguyen Viet Hung	Head of Planning and Investment Division	Son La DARD
Numerous representatives	Various	Forest Protection Department, Bac Ha Agriculture Service Center, Bac Ha Agricultural & Rural development Office
Phạm Văn Quảng	Head of the Fishery section	Lao Cai DARD
Quàng Thị Vân	Vice-chairperson	Son La Women's Union
Thái Bá Sinh	Director of Agriculture Rural Development Division	Van Ho District Authority
To Manh Tien	Deputy Director	Lao Cai DARD (GREAT Steering Committee member)
Tran Thi Ngan,	Head of the Family, Social and Economic section	Lao Cai's Women's Union

Name	Role	Organisation
Trần Thị Thu Thủy,	Former Chairwoman	Van Ho Women's Union
Trần Xuân Thành	Director of Agriculture Rural Development Division	Moc Chau District People's Committee
Trương Văn Nghiệp	Director	GreenFarm
Vì Thị Biên	Chairwoman	Moc Chau Women's Union
Vi Van Gioi	Vice-chairman	Xuan Nha People's Committee
Ha Thi Sang	Chairperson	Xuan Nha Women Union
Nguyễn Văn Khâm	Vice-chairperson	Tan Xuan People's Committee
Ha Thi Vui	Vice-Chairperson	Tan Xuan Women Union
Hoang Van Khun	Vice-chairperson	Chieng Khoa People's Committee
Ha Thi Duyen	Vice-Chairperson	Chieng Khoa Women Union

Community project participants

Project	Number of respondents
CRED Bamboo, Tan Xuan	10 (6 male, 4 female)
CRED Bamboo, Xuan Nha	9 (5 male, 4 female)
GreenFarm, Chieng Khoa	9 (4 male, 5 female)
GreenFarm, Dong Sang Commune	8 (4 male, 4 female)
Indirect beneficiaries from Bảo Nhai commune	11 (4 male, 7 female)
Lao Cai College	9 (female)
SNV and Son Ha Cinnamon Project, Bản Cối commune	11 participants (5 male, 6 female)
SNV and Son Ha Cinnamon Project, Nậm Lúc commune	10 (5 male, 5 female)

Other partner staff

Partner	Number of respondents
Clean Bamboo Cooperative, Xuan Nha	2
Clean Bamboo, Tan Xuan	2 (female, management level)
Hotel De La Coupole, Sapa	1 (senior level, female)
Silk Path Grand Sapa Resort & Spa Hotel, Sapa	1 (management level, female)
Van Ho Vegetable Cooperative	2 (management level, 1 male, 1 female)

Annex B Documents reviewed

No.	Category	Document
1	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aus4Equality Design
2	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERL Framework
3	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Engagement Strategic in Son La Province
4	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Engagement Strategic in Lao Cai Province
5	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSD Strategic Framework 1
6	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSD Strategic Framework 2
7	Strategic Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy 2020
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Workplan 2020-21
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020 Workplan and Budget
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Workplan 2019-20
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019 Workplan and Budget
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Annual Workplan
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Annual Workplan Presentation
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July-Dec 2020 Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan-Jun 2020 Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July-Dec 2019 Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan-Jun 2019 Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July-Dec 2018 Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Six-Month Progress Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2020 Aid Quality Check Report
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GREAT Update October 2020
	Annual Plans and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of Theory of Change, Assumptions and Contractual Indicators
	Project Management Unit (PMU) Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 5 August 2019
	PMU Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 5 August 2019
	PMU Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 30 August 2019
	PMU Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 01.07.2020

No.	Category	Document
	PMU Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 09.04.2020
	PMU Meeting Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMU Meeting Minutes 01.07.2020
	Steering Committee Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting minutes 20 Aug 2018
	Steering Committee Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting minutes on 11 Sep 2019
	Steering Committee Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting minutes on 20 Oct 2020
	COVID Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft GREAT COVID-19 Response Plan
	GESI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Communication Script
	GESI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstreaming Guidelines
	GESI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Infographic
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cinnamon sector overview
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation for change
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicinal Plant overview
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tea Sector overview
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourist Sector overview
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetable Sector overview
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cinnamon sector meeting minutes – meeting 2 12/10/2019
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passionfruit sub-sector meeting minutes – meeting 1
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tea sub-sector meeting minutes – meeting 1
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism partnership meeting minutes
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism steering committee meeting minutes
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetable sub-sector group AHR meeting minutes
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetable sector meeting minutes – meeting 2
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation for MSD study
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GREAT Sub-sectors introduction
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lao Cai Lessons Learnt
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study – Public-Private Partnership for developing Benzoin Lao Cai market system
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benzoin production: principles and criteria

No.	Category	Document
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost and harvest circle
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies: biodiversity impact
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on compliance of BioTrade principles along Siam Benzoin (<i>Styrax tonkinensis</i>) production
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duc Phu presentation
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Research Finding on Development of Benzoin
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission report & action plan (31st of May - 14th of June 2018) Duc Phu
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Benzoin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission report & action plan (19th of August - 5th of September 2017)
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Cinnamon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline study of SNV Spice project
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Cinnamon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cinnamon value chain in Lao Cai final report
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Cinnamon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spice Market research report
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Ramie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallholder Value chain lending pilot project in Son La
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Ramie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Chain Overview and Finance Product Proposal
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACIAR Fresh Studio marketing presentation for annual review workshop
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACIAR Desk Research - High-quality veggies
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallholder Value chain lending pilot project in Son La
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Chain Overview and Finance Product Proposal
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The market for vegetables in North Vietnam
	Sector and Sub-Sector Documents (Vegetable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Studio Needs Assessment Baseline report
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bat Xat
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Ho
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bac Ha Tea
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCI Sapa
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOP
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRED CBT
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chieng Di
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vina Tea
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfarm

No.	Category	Document
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TT Lam San Ngoai Go
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HELVETAS
	Partnership – Project Outline and full proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRED Bamboo
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CARE TLEAF
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muong Khuong Cooperative
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAPANAPRO
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAFOOD Tay Bac
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duc Phu
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEEDLING CENTER
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mai Anh
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WISE Social
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Ho Medicinal Plants
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Ban Women’s Union
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loi Tuoi
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Protection Division Van Ban
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoang Lien Van Ban Natural Reservation Area
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tho Cam Lan Rung
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPI Lao Cai
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfam
	Partnership – Project Outline and full proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNV
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Studies
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Lao Cai
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lao Cai Quality Control Division
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAVRI
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Dao Community Cooperative
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VietRap
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son Ha

No.	Category	Document
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vina Samex
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lao Cai College
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viet Tu
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant Protection and Crop Department
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADC
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPI Son La
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVESTRO
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VietED
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DARD Lao Cai
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PWU Lao Cai
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CODAS
	Partnership – Project Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VietEd-VBSP
	Background Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market System Analysis: Tourism Sector
	Background Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market System Analysis: Agriculture Sector
	Background Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Assessment and Gender Power Relation analysis
	Background Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling environment
	Baseline datasets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggregated baseline assessment results
	Longitudinal studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline Report
	Longitudinal studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midline Report
	Midline project assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midline Assessment tool meeting
	Midline project assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical proposal
	Assessment on systemic market changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical proposal
	Assessment on systemic market changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Group Discussion guide
	Assessment on systemic market changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Terms of Reference
	Assessment on systemic market changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic market changes within GREAT
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Operating Procedures
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Operating Procedures – Car Policy

No.	Category	Document
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard Operating Procedures – VN Partner’s Financial Guide
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard Operating Procedures – Unit Cost Policy
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team Leader Terms of Reference (TORs)
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy Team Leader TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERL Manager TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Manager TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Specialist TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Adviser TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Business Adviser TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources and Procurement Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERL Specialist TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Coordinator TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Coordinator TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Grants Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Grants Assistant TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Consultant TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERL Officer Lao Cai TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERL Officer Son La TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration Assistant TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Assistant TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Assistant TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driver TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logistics Support Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture Business Adviser TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Grants and Finance Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Coordinator Lao Cai TORs

No.	Category	Document
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants and Finance Officer TORs
	Standard Operation Procedure and Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Chart
	Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Management Plan (KMP)
	Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KMP Action Plan
	Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market Systems Development (MSD) approach
	Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linking producers to businesses
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 training slides
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 training recording
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 Group 1
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 Group 2
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 Group 3
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 1 Group 4
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 2 Group 1
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 2 Group 2
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 2 Group 3
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 1 Session 2 Group 4
	MSD Training Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher Training

Annex C GREAT Strategic Approaches

1. GREAT Theory of Change⁹³

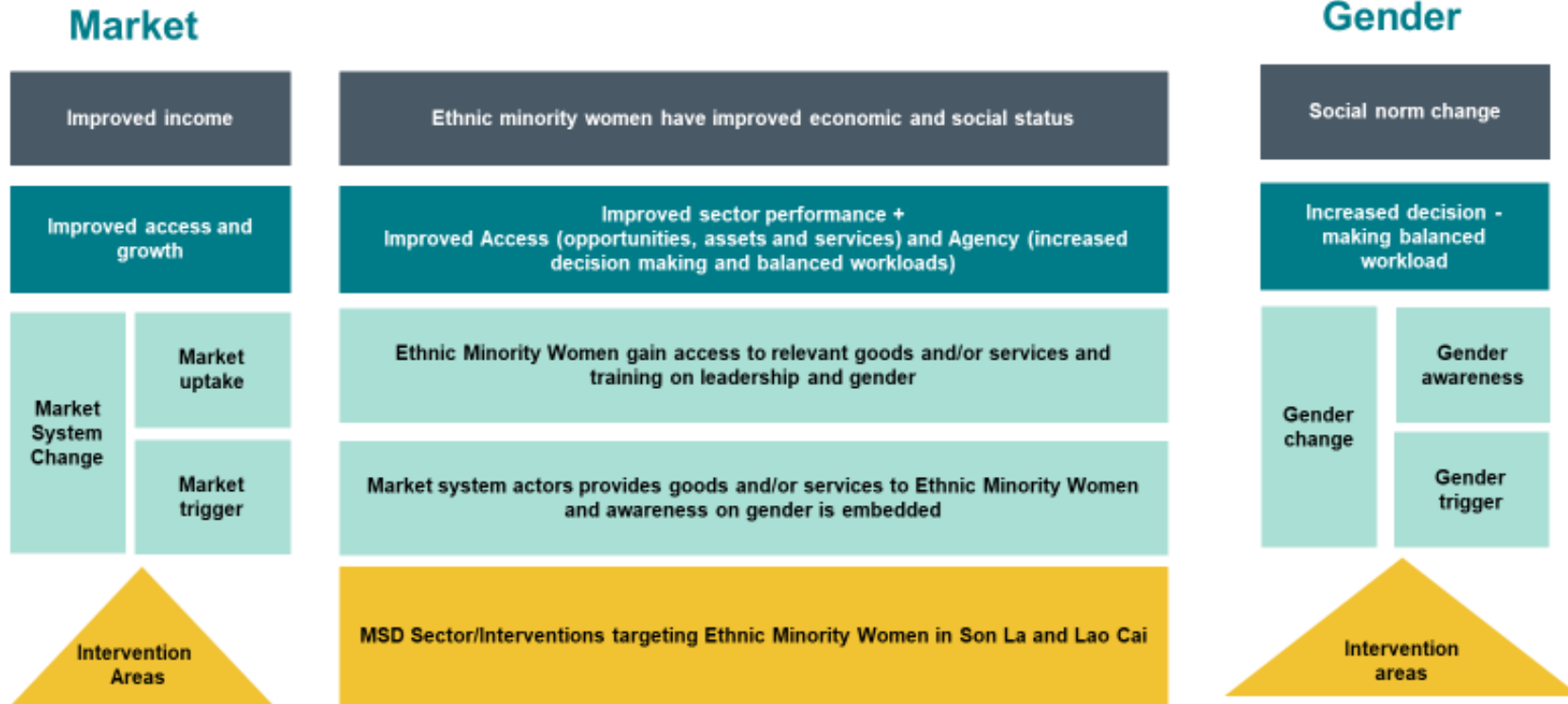
Figure 3: Great Program Theory of Change



⁹³ Aus4Equality GREAT Program, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Framework, June 2018, p16

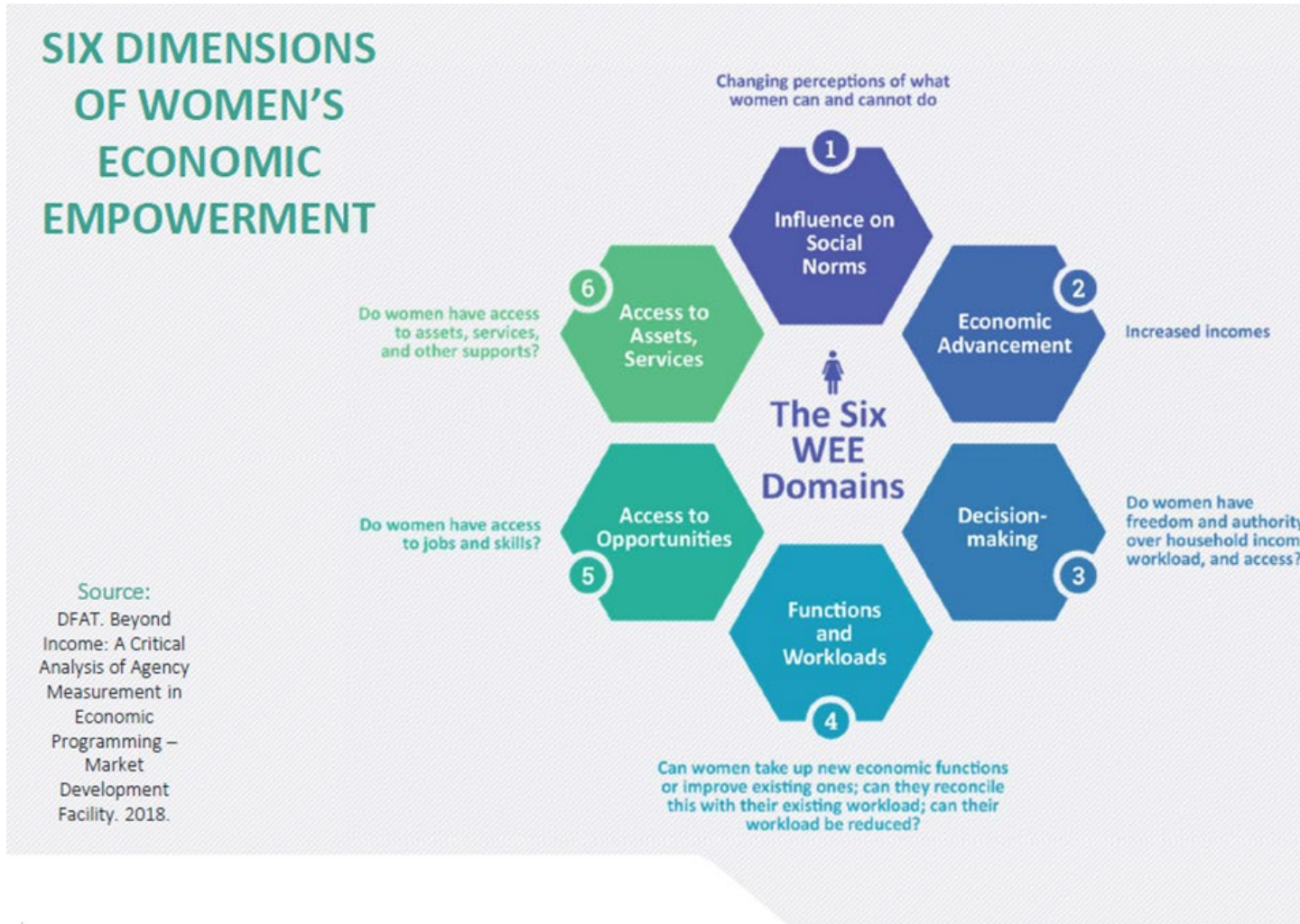
2. GREAT Emerging Theory of Change⁹⁴

Inclusive Systems Development



⁹⁴ GREAT Team "GREAT Update", Powerpoint presentation to the Mid-term review, February 2021

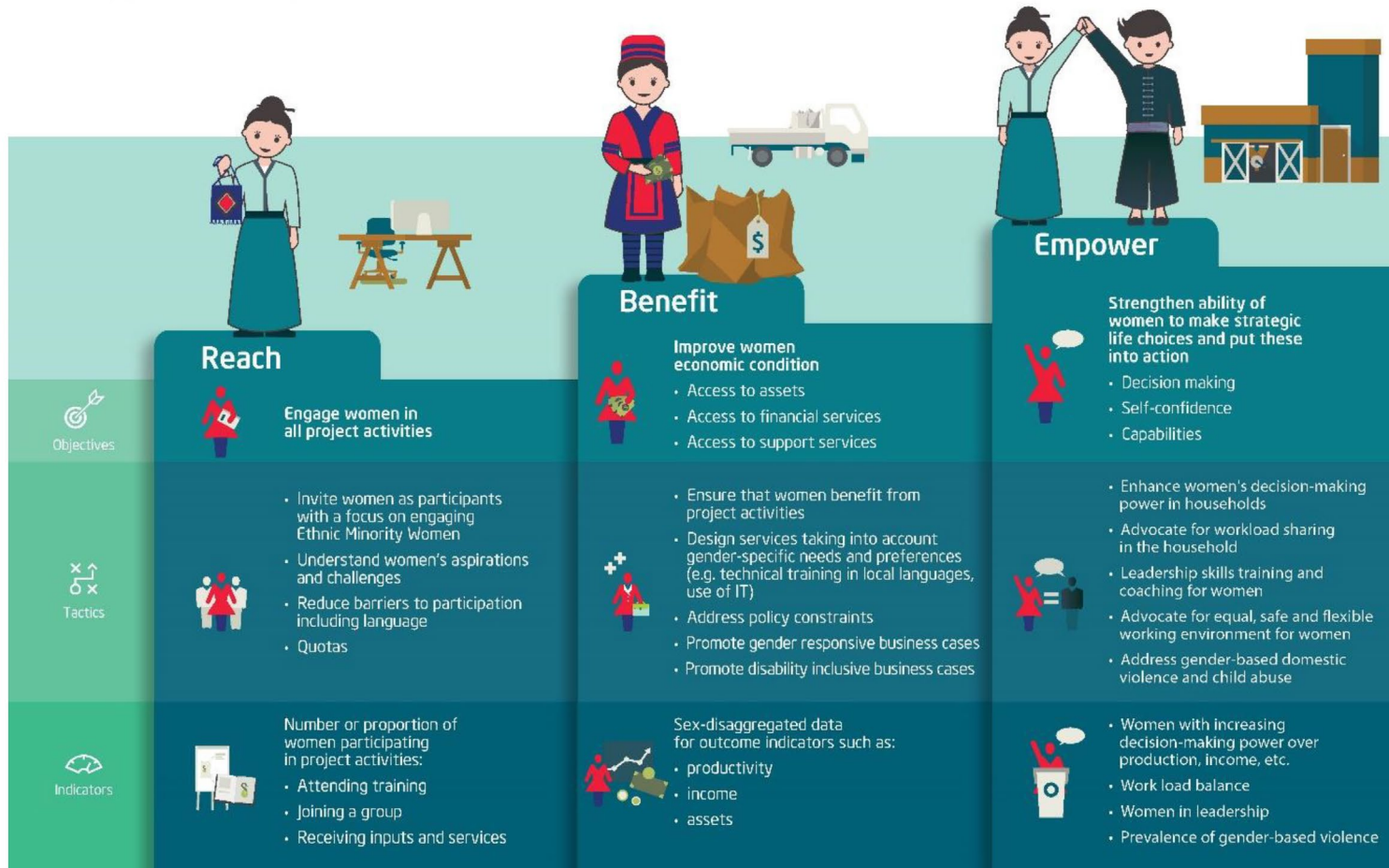
3. Six Dimensions of Women's Economic Empowerment



4. GREAT's Reach Benefit Empower Framework⁹⁵

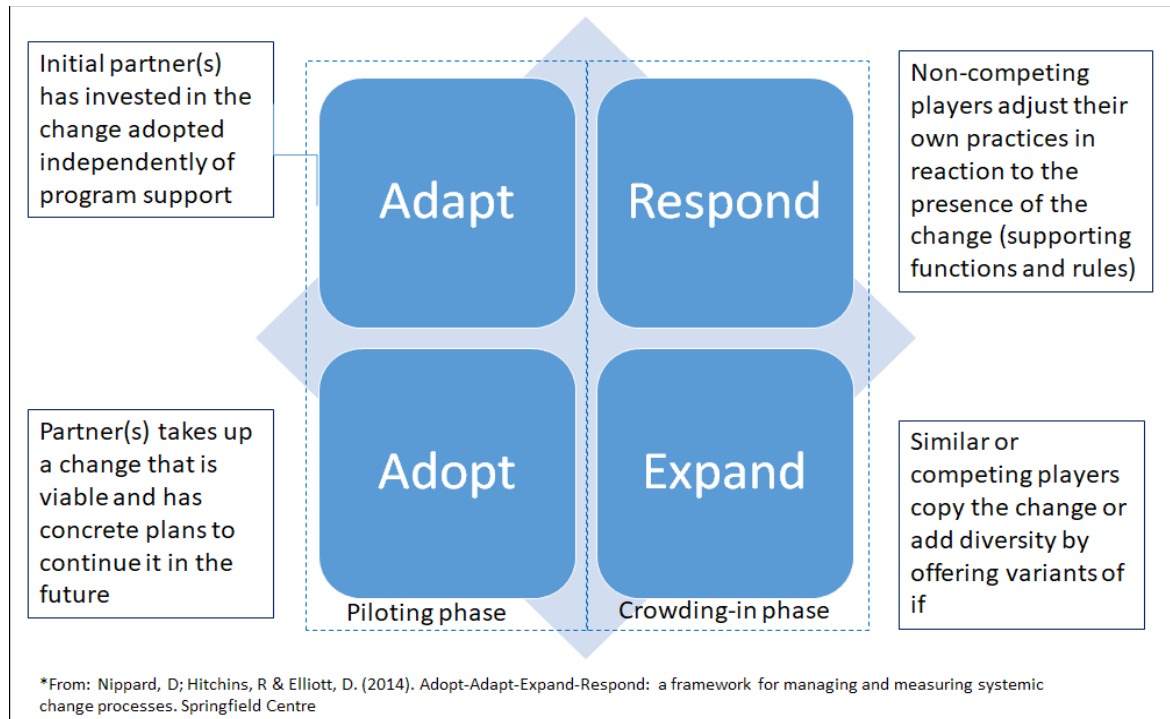
How the GREAT Program Empowers Women

(Source infographic: Fair & Sustainable Consulting)



⁹⁵ GREAT Progress Report, Jan-Jun 2020, p46

5. Systemic Change Framework



Annex D Program assumptions

The MTR has reviewed the Program's assumption against the Program's assessment in 2019. This assessment found that the Program's assumptions still hold true in a broad sense with some caveats as indicated.

Beneficiary

Assumptions	Program Comments (15/10/2019)	MTR Comments (17/06/2021)
Women have the time, interest, and family support required to engage with new approaches.	Households that have been involved in previous projects that have not worked want to see evidence before changing crops or approaches.	No comment
Lack of basic education is not a fundamental barrier for ethnic minority women.	Lack of basic education can be a significant barrier. Many women from ethnic groups such as Hmong and Ha Nhi cannot communicate in Vietnamese and generally have a low education level. Awareness-raising activities, training approaches, and tools need to be properly designed.	Agree with Program comments
Women and communities exist with potential skills and services that closely match private sector businesses' needs.	Many farmers lack skills to meet the agricultural standards required by companies and it takes time to tailor the approach and methods to help farmers with a low education level and with different cultures/traditions. Businesses are often not prepared to invest appropriate levels of resources. We also need to be careful in making assumptions about the practices of the ethnic minority people and their ability in agricultural production. It is useful to understand the advantages and disadvantages of their current practices – the reluctance to not participate in a particular project may be a very sensible economic decision based on perceived risk and reward.	GREAT has worked to provide significant training to support women to participate. The REACH component of the RBE framework has emerged in response to this significant challenge. Resources invested in training and supporting women to engage can be transformational but will take far longer to translate into quantitative results in terms of jobs, income, leadership roles.
Consultations with women of different ethnicities, communities, businesses, and governments reveal shared challenges that Program resources can help address.	As above	Agree with program analysis.
Women's increased economic productivity, in turn, increases their social status and does not increase women's time poverty	We need evidence to see whether women's improved economic status will lead to an increase in their social status. The improved economic status can become a risk for GBV if their decision-making roles are not improved and their voice is not heard.	This is not adequately captured in program indicators as indicators reflecting men's attitudes to women's leadership and changing roles and norms are not systematically captured or communicated through MEL and reporting.
Men are willing to take new roles	We suspect that in some places and for some ethnic groups like Hmong,	Agree with Program

Assumptions	Program Comments (15/10/2019)	MTR Comments (17/06/2021)
	this is difficult. The Program's target only includes women when it is often men's attitudes that need to change. Resources at a project level have often not been sufficiently allocated to include both men and women in training on gender norms.	

Business

Assumptions	Program Comments (15/10/2019)	MTR Comments (17/06/2021)
There are a sufficient number of businesses interested in growing and extending to be more inclusive of ethnic minority women.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a lack of business interest in investing in the Muong Khuong district. 2. Businesses' capacity in working with ethnic minority people is limited. 3. The larger companies are not as good at forming groups of farmers as we thought would be the case. 4. Tourism businesses do not have a high interest in joint investments with GREAT for community-based tourism due to poor return on investment relative to other investments and the Program's requirement to commit to a high number of beneficiaries. 	The program has had challenges engaging some business partners in WEE, with notable exceptions where a CSO/NGO has been able to broker between businesses and the community. Some have embraced ethnic-minority-inclusive business where they have been able to see the value in terms of productivity or marketing (eg as an ethical label)

Government

Assumptions	Program Comments (15/10/2019)	MTR Comments (17/06/2021)
Local government is actively committed to facilitating more inclusive and sustainable business practices in the private sector.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The government of Vietnam is committed. The level of commitment varies across districts. GREAT does not have a choice of the districts with a high commitment. 2. In some districts, there is a lack of resources/capacity that may need the Program's support. 3. The government's consensus and understanding about inclusiveness, gender issues interlinked with MSD needs time to build up. This requires resources. The call for proposal approach to select probably did not get the right proposals to solve these issues. 	This aligns with the observations made by the MTR. Business allies and advocates are needed to demonstrate the value of support for gender-inclusive value chains in terms of profits, branding, and values.

Annex E GREAT Progress against PAF Targets

Source: GREAT Progress Report, July – December 2020, pp10-11.

Indicator	Achieved FY20/21 July to December	PAF Target FY20/21	Accumulated to December 2020	GREAT's Contractual Target
1. Number of women receiving training on technical and business topics*	13,607	20,859	48,608	NA
2. Number of trained women having new knowledge and skills in agriculture, processing, tourism, and business*	11,879	18,059	43,618	NA
3. Number of women joining a cooperative or a business network (such as a collective group or group of common interest)	1,120	3,569	13,419	NA
4. Number of women provided with productive resources and inputs with GREAT support	1,789	6,074	11,936	NA
5. Number of women with increased income	8,660	14,737	8,660	40,000
6. Number of women appointed to take a leadership position in GREAT supported collective groups	159	325	1,194	NA
7. Number of women beneficiaries reported having increased confidence	18,053	12,522	18,053	32,000
8. Percentage of women beneficiaries of gender targeting interventions participating in household financial decision making	100%	50%	100%	NA

Indicator	Achieved FY20/21 July to December	PAF Target FY20/21	Accumulated to December 2020	GREAT's Contractual Target
9. Number of policy dialogues between government and businesses in which women participate.	69	72	113	NA
10. Value (in USD) leveraged from GREAT supported enterprises/cooperatives as result of co-investment with GREAT	USD 2.25 million	USD 1.08 million	USD 5.35 million	USD 6 million

Annex F Mid Term Review Case Studies - Impact Assessment Tables

7. Systemic market change

MTR case study	Changes (intended or unintended) in market systems evident from the project's activities
<p>1. Lao Cai College Hospitality Skills Development and Job Access for Women</p> <p>Systemic Change Framework Levels⁹⁶:</p> <p>Adopt</p> <p>Adapt</p> <p>Expand</p>	<p>This project is achieving intended results towards systemic change in the Adopt and Adapt quadrants (of the systemic change framework) but is also demonstrating positive signs that the model can become financially self-supporting as large hotels indicate interest in paying for the training on a commercial basis.</p> <p>Lao Cai College is developing capacity and reputation in the sector as a high-quality training provider for ethnic minority hospitality staff as evident in interviews with hotels for the MTR. Lao Cai College has applied demand-based training for other training subjects/long courses offered by the College using international standards to improve job opportunities for students. Path Silk Hotel Sapa, a 5-star hotel has engaged the College on a commercial basis to provide training beyond GREAT.</p> <p>The end of project target is to reach 312 women (185 ethnic minority women). This is one of the smallest targets of GREAT's projects (as of December 2020) but needs to be balanced with the transformational nature of employment compared to increased income in the agricultural sector.</p> <p>The College partners with hotels to recruit trainees and after the first course, GREAT staff report that 52 of 60 trainees found a job with a monthly salary of at least VND 5 million. The impact of COVID-19 on travel has significantly limited further employment in tourism, affecting the second trainee cohort.</p>
<p>2. Spice for Equality - Lao Cai Cinnamon Project (SNV)</p> <p>Systemic Change Framework Levels⁹⁷:</p> <p>Adopt</p> <p>Adapt</p> <p>Expand</p>	<p>GREAT reports that farmers including ethnic minority women have invested in expanded and upgraded production to meet demand from companies. Son Ha and Vinasamex companies have also linked with producer organisations beyond GREAT to develop certified cinnamon. Government is supportive of policies to facilitate the expansion of high-end production and an overseas buyer from Spain is sourcing from producer organisations in the provinces. These results are intended within the project's goal of shifting the sector to a value-addition approach to tap into global demand, using a sector-based approach and supporting 3 projects within the sector. MTR fieldwork confirmed strong recognition and support from local authorities, and expectations of continued and growing income from ethnic minority producers, male and female.</p> <p>The recent progress report notes that Tam Hoi Cooperative from Bao Thang is adopting the GREAT-supported organic cinnamon value chain model for export (a sign the project is triggering 'expand' level systemic changes). 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 the GREAT Program, Olam (a global spice giant), has signed a sourcing contract with local cooperatives.</p>

⁹⁶ GREAT Program Analysis conducted for the Mid-term review

⁹⁷ ibid

MTR case study	Changes (intended or unintended) in market systems evident from the project's activities
<p>4. District and Department Competitive Index (DDCI) Lao Cai</p> <p>5. DDCI Son La</p>	<p>GREAT's DDCI promotes the inclusion of inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive indicators and is reported to have been adopted by 6 provinces (Soc Trang, Lai Chau, Hai Phong, An Giang, Hoa Binh, and Lang Son). Replication of the GREAT DDCI approach is one of GREAT's policy influencing strategies, implemented through Economica, DDCI national consultants who are supporting other provinces in a similar initiative on business environment reforms. The MTR found that in Lao Cai and Son La there was limited understanding of gender among officials, however GREAT has recently been training officials in gender-responsive planning. Opportunities for learning in 2020 were significantly disrupted by COVID-19.</p>
<p>5. Market-driven Bamboo Shoots Production in Son La (CRED)</p> <p>Systemic Change Framework Levels⁹⁸:</p> <p>Adopt</p> <p>Adapt</p> <p>Expand</p>	<p>The project is going beyond intended immediate results in strengthening quality supply to Kim Boi company by demonstrating that it is catalysing expansion of the sector, using a gender-inclusive business model. GREAT reports that the District People's Committee will invest in the expansion of the bamboo production area; and new cooperatives led by or participated in by ethnic minority women are emerging to establish business links with Yen Thanh Company for production. GREAT is supporting two sub-projects in this sector (MTR assessed one only). This sub-sector has weathered COVID-19 well, and producers have maintained sales.</p> <p>The project midline assessment⁹⁹ noted that the project has improved household livelihoods, which is significant in the face of the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. 52% of the surveyed households reported a general income decrease. 68% of surveyed households reported facing economic difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, the average income from project-supported products per household¹⁰⁰ increased from four million in 2019 to seven million in 2020. 49% of the surveyed households reported an increase in general income.</p> <p>The bamboo shoots sub-sector is not included within the current Market Systems Study preliminary analysis.</p>
<p>6. Expanding the value chain of safe vegetables in Moc Chau and Van Ho (Greenfarm)</p> <p>Systemic Change Framework Levels¹⁰¹:</p> <p>Adopt</p> <p>Adapt</p> <p>Respond</p>	<p>Despite significant challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic, there is good evidence that Greenfarm is adopting and implementing the new practices supported by the Project. As one of 5 vegetable sub-projects supported through GREAT, this is achieving intended objectives in generating ongoing commitment from producers and the private sector partner (Greenfarm) to growing the model despite COVID-19 setbacks in the vegetable market (oversupply due to reduced demand). There are 5 GREAT projects currently working in this sub-sector in Son La (and two in Lao Cai). As evidence of the "expand" level, GREAT cites data showing that since the project start, Greenfarm and other buyers (Big C) have expanded the number of vegetables they buy beyond project target GREAT's analysis, which indicates that buyers are increasing sourcing of safe vegetables from the target districts across the 5 projects. There is evidence, to be further explored in the Market Systems Study, that the sub-sector is operating across the Adopt Adapt Respond and Expand dimensions of the market.</p>

⁹⁸ Mid Term Review and GREAT Program Analysis

⁹⁹ Greenfarm Midline Assessment Survey, March 2021

¹⁰⁰ Average income from project supported product per household is annual earnings from sale of project-related products and services (after deducting incurred expenses to generate the income).

Both income from all sources and project-related income are adjusted to annual Consumer Price Index to truly reflect household's spending power.

¹⁰¹ Mid Term Review and GREAT Program Analysis

MTR case study	Changes (intended or unintended) in market systems evident from the project's activities
Expand	

8. Enhanced women's engagement in market systems and society more broadly

MTR case study	Women's Economic Empowerment - Changes (intended or unintended) evident from the project's activities
1. Lao Cai College Hospitality Skills Development and Job Access for Women	<p>The project is achieving intended results, which include creating opportunities for ethnic minority women and conditions transforming ethnic minority women's agency. The project is reaching ethnic minority women through outreach, and seeing interest increasing as a result of the positive experience of trainees. The MTR found that women's confidence to apply for jobs reflected a radical shift in terms of their skills and outlook, as well as in community and men's expectations in terms of women's roles (norms). Women still struggle to balance domestic duties with the demands of training and employment, but employers indicated increased understanding and a level of flexibility to support ethnic minority women's employment.</p> <p>Additionally, GREAT reports that the program has worked to address decision-making within households.</p>
2. Spice for Equality - Lao Cai Cinnamon Project (SNV)	<p>The Longitudinal Study assessed measurable improvements in WEE and gender equality in the project's target communities as a result of the inclusive business model developed by the project. The project objectives include increasing income and employment for women, increasing confidence, self-respect and changing gender roles for 1200 women, and improving policies to develop a gender-responsive market in the sector. The survey found women were befitting across a range of empowerment dimensions: increasing and using their income, confidence, participating in decision-making, and sharing the domestic workload with men. The MTR and project midline found a more nuanced picture, with women less active than expected as cooperative leaders, noting the significant shift involved in engaging women in producer groups to start within an area where the Vietnamese language is still low. The MTR also found entrenched views around women's roles. Women and men's perceptions around household decision-making, functions, and workloads varied in the MTR fieldwork, with men stating greater equality across these domains than women. All groups noted that gender relations are changing.</p>

MTR case study	Women's Economic Empowerment - Changes (intended or unintended) evident from the project's activities
	The project is contributing significant access to opportunities and services for ethnic minority women as well as men.
<p>2. DDCI Lao Cai</p> <p>3. DDCI Son La</p>	<p>The overall aim of DDCI is to improve the business environment so that it is inclusive of women and ethnic minorities. Objective 1 involved increasing the DDCI assessments criteria related to gender to monitor and incentivise departments/districts to adopt reforms that support gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The project is only likely to make a contribution to the six dimensions of WEE over the very long term. The MTR was able to confirm that the DDCI Index is contributing in the following positive ways to promote a gender-inclusive business environment:¹⁰²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger gender focus in the survey tool • Stronger analysis of the gender dimension of performance • Stronger inclusion of gender in district/department action plans • Increase women's participation in dialogue, training, and communication activities. <p>As noted above, local officials interviewed for the MTR requested further support to improve their understanding of how to use the index, and it is unclear whether they had participated in GREAT's recent training in gender-responsive training across all GREAT districts.</p>
5. Market-driven Bamboo Shoots Production in Son La (CRED)	<p>From the perspective of the mid-term review, this was the best-performing of the 6 case studies in terms of women's economic empowerment. CRED Bamboo Shoots Production project is demonstrating strong results in terms of women's economic empowerment and is on track to generate greater income for ethnic minority communities as a result of improvements in the bamboo shoots value chain. The project's four objectives integrate women's economic empowerment, inclusive business, and value chain development, with a specific focus on WEE under Objective 3, and specific NGO-led initiatives target understanding of women's contributions within households. The MTR, Longitudinal Midline Study offers evidence indicating increased opportunities for women through skills training, access to assets and services (labour-saving processing equipment), and income. Women are taking up new opportunities through cooperatives, there is improved decision-making for women within households, and changes in social norms related to women's roles and recognition of women's value as leaders were reported. Women still spend more time than men on domestic labour and women's workload is increasing. Further efforts are needed to consolidate positive indications from the MTR around gender norms, as evidence in the project's midline assessment found that strong gender stereotypes persist related to women's primary roles in housework, child-rearing, and non-income generating tasks.</p>
6. Expanding the value chain of safe vegetables in Moc Chau and Van Ho (Greenfarm)	<p>The MTR found good evidence that the Project is progressing toward the objective of increasing women's capacity to better engage in the vegetable supply chain. Until COVID-19 hit, the project was supporting producers' economic advancement, but it was badly affected by COVID-19. Evidence around enhancing women's role in leadership and decision-making was less clear. The project seeks to address these issues through gender training within technical training, but the MTR found that gender training was poorly attended by men in the areas assessed, and in both communities, men in focus group discussion saw gender inequality as a lesser problem than women did.</p> <p>While women have been given positions as leaders of producer groups, some women seemed unclear of their roles and some men did not believe it is appropriate for them to hold these positions. In contrast, the project midline</p>

¹⁰² From GREAT, Summary of project progress [29.PLB027 (DPI Lao Cai)] up to Q2 FY20/21 (October - December 2020)

MTR case study Women’s Economic Empowerment - Changes (intended or unintended) evident from the project’s activities

assessment found both women and men had increased confidence in vegetable skills production, though women were slightly less confident than men. Women reported taking part in all household decisions (100%), while less than 70% of men agreed. While women’s time on paid work was the same as men’s, they still do more of the domestic labour.

Annex G GREAT Mid-term review Terms of Reference

Mid-Term Review

Gender Responsive Equitable Agriculture and Tourism (GREAT) Program

1. Background

The GREAT Program is an AUD 33.7 million initiative of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) which aims to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the northwest area of Vietnam. It has a specific focus on supporting ethnic minority women to better engage in the agriculture and tourism markets, enhance women's voices in decision-making, promote partnerships with the private sector, and support more inclusive government policies and services.

GREAT was designed to be implemented for five years, with an option period of an additional five years, to realise expected empowerment outcomes and impacts. With delays in government approvals, GREAT started in late 2017, with the Program duration reduced 9 months than originally planned.

The objectives of the GREAT Program are:

Objective 1 – Empowering local women: Women living in local communities have increased capacity, space, and choices to beneficially engage with agriculture and tourism businesses.

Objective 2 – Inclusive businesses partnerships: Selected private sector actors within the agriculture and tourism sectors innovate to profitably and sustainably trade with more women entrepreneurs and operate in gender-sensitive ways.

Objective 3 – Improving sector governance and policy: Government agencies reinforce policies, and enact plans, regulations, and services that enable more inclusive socio-economic development.

Key approaches applied by the program include: Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE); Market Systems Development (MSD); Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI); Results-Based Management; Partnership; Adaptive Management; and Innovation.

The program works with approximately 50 partners to deliver results, including with private sector actors, governmental and non-governmental organisations, mass organisations, and research institutions.

GREAT is managed by DFAT-appointed Managing Contractor, Cowater International and for the day-to-day management of the program, an office (GREAT office) has been established in Hanoi.

The Provincial People's Committees (PPCs) of Son La and Lao Cai provinces are the program's key counterparts. A Vice-chairman of each PPC is a member of a joint GREAT Steering Committee that meets annually to approve work plans and budgets and to discuss the program's progress.

Within each province, a partner government Project Management Unit (PMU) was established and works collaboratively with the GREAT office.

2. Objective of Mid-Term Review

The objective of the Mid-term Review (MTR) is:

- To undertake an independent assessment and review of the program implementation to date; reassess the appropriateness of the program's scale, scope, and implementation approach; its Theory of Change (TOC), the assumptions underlying the TOC, and the end of program targets.
- Based on this assessment, the MTR will also provide lessons and recommendations for improvement/adjustment for the remainder of the current phase of the program, and a potential design refresh should a second phase move forward.
- To inform DFAT's Management decision on whether and how to exercise an option to extend the program for an additional five years.

3. Scope of Work

The Review Team will undertake the following tasks:

- Assess the program's achievement and effectiveness against the below criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, risk management, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation).
- Provide recommendations to DFAT concerning adjustment to current targets of the program and the implementation of the remainder of the current phase
- Provide DFAT's management with evidence on performance and impact to inform decisions on the next phase of the program, and recommendations on how the program might be best adjusted through a design refresh should it move forward into a second 5-year period.

4. Evaluation criteria

The MTR will assess the performance of the program against the following criterion and key research questions:

4.1. Relevance: Assess whether the program is contributing to implementing Australia's strategic policy framework and addressing Vietnam's development priorities including:

- Does the program align with Aid policy frameworks, including but not limited to the Aid Investment Plan in Vietnam, DFAT's gender equality and women's empowerment strategy (including Australia in Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2020), the Operational Framework for private sector engagement in Australia's aid program, the Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's Covid-19 Development Response;
- Does the program align with Vietnam's development priorities in the current and next development periods?
 - Is it relevant to the needs and the existing assets of target groups?
- Has the operational context of the program changed?
 - To what extent have the changes impacted the program's relevance to Australia's and Vietnam's priorities?
 - To what extent has the program responded to changes?
- Are the framework and approaches (WEE, MSD, and GESI mainstreaming) by the program relevant to target areas and beneficiaries?
- How might a potential design refresh enhance the relevance of the program to Australia's strategic policy framework and development priorities in Vietnam, including in light of COVID-19?

4.2. Effectiveness: Assess whether the program is on track to achieving its stated objectives including:

- To what extent is the program's logic and theory of change robust and applicable? To what extent do the program's assumptions hold true in the context of program implementation?
- To what extent are the program's intended objectives being met?
 - What have been significant challenges for the program to achieve its expected objectives?
 - Given these challenges and changes in the operational context, are the program targets still relevant compared to the program's objectives?
 - How should the program's current targets be adjusted and complemented by alternative targets and measures?
- How effective was policy dialogue in influencing partners (governmental agencies, private sector, and civil society) and supporting the achievement of expected outcomes?
- How effective were the program's approaches in delivering expected results?
 - To what extent has GREAT been able to integrate WEE and MSD approaches?
 - To what extent have the combined approaches in collaboration, learning, adaptation, and results-based management been effective in allowing the program's steering and flexibility toward expected outcomes while controlling the risks?
- What have been the most/least impactful interventions by GREAT and why?
- To achieve high-level outcomes and impacts in women's economic empowerment, what should be done differently in terms of program's approaches and interventions, including but not limited to policy dialogue, inclusive MSD, combined approaches in collaboration, learning, adaptation, results-based management?

4.3. Efficiency: Assess whether the program is making efficient use of available resources to achieve objectives.

- How efficient has the program been in terms of use of time and resources?
- How are the program's funding and timeframe sufficient to achieve expected outcomes?
- What have been the advantages and disadvantages of the aid modality (Managing Contractor working in partnership with Program Management Unit from Vietnamese Government)?
- To what extent is the program aid modality and its management, governance, and resourcing arrangements (through partnerships with government agencies, private sector, civil society) promoting value for money and efficient delivery of aid program resources?
- To what extent should the current aid modality, governance, and resourcing arrangement be changed or adjusted to improve the program's efficiency?

4.4. Impact (where feasible): Assess whether the program produces positive or negative changes (directly, or indirectly, intended or unintended).

- What are obvious changes (intended or unintended) evident from the program's activities? Include any positive/negative impacts from external factors.
- To what extent are the impacts of GREAT significant?

4.5. Risk Management: Assess how risks are being managed and whether there is any need for improvement.

- To what extent has the risk management of the program aligned with DFAT's risk management policy?
- How are risks and safeguards being monitored at the partnership and the program levels? How were control and treatment measures effective in terms of managing identified risks?
- What changes should be considered to improve the risk management of the program?

4.6. Sustainability: Assess whether the benefits of the program will last after the funding has ceased and whether the program creates any systemic changes.

- Are the results of the program likely to continue after the end of the program? What is the program's likelihood to create systemic changes? How does the MSD approach without subsidies to target groups contribute to the program's sustainability?
- Is the program creating systemic changes that can be replicated and adopted by other partners? What has been the level of buy-in of the program's approaches (MSD and WEE) from partners (Government agencies, private sector, civil society)?
- Are GREAT's government counterparts and demonstrating ownership?
- What should be done to measure potential wider impacts by GREAT's interventions beyond targeted value chains or geographical areas?
- To what extent the program has a clear exit strategy?
- What changes and adjustments should be considered to improve the program's sustainability?

4.7. Monitoring and Evaluation: Assess whether the MERL framework effectively measures progress towards meeting the objectives of each activity and the entire program.

- To what extent have the results-based management, collaboration, learning, and adaptation been mainstreamed into the program management?
- To what extent has the M&E arrangements been effective in terms of measuring the results of the program at the different levels and generating timely evidence for the program's learning and adaptation?
- To what extent has information generated by the Management Information System (MIS) and other MERL activities informed GREAT's partnerships management, learning, and communication, accountability purposes
- What should be done to measure the significance of impacts by GREAT's approaches and interventions?
- To what extent have learning products generated by the program, including but not limited to the Longitudinal Research enhanced GREAT understanding and approach to promoting ethnic minority women's economic empowerment?

- What are key changes should the program make to the MERL strategy to measure the progress of expected results in the immediate period, and in a potential second phase?

5. Methodology

The Review Team should propose the methodology and plan for the MTR for discussion with DFAT and GREAT, including consideration of the following methods of data collection.

- Review available documentation including:
 - Documentation related to GREAT Program Design
 - 6-monthly progress reports
 - Internal reports such as workplans and key strategies
 - Performance assessment report of projects under GREAT
 - Available communications, research, and/or policy material
- Field review and key stakeholder interviews including:
 - DFAT
 - Managing Contractor, including Headquarters and Vietnam-based representatives
 - Other donors and actors with similar initiatives, including DFAT partners such as World Bank, Investing in Women, UN Women Union
 - Program's Steering Committee
 - Project Management Unit
 - Implementing partners (to be selected from about 50 implementing partners)
 - Beneficiaries, including Vietnamese agencies such as the Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs

An in-country visit to the program's sites and face-to-face meetings and interviews with informants would normally be part of the MTR, however, Vietnam has been in the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic since the end of July 2020. Social distancing policies may make international travel to and from Vietnam as well as domestic travel between regions of the country for face-to-face interviews impossible at the proposed time of the MTR (Dec 2020- March 2021).

It is therefore important to note that the MTR proposal submitted by the Review Team needs to reflect and address these challenges in the review methodology and plan by proposing solutions in response to different scenarios. These solutions will be discussed and agreed upon with DFAT and the GREAT program as the basis for the contract signature of the MTR.

6. Team composition

For the MTR, DFAT seeks a Review Team with the following selection criteria:

1. Clear methodology and plan for the MTR
2. Strong experience, expertise, and skills in independent reviews and evaluation of development assistance programs, in which experience with the Australian Aid program is an advantage
3. Demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and experience in women's economic empowerment and gender equality
4. Sound understanding of, and experience with the Market System Development Approach, and Private Sector engagement
5. Excellent communication, analytical, and report writing skills, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. Proven flexibility and adaptive management in conducting reviews and evaluations would be preferred
6. Strong understanding and demonstrated knowledge of Vietnam's social and political context

Roles and responsibilities:

The Team Lead will have the principal responsibility to deliver an MTR that meets DFAT's requirements. Specifically, the Team Lead will:

- Lead the development of the MTR methodology and plan for consultation and agreement with DFAT and GREAT.
- Be responsible for managing and directing the MTR activities and leading consultations with stakeholders.
- Be responsible for drafting deliverables and reports, which incorporate comments provided by DFAT, GREAT, and other key stakeholders.
- Be responsible for producing the final MTR report.

- Manage and direct the team member(s).

The team member(s) will assist the Team Lead with review activities, and provide technical advice and written inputs to meet the objectives and reporting requirements of the MTR.

The MTR will be overall managed by DFAT (First Secretary and Senior Program Manager) with significant assistance from the GREAT program. Subject to the final methodology and plan of the MTR that the Review Team, DFAT, and GREAT agree on, staff from DFAT and GREAT may participate as member(s) of the MTR.

In addition, GREAT will assist in arranging meetings and interviews with relevant informants in the agreed plan.

7. Evaluation methodology

DFAT will conduct a technical assessment of suppliers' proposals as below

#	Criteria	Maximum points
1	Clear methodology and plan for the MTR	2.5
2	Strong experience, expertise, and skills in independent reviews and evaluation of development assistance programs, in which experience with the Australian Aid program is an advantage	2.5
3	Demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and experience in women's economic empowerment and gender equality	1.5
4	Sound understanding of, and experience with the Market System Development Approach, and Private Sector engagement	1.5
5	Excellent communication, analytical, and report writing skills, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. Proven flexibility and adaptive management in conducting reviews and evaluations would be preferred-weighting	1
6	Strong understanding and demonstrated knowledge of Vietnam's social and political context	1
7	Technical score	10

The technical score will represent 90% of the total proposal score, using the following formula

- Technical score (1) = $\frac{\text{Technical score of the proposal}}{\text{Highest technical score}} \times 90$

Following the technical assessment of quotes, DFAT will undertake a price assessment of the quotes submitted by suppliers using the following formula:

- Price Score (2) = $\frac{\text{Lowest Price Submitted}}{\text{Contractor's Price}} \times 10$

DFAT will identify a preferred supplier using the following formula:

Total proposal score = Technical Score (1) + Price Score (2)

8. Timeline and deliverables¹⁰³

The MTR is expected to start in December 2020 and the final report is expected to be available by the end of March 2021 with the aim that findings and evidence collected by the MTR will help DFAT's Management to make a well-informed and timely decision on the program's next steps

Table 1. Activities and Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Introductory meeting with DFAT and GREAT Program	Early Dec 2020
Finalisation of the review plan and methodology.	Early to Mid- Dec 2020
Signature of contract for MTR.	Mid-Dec 2020
Document review Key informant interviews and fieldwork in Hanoi, Son La, and Lao Cai, as possible.	End of Dec 2020- Jan 2021
Debriefing with DFAT Hanoi, Managing Contractor, PMUs and submitting Aide-Memoire on key findings and recommendations.	Feb 2021
Submission of a final report. The main part of the final report should not be more than 25 pages including an executive summary that highlights key findings and evidence to inform DFAT's management on the program's next steps	Mar 2021

The assignment may involve the following steps:

- Travel to Vietnam if possible.
- Up to 4 days for document review and development of the Evaluation Plan.
- Up to 14 days for in-country meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders.
 - Alternatively, if travel is not possible the Team should suggest alternative solutions to gather all necessary information.
- Up to 5 days for report drafting.
- Up to 3 days for report finalization.

The above timeline, sequencing, and the number of days allocated for review activities are INDICATIVE and can be negotiated between DFAT and selected service suppliers in a way that works best for both sides.

9. Application process

Interested suppliers are invited to send a proposal that includes:

- Technical proposal individually addressing each of selection criteria detailed above (maximum 15 A4 pages)

¹⁰³ The timeline and deliverables are indicative and will be adjusted based on review plan and methodology submitted by the Review Team.

The final timeline should take into account Christmas and New Year's leave (24 December 2020- 07 Jan 2021) and Vietnam's Lunar New Year (01 February 2021- 26 February 2021).

- Financial proposal that breakdowns applicable fees and reimbursable costs, including personnel fees, accommodation, support costs, travel and management fees
- Curriculum Vitae (no more than 4 A4 pages) of Team Lead and each of Team member(s)
- Up to 2 past experience statements of no more than 1 A4 page each detailing relevant skills and experience of the Team Lead to provide the services

The proposal package should be sent to hoainam.nguyen@dfat.gov.au **COB 30 November 2020**