



## Sustainable Livelihood Development and Ethnic Minority Diversity: Vietnam 2012/13

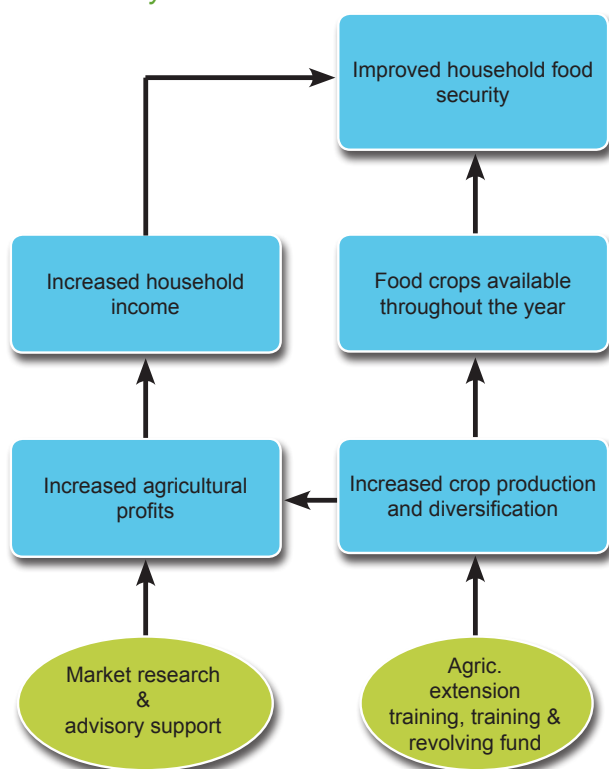
The Sustainable Livelihood Development and Ethnic Minority Diversity project in Lao Cai Province was implemented from 2007 to 2011. Its ambition was to mobilise poor, ethnic minority farmers, the H'mong, Dao, and Tay in particular, into farmer groups and provide them with training, credit and agricultural extension support.

Appreciating that this project also had a number of policy influencing components, this review focuses on the project's direct livelihoods work. Most of the project's activities were concentrated in Saga district, the geographical focus of this review, reaching 13 farmer groups comprising of 271 households.

The primary aim of the project was to improve household food security. Training and agricultural support were provided to increase both crop production and diversification. This was complemented through the setting up of a revolving fund to enable farmers to access credit for agricultural investment purposes. Increased crop production and diversification was to increase the availability of food throughout the year, thereby improving household food security. It was to also bolster agricultural profits and ultimately household income and, in turn, further contribute to improved household food security.

Photo credit: Nguyen Thi Hoang Yen

Figure 1: Theory of change shows how the project is expected to increase household income and food security



## Evaluation Method

To assess the effectiveness of the project, primarily in relation to improving agricultural production and household food security and income, a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design was implemented. This process involved administering surveys to 553 households in 16 villages in Sapa in July/August 2012 – eight targeted by the project and eight purposely matched comparison villages. To reduce bias at the analysis stage, propensity score matching and multivariable regression techniques were used to control for observable baseline differences between the intervention and comparison groups. The effectiveness of the project in relation to a number of key outcomes, such as agricultural productivity and profits, was assessed through this process. The household expenditure data, in particular, informs Oxfam GB's global livelihoods outcome indicator - the percentage of supported households demonstrating greater income, as measured by consumption expenditure per capita.

**Rating key:** ● - Evidence supporting large impact; ● - Evidence supporting more modest impact; ● - Evidence of large impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - Evidence of modest impact, but only for specific sub-groups/measures; ● - No evidence of impact

## Results

There is some evidence that, relative to the comparison group, the project succeeded in encouraging a higher proportion of households belonging to its farmer groups to adopt a number of preferred agricultural practices, e.g. improved methods for rice seeding preparation and planting of both rice seedlings and maize seeds. These households were also relatively more likely to report having better access to farming extension and, to a lesser extent, credit services. However, there is no evidence that this translated into differential improvements in agricultural production and/or profits and, in turn, either household food security or income. Nor did the review find any evidence that the project has improved gender attitudes in general and attitudes towards violence against women in particular. One plausible explanation for the relatively small differences between the intervention and comparison villages in terms of outcomes may be that the project did not offer or generate anything uniquely different than what was simultaneously promoted in other villages in Sapa district. The review also finds evidence suggesting that the marketing component of the project, which is crucial for the translation of improved farm practices into improved agricultural income, was minor and/or not substantially implemented.

Outcome	Rating	Commentary
Outcome 1 – Increased household income	●	No evidence of project impact in relation to Oxfam GB's global livelihoods indicator or other measures of household wealth/income
Outcome 2 – Improved household food security	●	No evidence of positive impact on any of the household food security measures used.
Outcome 3 – Increased agricultural production and profits	●	No evidence that the project increased production of rice, maize or other crops, or increased income through their sale.
Outcome 4 – Increased adoption of preferred agricultural practices	●	Evidence that the project encouraged a small proportion of households in the farmer groups to adopt some promoted agricultural practices.
Outcome 5 – Improved access to services/information	●	Farmer group households reported having better access to extension services and, to a lesser extent, disaster preparedness information, but not other services.
Outcome 6 - Improved gender attitudes	●	No evidence that the project has improved gender attitudes in general and attitudes towards violence against women in particular.

## Going forward

The results of this review have been shared and discussed with the project team and local partners. The team will continue their efforts in supporting poor communities to adapt good agricultural practices and in improving their access to information. Although the reviewed project has been closed, another value chain project has been designed taking the review's main recommendations into consideration. More generally, the team has committed to scaling up their efforts in incorporating dietary and food diversity into the design of their livelihoods projects.