

Investment Concept

A: Investment Concept Title: Australia-Vietnam Women's Economic Empowerment Partnership
Proposed investment start date and timeframe: January 2017, 5 years
Proposed funding allocation: Up to AUD 33.7 million
Risk and Value assessment result: Low Risk/Low Value
Consultation: DHOM Hanoi; Reference Group (internal and external specialists); Regional Gender Specialist; Vietnam and Cambodia Desk; SE Asia Analytical and Effectiveness Branch

B: Problem/Issue definition and rationale for investment (Why)

The problem

Although Vietnam's remarkably rapid economic growth after the Doi Moi reforms of the 1980s succeeded in lifting millions out of poverty and enabled the country to graduate to lower middle-income status, the benefits have not been evenly distributed. Socio-economic inequalities are becoming more pronounced, with women and ethnic minorities much more likely than others to be excluded from economic opportunities.

Vietnam is deservedly recognised for its achievements in closing the gender gap in education and in labour force participation in the formal sector. However, a number of gender equality challenges persist, including disparities in women's access to and ownership of property and economic assets, significant differences in pay (with the women's wages in the informal sector estimated to be as low as 50% of men's), and segregation between women and men in terms of occupations and employment sectors, which reflects disparities in access to education and training, and limits women's ability to benefit from economic developmentⁱ. 20.5% of the male labour force has received training as compared to 15.9% of the female labour force; and women are more likely than men to be in informal and insecure jobsⁱⁱ.

While women in Vietnam generally take on the main responsibility for ensuring the well-being of their families, they have less mobility than men, less access to technical and financial support, and less influence over decisions within the home and the community. The unequal burden of unpaid work which falls to women limits their involvement in the workplace and decision-making forums. Representation of women in the National Assembly and other leadership roles is high by regional standards but still fractional compared to men'sⁱⁱⁱ. Women in Vietnam continue to be victims of gender-based violence, which closely correlates with lack of economic decision-making power and exacerbated by lack of mobility, in particular in rural areas^{iv}. Also of concern is the widening gap in sex-ratio at birth, favouring sons.

Apart from the legislated difference in retirement ages between men and women and the need for more comprehensive laws addressing violence against women, Vietnam has a strong policy framework for pursuing greater gender equality. However, gaps remain in the adequacy of data for monitoring the progress of Vietnam's women, particularly in the employment sphere, and budgets for implementation of policies and plans. Other reasons for lack of implementation include lack of knowledge, low capacity, and limited presence of women in public decision-making forums. Attitudes of both men and women remain a major obstacle to the advancement of women. A study conducted by the Vietnam Women's Union found that a large number of respondents would choose men to take on senior positions.

The development gaps between those in remote mountainous areas especially ethnic minorities, compared with the national average, are significant and widening. Although Vietnam's 53 ethnic minority groups make

up less than 15% of the population, they accounted for nearly 50% of the poor in 2010, compared to only 29% in 1998. 66.3% of minorities were poor in 2010 compared to only 12.9% of the Kinh majority^v. Key causes of poverty among ethnic minority groups in Vietnam include fewer physical assets (and, capital, credit) and fewer social assets (education, health, access to social services)^{vi}.

With 90% of poor people in Vietnam living in rural areas, agriculture is the sector from which many of the poorest households have moved up the ladder from subsistence to commercial activity. The northern uplands remain the poorest areas of the country, followed by the central highlands and the north central and central coasts^{vii}. These communities rely heavily on agriculture for food and income, yet lack access to quality productive land or agricultural extension services in their language, with terrain making connectivity to services and markets difficult. They are highly vulnerable to external shocks, with limited livelihood options to fall back on if harvests are destroyed by extreme weather or cannot be sold due to fluctuations in commodity prices, and tend to have little information about markets or financial literacy. Ethnic minorities continue to face social and institutional discrimination, which contributes to keeping them out of mainstream economic development.

Cultural norms and economic barriers place ethnic minority women in a subordinate position in many communities, and ethnic minority women are disadvantaged in most respects, including access to productive resources and agricultural extension services as well as healthcare and education. Many ethnic minority women have not gone to school and are illiterate in Vietnamese. Ethnic minority women, especially those in remote villages, are expected to stay in the home which prevents them from accessing services and significantly limit their interaction in community planning or decision-making.

It should be noted that while ethnic minorities may not be benefiting from government poverty reduction programs as successfully as Kinh, around 34% of ethnic minority people are not poor. This is considered to be thanks in part to government programs but largely to efforts made by the people themselves^{viii}.

Why should Australia invest?

One of the three objectives of Australia's new Aid Investment Plan for Vietnam 2015-2020 is '*Promoting women's economic empowerment, including among ethnic minorities*'. This objective directly contributes to two of the priorities in DFAT's forthcoming Gender Equality Strategy: (1) enhancing women's voice in decision making, leadership and peace-building; and (2) promoting women's economic empowerment; as well as indirectly supporting priority (3) of ending violence against women. At the Vietnam-Australia High Level Consultations on Development Cooperation in July 2015, our two governments affirmed a shared commitment to promoting women's economic empowerment and supporting the most disadvantaged areas of Vietnam, in particular ethnic minority communities, to move out of poverty. The recently released *Strategy for Australia's aid investments in agriculture, fisheries and water* recently includes a focus on strengthening markets and innovating for productivity and sustainable resource use, and is accompanied by a *DFAT Operational Guidance Note on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment in Agriculture* which will inform this design.

Development actors in Vietnam have been funding efforts to support ethnic minority women's livelihoods for many years in various forms. Australia's support has mainly been through small-scale projects implemented by Australian NGOs funded under ANCP. There were good reasons for taking a localised project-based approach: every ethnic minority group is different, and achieving economies of scale for ODA interventions is challenging in the northern uplands precisely because of the constraints such as terrain and lack of infrastructure which are holding back socio-economic development in general. However, with economic development and women's empowerment at the forefront of Australia's aid and foreign policy, we propose to take the opportunity of this new investment to be more ambitious. We aim to identify and scale up effective approaches, and achieve wider impact than just the target beneficiary groups by influencing policies and attitudes to catalyse longer-term change.

The timing is right for this. The Government of Vietnam is consolidating its 16 different National Target Programs (NTPs), which cut across a whole range of sectors, down to just two NTPs focused on rural development and poverty reduction. These are the Sustainable Poverty Reduction Program 2010-2020 led by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) which targets the most disadvantaged areas of the country, and the New Rural Development Program led by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) which aims to graduate better-off communes out of poverty. There is considerable scope for improvement to ensure these NTPs factor in the particular interests of women and ethnic minorities, and make appropriate resources available at local levels for implementation.

Post has been engaging through the Ethnic Minority Working Group, alongside UNDP, World Bank, Ireland, NGOs and other partners, to draw these issues to GoV's attention. The design of our new investment will be well timed to align with and support development of these NTPs. MOLISA has also prepared the National Action Plan 2016-2020 for implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality which aspires to reduce the gender gap in key areas, including increasing access for poor rural and ethnic minority women to economic resources and the labour market. Another positive step in 2015 was MOLISA's publication of a Master Plan for non-economic measurements of poverty, recognising that income should not be the only indicator of poverty.

The policies and programs that have been working for the majority of the population over the past couple of decades are not necessarily on track lift all those remaining poor out of poverty. New approaches may be needed. We aim to encourage recognition of small-scale producers, including women, as (potential) private sector actors with a place in provincial and even national value chains; and to explore how private finance, not just public finance, can be better channelled to reach and serve rural areas including ethnic minorities.

This new program will be complemented by our support through the regional Investing in Women Initiative (IWI), which is aimed at middle-class Vietnamese business women who need a more level playing field to fulfil their potential to contribute to economic growth. This entails improving access to finance and skills for enterprise growth, as well as promoting women's employment and enterprise leadership. With IWI poised to be influential in national policy and social norm change, these two new investments would do well to cooperate at a strategic level, especially on policy dialogue and communications.

Building on Australian experience

This investment is taking the Australian aid program in a new direction, working in new locations and partnerships, which will bring challenges and opportunities. However, it benefits from and builds on Australia's substantial experience of supporting gender equality, sustainable and resilient livelihoods, poverty reduction in ethnic minorities' areas, and agricultural research in Vietnam.

Through our support to Vietnam's poverty program P135 at the national level and in Quang Ngai province (2005–2012), Australia built an international reputation for supporting ethnic minorities in Vietnam. The program has been described as ground-breaking for its supportiveness of community-led development planning at the village level. Through the Integrated Coastal Management Program implemented by GIZ, we support alternative livelihoods for vulnerable communities in the Mekong Delta, with a focus that extends beyond provincial borders to promote a coordinated, evidence-based approach to development planning and investment.

Australia has partnered with NGOs in Vietnam for many years to reach the most vulnerable rural communities. Working through NGOs allows us to promote participatory development, including empowerment of women. NGOs are often well-placed to represent civil society voices, and to mobilise multi-stakeholder coalitions to influence policy dialogue.

The program will draw on Australia's experience through ACIAR and CSIRO of bringing Australian scientists together with Vietnamese technical institutes to identify sustainable practices that can link farmers to

profitable markets. ACIAR's connections in Vietnam's northern mountainous areas, including with ethnic minority women farmers, will be of value to the design.

Australia's strong partnership with the Vietnam Women's Union will stand the program in good stead, given their national-level policy influence, combined with the breadth and depth of their geographic reach and potential to mobilise women at consultation and implementation phases.

This new program will also build on our early experience engaging with the private sector to promote sustainable livelihoods. To date these efforts have been largely focused in the agriculture sector. For example, both GIZ and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) have succeeded in generating interest from private buyers for higher-value eco-branded rice developed through Australian-funded collaborations between farmers, scientists, government and the private sector.

C: Proposed outcomes and investment options (What)

What we will do

We propose to design a program that will take an innovative approach to achieving changes at local, provincial and national levels that empower women to participate more effectively in value chains and get better returns from their on-farm and off-farm work, thus improving the well-being of themselves and their communities and contributing to economic development. Higher incomes for women will only reflect partial success. This must be accompanied by stronger agency for women in decisions about how to use their time and resources, and representation of women's interests in policy and planning. A longer-term aim will be to contribute to changes in attitudes and social norms around gender equality, through evidence and strategic communications, to ensure the benefits are sustained and institutionalised.

Based on analysis undertaken at concept stage, we propose **three headline outcomes** for the program, all of which are inter-linked and intended to be mutually reinforcing:

- 1) **AGENCY:** Improve rural women's engagement in economic decision-making and development planning in the home and at the community-level
- 2) **ACCESS:** Increase rural women's access to markets and ability to engage in higher value, more profitable economic activities
- 3) **INFLUENCE:** Promote development of evidence, policies, planning, investment and attitudes that facilitate outcomes 1 and 2

Below are outlined a series of options that we envisage this investment could support in order to achieve each of the three outcomes. These represent a combination of activities designed to demonstrate early results and tangible benefits for men and women at the household and community level – critical for securing local buy-in, delivering reportable outputs and providing communications opportunities – alongside more innovative engagements whose direct impacts might be harder to measure over the short-term but represent Australia's wider ambitions of changing policy and attitudes.

Outcome 1) AGENCY: Improve women's engagement in economic decision-making and development planning in the home and at the community-level

- By strengthening networks for female producers, e.g. supporting women-only and women-led producer cooperatives and saving-loans groups, and women's participation in existing mixed-gender groups, and assisting women to identify and articulate their specific challenges, needs and priorities
- By facilitating deliberative processes whereby local authorities seek women's input in developing, implementing and monitoring commune-level SEDPs and village-level plans that reflect women's needs and interest, and providing direct funding for priorities identified in SEDPs as in the interests of women (e.g. through innovative community-centred funding mechanisms such as results-based management or citizen report cards)

- By finding ways (including working closely with men) to ensure that activities to increase women's incomes under objective 2 are accompanied by improvements in their decision-making status at home, and do not have unintended negative impacts on women's workloads or relationships

Outcome 2) ACCESS: Increase rural women's access to markets and ability to engage in higher value, more profitable economic activities

- By increasing women's exposure and access to opportunities to increase the value of their economic activities, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors e.g. introducing new methods or technologies that can increase productivity or value-add; supporting off-farm activities that are feasible for women; identifying entry-points in rural markets and beyond to reach wider set of buyers
- By building capacity of women as small private sector actors e.g. training in financial planning, access to finance, business start-up, including general and financial literacy; supporting women to take leadership roles within value chains and negotiate more effectively with market players; enhancing quality or accessibility to women of agricultural extension services
- By supporting women to engage effectively and profitably as employees or contractors of larger private sector entities e.g. through more inclusive standards and practices among agribusiness firms; incentivising private buyers to set up socially responsible alliances with farmers; exploring risk sharing initiatives with agribusiness firms

Outcome 3) INFLUENCE: Promote development of evidence, policies, planning, investment and attitudes that facilitate outcomes 1 and 2

- By generating an evidence base to support policy change and development, including: undertaking research and analysis on barriers to and drivers of change; documenting lessons learned; influencing the research agenda of Australian partners (ACIAR, CSIRO) and others
- By building alliances with influential individuals and organisations that can be champions of change and undertake joint communications efforts, including non-traditional partnerships e.g. with the private sector and multi-stakeholder coalitions
- Developing an advocacy and influence strategy that maps out relevant milestones in the government's agenda at central and provincial levels, e.g. updates to relevant policies and programs with potential for scale-up, and identifies entry-points for targeted technical assistance

Beneficiaries

The target beneficiaries are women, especially those from ethnic minority groups, including but not limited to those from female-headed households, living in Vietnam's disadvantaged remote northern areas.

Indirect beneficiaries will include: the partners and families of target beneficiaries; communities where local economy is stimulated and attitudes shift; local authorities and mass organisations (including VWU); implementing partners including NGOs and research institutes.

What we will not do

This program does not aim to target the poorest of the poor who may be better reached by other measures such as social assistance. Rather, it will aim to identify women who are already economically active, and equip them to access greater benefits from rural markets.

Considerations for design include:

- Establish coherent theory of change, including testing assumptions that underpin proposed outcomes, and propose a performance assessment system
- Evaluate the feasibility of proposed investment options and activities, and priorities among them
- Narrow down the target locations and direct beneficiaries (no more than three provinces)

- Assess capacity and interest of local authorities and other partners, and identify new collaborations

D: Implementation/delivery approach (How and with whom?)

How we will work differently

This represents a substantial investment and the flagship program under pillar 3 of Australia's new AIP for Vietnam 2015-2020. As such, we will be more ambitious than simply funding some traditional partners to implement a series of separate small-scale interventions. To achieve greater impact, we aim to:

- **Link local results to the bigger picture**
 - The design will be based on sound analysis of what has been tried before (by Australia and others), what works and what doesn't
 - The M&E system will build in learning and feedback mechanisms to support flexible and adaptive management, as well as generating evidence that can inform policy dialogue and contribute to Australia's credibility as a valued development partner
 - The design must align with Vietnam's own development plans, and the investment will prioritise disseminating experience and lessons from the local-level to inform provincial and national policies and development planning processes
 - With all sub-activities we will consider the potential for sustainability and scale-up, for example through alternative future sources of finance beyond the life of the program
- **Foster non-traditional partnerships**
 - We will seek to build on lessons learned in fostering multi-stakeholder coalitions of individuals and organisations who can advocate for change
 - We will explore innovative ways to engage with the private sector, including supporting the start-up of micro-enterprises in rural areas, as well as encouraging large private sector entities to operate inclusive practices that are fair to small-holder farmers and rural employees
 - We will seek to partner with high profile public figures who can be champions for change e.g. Vietnamese-Australian TV chef Luke Nguyen
 - At design and implementation stage, we will consult and collaborate closely with whole-of-government partners e.g. ACIAR, AusTrade
- **Communicate innovatively**
 - Entrenched attitudes and expectations about gender differences are the most fundamental barrier to success of this program, and changes are notoriously difficult to catalyse or measure
 - The investment's dedicated communications strategy will not simply be an add-on to raise awareness and visibility of Australian aid; it will be part of the theory of change, with communications used as a tool to achieve development outcomes
 - At the local level, we will encourage partners to pilot innovative communications approaches such as community-led video stories and social media, including working with men
 - Where research is undertaken under the program, we will seek to maximise its relevance and impact for both end-users and policy-makers

Partnerships

To achieve the goals above, we propose to work with a variety of partners who have a proven track record of delivering results for gender equality and women's empowerment among ethnic minority communities in Vietnam's northern mountainous areas, in particular those with expertise and experience promoting sustainable marketed-based approaches to development.

Our direct partnership with the Government of Vietnam in terms of securing approvals for implementation will be at the province level, in order to ensure direct relevance to local socio-economic plans and close

engagement and capacity building for target communities (learning from Australia's very positive experience of partnering direct with Quang Ngai province to support P135 Implementation Support Program). Subsidiary Arrangements will be set up with each province, and to promote ownership and sustainability of the activities we will seek counterpart co-funding.

It will also be important to establish strategic partnerships with central government agencies working on these issues, both because one aim of the local-level achievements will be to inform to national level policy and planning, and also in order to maximise the benefits to the Australia-Vietnam bilateral relationship of this investment. There are a number of implicated GoV agencies (e.g. MOLISA, CEMA and MARD) so the design will need to identify strategic ways to engage them.

Besides government agencies, we would expect this investment to work with a combination of our trusted existing and recent partners – including NGOs, other bilateral and multilateral donors, and the Vietnam Women's Union – as well as setting up a flexible mechanism through which other entities, including technical institutes and private sector, who can be engaged to deliver on the program outcomes.

Delivery options

Various options have been considered. Option 1 is recommended for support.

Option 1: Facility managed by a managing contractor:

The recommended option is to set up a facility with a number of components, which could include but would not be limited to:

- 1) direct delivery of community-level interventions in selected provinces, likely through NGOs
- 2) flexible fund for small grants to be made available to partners or coalitions of partners (e.g. private sector, research institutes, line agencies) with relevant expertise and innovative ideas
- 3) policy dialogue, technical research/advice and advocacy (in collaboration with e.g. key members of Ethnic Minorities Working Group (UNDP, WB, IrishAid); and IWI investment)
- 4) monitoring, evaluation, learning and communications

Under this model, the managing contractor would be responsible for all the procurement and day-to-day operational management and reporting, while the Australian Government's role would be clearly delineated to focus at the strategic, policy dialogue and public diplomacy level.

The **advantages** of this model include:

- Limited management burden for Post: Australia is responsible for only one overall contract, and can therefore focus on strategic engagement
- Coherent program structure: Planning, reporting and communications led by one central unit, with partners receiving a cohesive package of support
- Vertical linkages (from local to central level) and horizontal linkages (between program components) will be strong
- Access to high quality technical specialists to lead on implementation of each component
- Flexibility to commence programming slowly and develop new partnerships and activities as opportunities arise

The **risks** of outsourcing to a managing contractor include the possibility that Australia would lose out on opportunities for decision-making, technical input, knowledge development on the subject matter, and strategic relationship building. These risks will be mitigated by:

- Clear governance structure, with decision-making windows built in for DFAT managers including on selection of partners (the design team should assess the pros and cons of setting up a high

- level Steering Committee including main implicated GoV line ministries)
- Strategic influence and diplomacy plan that builds in role for Australian Embassy
- Role to be written into design for Australia (including both gender specialists and program staff) to provide technical and partnership management advice

Post expects to have the necessary resources and expertise to manage this recommended option from within the Sustainable and Inclusive Development team at Post.

Option 2 : Direct budget support

This option would involve letting the Government of Vietnam set the agenda, through their New Rural Development program and/or the Sustainable Poverty Reduction Program, with Australia providing direct funds to GoV to implement and manage the investment. This option aligns with international best practice on aid effectiveness because it promotes government ownership and capacity^{ix}. In theory this approach could allow us to have influence over development of these national programs, and it could also strengthen Australia's bilateral relationship with key Ministries such as MARD and MOLISA, providing opportunities for policy dialogue and public diplomacy. However, evidence suggests that there have been weaknesses in current approaches to poverty reduction policies and programs, including a top-down approach resulting in slow decision-making; lack of coordination between agencies and fragmentation among sub-projects; national level targets that are not always reflected with corresponding sub-national resources; weak M&E capacity^x. Another risk of this approach would be loss of Australian influence and visibility, resulting in lower public diplomacy gains. For the above reasons, this approach is not recommended.

Option 3: Co-financing with other development partners

There are a number of large poverty reduction projects and programs funded by other bilateral and multilateral donors in Vietnam's northern mountainous areas that are supporting ethnic minorities, e.g. the World Bank loan funding for the Second Northern Mountains Poverty Reduction Project in 6 northern provinces; Irish Aid and UNDP technical assistance and budget support to GoV's Sustainable Poverty Reduction Program; IFAD's loan funding to long-term value chain and poverty reduction projects in Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Cao Bang and Bac Kan. By working with one or more of these partners, Australia could benefit from their technical expertise and resources (including well established systems, long relationship with GoV, and ability to influence GoV policies). Australia could reduce Post's management and technical responsibilities through this approach, as well as sharing risk and avoiding overlap, while nevertheless leveraging greater total financial contributions than if we operate alone. However, the key disadvantage of this approach is to reduce Australia's ownership and identity, as it would be challenging to distinguish Australia's specific contributions from the program's overall achievements. Also, it can be challenging to develop harmonised reporting and M&E processes that meet requirements of different donors. If Post's human resources are under pressure, this would be an appealing option, but given this investment is to be the flagship program under Objective 3 of the AIP, this approach is not our preference. However, collaboration with donors will be important to avoid duplication and maximise our policy impact, so the design should factor in opportunities to coordinate with development partners on identified common interests e.g. through the Ethnic Minority Working Group, and the Australia-World Bank Partnership.

Considerations for design include:

- Management and governance arrangements (including resource implications) i.e. the respective roles of and lines of communication between: DFAT, other Australian agencies, Government of Vietnam key line agencies, local authorities, managing contractor and implementing partners
- Capacity, interest and buy-in of potential partners
- Establishment of an innovative funding mechanism that non-traditional partners including multi-

- stakeholder coalitions and private sector entities can access
- Flexibility so that the investment can be managed adaptively in response to lessons learned and emerging opportunities

E: Risk assessment approach (What might go wrong?)

Developing a substantial new program in a new geographic area, which aims to tackle entrenched development challenges not all of which are fully understood or acknowledged by critical stakeholders, necessarily brings challenges. Outcomes such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘equality’ are notoriously difficult not only to achieve, but also to measure. Promoting innovative approaches and setting up agreements with new untested partners requires a calculated acceptance of the risk that not all the approaches we try will be successful in the ways that we expect, and some may have unanticipated outcomes.

However, this investment overall is identified as LOW risk, as indicated in the Investment Concept Risk Assessment. Key risks may include:

- **Fraud/fiduciary risk:** The decentralised mechanism of the investment puts it at some risk of misuse or corruption during implementation. However, by using a managing contractor, we will be relying on their contracting expertise and financial procedures for the majority of the program, thus major fraud is not likely. Fraud and fiduciary risk management will be part of the criteria for selection of implementing partners.
- **Long GoV approval processes:** Complex requirements by Government of Vietnam may result in delays to mobilisation. In consultation with the Partnership and Aid Effectiveness team at Post, it has been decided to set up agreements at the province level, for efficiency, and we will consult early with GoV at national and provincial levels to seek their advice and ensure buy-in.
- **Fragmentation of program:** In order to maximise flexibility and scope of the investment, and allow us to engage with a variety of new partners, the program is designed to have several different components including a flexible fund for small grants. The risk is that this could spread the investment too thin, and reduce its coherence and impact. Strategic boundaries will therefore be established for the funding mechanism, to ensure the managing contractor and each funded partner are jointly responsible for developing a clear results narrative about their contribution to the program’s overarching objectives.

During development of the detailed design document, a full risk assessment using the DFAT’s aid risk register template will be carried out by the design team. Based on analysis and consultations with GoV authorities, development partners, civil society, and direct beneficiaries, the design team will prepare a risk management matrix. Identified risks and proposed mitigation solutions will be discussed during the Aide Memoire presentation and quality assurance process of the design. High level risks will be escalated into overall Vietnam Program’s Risk Register.

At this stage, there are no major safeguard risks (child protection, displacement and resettlement risks and environmental protection). Those risks if any will be further assessed during the design mission and quality assurance process.

F^{xi}: Proposed design and quality assurance process (What are the next steps?)

Design process

The design will be a DFAT-managed and contractor-led process, managed by the Sustainable and Inclusive Development (SID) team at Post.

The design process will be informed by pre-design scoping and analysis conducted by the SID team,

including desk analysis, consultations with key development partners, and engagement of a local consultant to support a scoping mission to three potential target provinces in December 2015.

The design will be undertaken by a team of 2 international consultants, 1 local consultant, and 1 in-house gender specialist (South East Asia Social Development Advisor). The team will collectively have expertise in gender equality, women's economic empowerment, ethnic minority poverty reduction in Vietnam, agricultural livelihoods and value chains, government of Vietnam systems, design and M&E. Between December 2015 and May 2016, in close collaboration with the SID team, the design team will undertake in-country consultations and analysis, prepare the detailed design document, attend the peer review, and draft a scope of services for the tender process.

Post will also mobilise support from a range of resources to quality assure the design process, including setting up a Reference Group of in-house specialists (including from gender equality, private sector, rural development, and aid effectiveness areas) and external subject matter experts, to see peer review the concept note and detailed design document. The Procurement Section from DFAT Canberra will be engaged from early on to provide advice on the appropriateness of the modality and procurement process.

The final design document is expected to be available for internal peer review by May 2016, aiming to secure approval to go to tender by July 2016, and to have an agreement with a service provider in place by early 2017 to commence implementation.

Quality assurance process

The investment will follow the quality assurance process as set out in the Aid Program Guide, i.e. internal and external independent appraisers (members of the Reference Group) will be requested to provide professional technical appraisal of the detailed design document, referring to DFAT's standard design quality criteria; a peer review meeting will be organised and chaired by the relevant delegate (May 2016); the independent appraisal comments and peer review meeting outcomes will inform the improvement of the detailed PDD, prior submitting to the delegate for final approval to proceed to implementation.

i World Bank. Vietnam Country Gender Assessment

ii The share of workers without labour contracts was higher for women (49.3%) than men (35.5%)

iii Women's representation in the National Assembly has also fallen from 25.76% (2007-2011) to 24.4 (2011-2016)

iv The rate of women ever experiencing physical violence from their husbands was 31.5% in 2010 over one half of all wives experiencing emotional violence at some point in their marriage

v Well Begun, Not Yet Done- Vietnam's remarkable progress on poverty reduction and the emerging challenges- World Bank 2012 Vietnam poverty assessment

vi The Country Social Analysis- Ethnicity and Development in Vietnam

vii Country Social Analysis- Ethnicity and Development in Vietnam- World Bank

viii Ethnic Minority Development in Vietnam: What Leads to Success?- Andrew- Wells Dang

ix Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005)

x A mapping exercise- Poverty Reduction Programs and policies in Vietnam by UNDP

xi Aid Investment managers should refer to the Investment Design Good Practice Guide: DFAT led Design for advice on quality assurance options to help ensure the investment will meet DFAT's Investment Design Quality Standards.