



Success Story: Empowering Female Farmers and Beekeepers

Women in the mountainous areas of Thua Thien Hue Province in Vietnam lack viable opportunities for employment. The physical requirements of many short-term, locally-available jobs, such as construction and acacia harvesting, make them difficult for women to perform. As a result, many struggle to make ends meet.

Ho Thi Ngach is one such woman. A stout, reserved 40-year-old mother of three girls, Ngach is a member of the Ta Oi ethnic minority, an indigenous group in Vietnam. Her husband is a bricklayer struggling with health issues. Ngach lives with her family in a commune in Thua Thien Hue's mountains that is known for its biodiversity. Despite the abundant natural resources around her, however, she had long struggled to earn enough money to provide for her family.

Today, the ECODIT-implemented USAID Vietnam Green Annamites Project is empowering women like Ngach to boost their incomes. The four-year, \$24 million project is working across central Vietnam's Annamites region to reduce emissions from deforestation and unsustainable agricultural practices, improve natural resources management, and increase livelihoods for local forest-dependent communities, with a focus on women and members of historically vulnerable ethnic minorities. The project includes a small grants component that introduces new, more sustainable livelihoods in the province.

ECODIT awarded a grant to a local agricultural cooperative and provided technical trainings for the cooperative's 90 members (80 percent of whom are women) on growing safe agricultural products following international standards for quality and sustainability. Female members of the cooperative also received



Photo credit: USAID Green Annamites Project

"I had been growing vegetables before, but only on my own, and I was not aware of the techniques to grow clean vegetables, and even if I had been able to grow them, I didn't know who to sell them to, now the selling price is better and there is less price coercion since buyers know that I grow clean vegetable following safe procedures."

– Ho Thi Ngach (vegetable farmer)

Vietnam Green Annamites Activity Overview

Period of Performance: September 2016 – December 2020

Value: \$24 million

Client: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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trainings on management, organization, business skills, and market development. In addition, the project upgraded the cooperative's sales office and production and treatment facilities.

These activities helped the cooperative to thrive. ECODIT linked cooperative members with major supermarket chains throughout the country, as well as to kindergartens, restaurants and clean vegetable wholesalers in the province. As a result, the cooperative generated more than \$18,000 (421 million Vietnamese Dong) from the sale of their vegetables and fruits, boosting the incomes of women like Ngach.

Another grant was awarded to a local beekeepers' association. Through this grant, the project trained local community members, many of whom were women, and helped them purchase food and equipment for beekeeping, so they could produce honey from local cajuput trees. In just four months, each participating household earned an average of \$547 (12.7 million Vietnamese Dong) from honey production.



These activities have transformed the lives of many Vietnamese women and their families. Ngach, for one, says that, thanks to this assistance, she can now produce a surplus of vegetables. She sells this surplus to businesses that plan weddings, earning an additional \$130 (three million Vietnamese Dong) each month. "I had been growing vegetables before, but only on my own, and I was not aware of the techniques to grow clean vegetables, and even if I had been able to grow them, I didn't know who to sell them to," she said. "Now, the selling price is better and there is less price coercion since buyers know that I grow clean vegetable following safe procedures."

Ngach can now afford a better education for her daughters, and adequate medicines and treatment for her husband. She has taken on a leadership role in her cooperative and is teaching the other women to increase their incomes by growing high-quality, sustainable vegetables. In her new leadership role, she is exploring the idea of growing vegetables, fruits, local plants, and flowers along the stream in her village to boost tourism and increase awareness about the importance of environmental protection. She is also exploring the idea of establishing a cultural village to promote eco-tourism and spread awareness of the Ta Oi ethnic minority. Through her leadership and initiative, she is slated to not only improve her family's life, but that of many other families in her community.

As more women like Ngach receive training and support, they are increasingly taking a greater role in boosting incomes and improving the management of natural resources in their communities. These results are transforming the lives of the Annamites Region's most vulnerable while helping preserve Vietnam's precious biodiversity.

Joseph Karam, ECODIT's President, says that these results underpin ECODIT's approach to development. "Throughout all our work with communities around the world, we aim to empower women and girls, as this is critical to promoting effective, sustainable development."