

Case on HITEACO and their Partnership with Tea Growers. CSIP Prose Research Team.

December 2016. Hanoi, Vietnam.

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I. Brief History and Profile of the Company and the Primary Stakeholders

Hiep Khanh Tea Joint-Stock Company (HITEACO) is established in 2007 in Trung Son Commune, Luong Son District, Hoa Bink Province. HITEACO is formerly called The Manufacturing Engineer and Construction Company Ltd and specializes in manufacturing, trading, and mechanical engineering.

In 2009, the company identified the potentials agriculture production, specifically in tea cultivation and processing. They purchased and invested in processing factories with a maximum processing capacity of 2,000 tons per year, equipment, agricultural products, and the latest modern technology.

HITEACO has been established through the traditional experience of a family in processing and trading tea products. Established by founders Mr. Pham Vu Khanh, Chairman of the Management Board; Ms. Nguyen Thi Tham, Executive Director; and Mr. Pham Vu Tuan, a member of the Management Board, HITEACO operates in the cultivating, processing, and exporting of tea products. Mr. Khanh and Ms. Tham hold a combined 18.29 % total share of the company. The remaining capital is divided among family members (33.71%) and other shareholders (48%). The total share of family members accounts to 51% of the total share of the company.

Among the three founders of HITEACO, Mr. Khanh has more experience in the field of mechanical engineering as he was once a manager in an automobile mechanics company. Ms. Tham, as the CEO of the company, has more than 16 years of experience in the field of business and trading tea products. Meanwhile, Mr. Phan Vu Tuan has 20 years of experience in tea trading.

The company started its operations in So La province in 2008 by initially developing a strategic partnership with two processing factories owned by family members of the Tham family in the province. These are Dai Thanh Tea Processing Factory in Chieng Khoa Commune, Moc Chau District and Tay Bac Tea Processing Factory in Ta Xua Commune, Bac Yen District, in Son La Province.

The two primary processing factories are built in a situation where the two districts of the Son La Province are facing difficulties in terms of a low buying price of tea and access to stable market due to unstable export market. This prompted most farming households to replace tea with other agricultural products.

HITEACO saw a potential in the cultivation areas that can provide for the sustainable raw materials for processing activities. The establishment and maintenance of these strategic partnerships is beneficial for HITEACO to have enough input materials for processing, and help the small-scale producers in Son La Province to deal with issues on access to available market.

Prior to its establishment, HITEACO's leaders are not aware of the concept of a social enterprise and are not functioning as one. The concept of a social enterprise was initiated when Ms. Tham joined a training course of social enterprise conducted by CSIP and Oxfam project in 2015.

The training presented HITEACO's leaders with the potentials and roles of a social enterprise in the improvement of the income of small-scale production farmers, who are generally poor and are from the ethnic minority. They also see the value of

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social enterprise in the protection of the biodiversity of the Shan tea in the two districts of Son La Province.

Further, the establishment of a social enterprise within HITEACO is also expected to create a sustainable market for tea products in the Northwest of Vietnam and create additional job opportunities for local labour market.

At present, HITEACO presents and would like to be identified as a business entity that carries a social responsibility of addressing social problems thru their tea production.

Profile of a Social Enterprise

The vision of HITEACO is to become a leading enterprise in the field of production and processing of safe agricultural products in Vietnam. To achieve this, its mission is to supply safe, healthy, and nutritious agricultural products for communities.

At present, HITEACO is producing tea and exporting dried specialty fruit products of the Northwest Vietnam such as Shan teas, herbal teas, dried plums, and dried apricots, among others. Majority of the export revenue of the company accounts to Middle East and European countries.

HITEACO owns and manages a tea processing factory in Hoa Binh and is collaborating with two other independent processing factories in Son La Province owned by Ms. Tham's family members. The three factories dry fresh green tea leaves with a maximum of 10 tons and 15 tons per day for the Ta Xua commune and Chieng Khoa commune, respectively. While the factory in Hoa Binh can sort and package dried tea leaves up to 2,000 ton per year.

Financial performance of the company has improved significantly over the past four years from 2012-2015. Revenues increased from 35.62 billion VND to 58.98 billion VND. The earnings after tax have increased from 126 million VND to 4.8 billion VND. Its total assets has raised from 30.2 billion VND to 93 billion VND.

Strategies and Services to the Poor and Women

The company works with approximately 1,000 small-producers and purchases tea materials from them through a contract. The contract aims to ensure that there is enough sustainable raw materials for HITEACO's processing needs. At present, HITEACO have signed contracts with almost 1,000 small-producer farmer households in Son La and Hoa province.

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Here is a breakdown of the numbers of farmer- households HITEACO have engaged per area:

Commune District	Number of Small-Producer Farmer Households in Contract with HITEACO	Cultivation Areas (in ha)
Chieng Khoa Commune, Moc Chau District	650	517
Ta Xua Commune, Bac Yen District	250	250
Luong Son District, Hoa Binh Province, Quoc Oai, and Chuong My District, Ha Noi	100	100

The small-scale producer farmers and HITEACO are engaged initially through contract of service. The intervention of HITEACO in the business activities in Son La and Hoa Binh province was insignificant initially from the perception of the small-scale producer farmers that resulted to inactive participation.

To address this issue, HITEACO collaborated with local authorities to mobilize and get the participation of the farmers in their tea value chain. The company also provided seedlings and fertilizer support to encourage farmers to work closely with the company. A total of the 70% of total input cost for tea cultivation was provided initially by HITEACO to the households until the beneficiaries realized the greater benefits of working with HITEACO. At present, HITEACO stopped providing for the free seedlings and fertilizer support. They pay for the fertilizers and seedlings expenses for their production.

However, the company continues to provide regular technical assistance to signed contract farmers that also serve as the quality control during the production process. Quality control ensures that the tea products comply with the set quality requirements for the products.

Further, as part of the efforts to enable the small-scale farmers with sufficient knowledge and skills in tea production, the company conducts regular training workshops on cultivation techniques among other topics. Both men and women participate in the training-workshops with women as main target participants. Women are often available at home, while men are often away working. There conduct around two training-workshops per year.

Moreover, HITEACO technical officers provide field monitoring and other technical support. This will ensure that processes and products comply with the technical guidance and regulations. The various technical support of HITEACO lessened the problems of the farmers in the daily production.

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Aside from the support in the production, HITEACO also commits to buy the products of the small-scale producers who have signed a contract, given that their tea products meet the set quality requirements. Price will be negotiated between the farmers and HITEACO with the local market price as the basis. Farmers are allowed to sell their tea products to other buyers. However, most of the farmers choose to sell the fresh tea leaves to HITEACO because of convenience and fair payment.

The tea value chain created by HITEACO benefits both the company and the small-scale producers. The farmers are able to have access to stable market and the company is ensured of enough raw materials for daily processing. As a result, the farmers are secured in investing in tea cultivation and converting all low-value agricultural crops into tea.

Moreover, the company provides a mechanism that provides advance money for farmers who have urgent needs. The amount will be deducted to the sales of tea of the farmer to HITEACO.

II. Outcomes and Impacts

The investment of HITEACO in the development of strategic partnership with the two primary processing factories in Son La province has created breakthrough access to markets for the small-scale production farmers. The farmers had difficulties selling their products before. The buying price of fresh tea leaves is unstable and seasonal.

Moreoften, due to the low demand for fresh tea leaves within the province, tea products are bargained by small traders. These circumstances resulted to farmers reducing the areas of tea cultivation in replacement for other agricultural product with higher economic value.

The tea processing factories acted as the game-changers. At present, the total revenue from the sales of the fresh tea leaves to HITEACO has reached 75 million VND/ day (15 tons x 5,000 VND/kg). Further, the buying price of tea is stable in the past two years. Five years ago, the buying price of tea reached as high as 8,500 VND/kg.

With HITEACO's intervention and assurance that there is a sure buyer of their products, the small-scale producers are more confident in investing in tea cultivation, as well as increasin the cultivation area for tea products. The producers are also following strictly the technical guidance and quality requirement set by HITEACO on their own. It has also become a flagship product in the agriculture strategy of the local government.

Another impact of the company is the creation of alternative jobs for local workers, especially for the ethnic minorities and the poor. It helped address the issues of unemployment for people who lack skills. It also provided alternative job opportunities in the area when there was none before that forces young people to move and find jobs in the big cities. The younger generation also did not see hig economic value from

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agricultural production activities. Because of this, most of the responsibilities for the agricultural activities are handed over to the women, who are left at home taking care of the children.

The intervention of HITEACO provided job opportunities for the local people directly and indirectly. The local poor and the ethnic minorities are able to access a stable job through the establishment of the two primary processing factories. Women, who generally lack the needed skills and who are expected by the society to be responsible for the children and the to work on the agriculture production, benefit also from the intervention as they are provided for alternative means of earning. Men, on the other hand, spend more for the cost of daily living in the big cities even if they can earn more compared to working in the processing factories. The stability of work for the men is not also assured compared to working in the processing factories. These are manifestations that the establishment of the two processing companies provides additional opportunities for both men and women in the area.

The tea processing factories employs a total of 43 full-time and 50 part-time local people workers with the average wage of direct labour of 3,700,000 VND/ person/ month (166 USD/ person/ month). For the administrative staff, they receive a monthly pay of 5,000,000 VND each (225 USD/person/month). These do not include reward bonuses, which are significant to the income of an employee in a private company. The average wage of the local people working for HITEACO is competitive in comparison to the industry's average wage.

Results from the in-depth interviews with some workers and leaders show that their income was increased significantly in comparison to other traditional jobs. The average income of a worker is 180,000 VND or equal to 9 USD/ day in a 20-22 days work in a month. The stable and resonable income earned from HITEACO helped the workers improve their quality of live.

**Story 1: Changes in the life of a female farmer who works
part-time in the processing company**

Ms. Lo Thi Yen, 28 years old, is part of a Thai ethnic minority group. She works as a part-time employee of Dai Thanh Primary Processing Factory, a strategic partner of HITEACO since 2015. She works for the factory during her free time, approximately 10 days monthly. She recieves 180,000 VND (8 USD per day) for an 8-hour working day, with the provision of a higher pay for overtime work. She is also receiving free lunch and dinner. Her monthly average income is 1.8- 2 million VND (80-90 USD/ month). If she works outside of and far from her village, she only recieves 120,000 – 150,000 VND/ day (5-7 USD).

According to Yen, the income from the processing factory is important for her family

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because it is used to pay for the essential daily expenses (food, clothing, and school fee for her children). Since, she is only engaged part-time, she can still find additional jobs near her village. She also doesn't need to move out of her village to earn money.

At present, Yen is happy working as a part-time employee because she has still time to care of her family and do other agriculture production activities. She cultivates 3000m² of tea and sells it to HITEACO. She also tills 10,000m² of corn and takes care of four buffalos. She expressed that this part-time job is helpful for workers who have do not have sufficient knowledge and skills.

(story was captured from the in-depth interview with Lo Thi Yen, Thai ethnic minority group, Tin Toc Village, Chieng Khoa Commune, Moc Chau district, Son La province)

Further, since both men and women do not need to go far to find a job, they will havemore chance and time for tea cultivation activites. The increased economic value from tea cultivation will also give more opportunities for both men and women to earn additional income within their village. The average income from the sales of fresh tea leaves of a tea farmer is 180,000 VND/ day (9 USD/ day) with 20-22 working days monthly. Prior to the establishment of HITEACO's tea factories, farmers are engaged with manual jobs outside of their villages and are only earning around 100,000 VND/ day lower compared to the 140,000- 180,0000 VND/ day they are now earning in the factories.

Story 2: Change in the life of female farmer since she signed-up for the production contract of the processing company

Ms. Vi Thi Bich, 24 year old, is part of a Thai ethnic minority group. She is living in Chieng Khoa commune, Moc Chau district, Son La Province. Her family is experienced in tea cultivation since 2002.

Before, her family only limits the area of

Previously, her family only limit the area of tea cultivation at scale of 1000m² due to unstable market and low price. But since having a processing factory at the village, her family decided to expand the area of tea cultivation up to 3000m².

Her family has officially signed production contract with HITEACO from early 2016. Each month, her family harvests about 1 ton of fresh tea and sell it for the processing factory, with average price of 6.000VND/kg (equal to 0.3 USD). Her family receives about 6 million VND per month (equal to 273 USD). Previously, revenues from tea is unstable, therefore, she has to owe money until harvesting time when she buy

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essential materials and other daily expenses. But now, with a steady income from selling tea to the processing factory, she is able to cover daily expenses with more comfortable. The most significant change in her point of view is that while the current price of fresh tea sold outside the market down low, only about 2,500VND per one kg (equal to 0.1USD), but the processing factory remains committed to buy tea for households who have signed the contract with price of 5000VND per kg (equal to 0.2USD).

In addition, one of benefits that Ms Bich's family has received since signing the contract with the processing factory is that she receives technical support and detailed guidance on care for tea, fertilizing and harvesting from technical officers of the processing company. As a result, the quality of tea have been improved and met the requirement of the market. Comparison with the previous, tea productivity gains about 25% thank to better compliance with technical process guided by the company. On the other hand, the value of the tea product was also increased in comparison to normal market price.

(the story was captured from interview Ms. Vi Thi Bich, 24 year old, small scale production farmer, Chieng Khoa Commune, Moc Chau district, Son La province)

In addition, since having two processing factories in these areas, the tea cultivation has become a main agriculture activity in those communes and districts of Son La and Hoa Binh provinces. The development of tea production will bring more benefits to the local people, especial women. The most important impact on community's awareness is that tea cultivation has been considered by local authority and local people as key agriculture activities to achieve its sustainable development goals. According to in-depth interview with local authority representative in Chieng Khoa commune showed that the establishment of the processing factory will keep small production farmers stay with tea production because of having stable market and technical supports provided by the factory will help small scale farmers overcome technical difficulties.

Story 3: Assessment of local authority on changes of local people

The establishment of tea processing factory brings a significant change for Chieng Khoa commune. Although people in Chieng Khoa has experience in growing tea from many years, but the price was fluctuate in the part make local people do not interest in expanding area of tea cultivation. But since the factory established in 2008, small scale production farmers started to care about tea production because there is a stable consumption in their village. As a result, the area of tea cultivation has been increased from 172ha before having factory to 300ha. The tea cultivation has been considered as one of key agriculture activities of Chieng Khoa commune. Currently,

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tea production contributes up to 50% of total income of households in Chieng Khoa commune. Over 60% of 1172 households now invests in tea production.

The expansion of tea cultivation area not only provides better income for production farmers, but also create stable jobs for local people, especially women. Many women have low working skills and they have more free time after harvesting season so that they could spend free time to taking care of tea instead of moving out of village. At present, many family decided to expand their cultivation area that provide women with alternative jobs and keep them stay at home with agriculture production.

There is another change since having processing factory is that the relationship between production farmers and the processing factory become closer and closer because the factory is located near village. Thus, local people could receive immediately technical supports from the factory when needed and the local people also actively seek the support when they have any technical problem. This support not only helps farmers do their cultivation activities effectively, but also ensure that the tea produced meets the rigorous requirements of market.

(The story was captured from in-depth interview with Mr. Dinh Cong Nguyen, former chairmen of Chieng Khoa commune, period 2004 – 2015)

Capacity building for small production farmers in general and women in particular is another positive impact created by HITEACO on the lives of production farmers in Son La and Hoa Binh provinces. There are approximately 200 turns of households have been trained on tea cultivation techniques through training course, workshops and community learning and sharing meetings. In which, women takes more than 60% of total participants who have been participated in such capacity building activities. By participating in production segment of tea value chain led by HITEACO, the small scale production farmers have increased their technical knowledge and skills on tea cultivation as well as improved their knowledge and skills to access to stable markets for their tea products. Thanks to techniques and skills provided by HITEACO, the small production farmers have changed their practice by promoting good practices in tea production in order to meet requirements of market. For example, they have changed their habits of using chemical fertilizers into using bio-fertilizers in tea production. They also avoid to use pesticides and if need they will strictly follow the instructions given by HITEACO. Currently, three production areas of HITEACO has not received certificate of Viet-Agriculture Good Practice (GAP) and global GAP, but HITEACO and small production farmers already strictly follow all criteria of Viet GAP and Global GAP. HITEACO is planning to get this certification in end 2017.

In addition, the company also help local people to change their business mind towards market orientation or customer driven. In the past, the small production farmers have long experience with subsistence, therefore, they produce tea in their own way, and they did not follow requirements of market in regards to the quality and safe production

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practice. Since involving in production segment of the tea value chain and receiving technical supports from HITEACO, the small scale production farmers have changed their mind. Currently, they build good relationship with HITEACO towards co-benefits sharing in tea production activity instead of keeping their own benefits only. At present, many farmers shared that they only get more benefits if HITEACO are successful in their business so that they has to follow strictly all technical guidance from HITEACO to ensure the quality of their tea product. They also know that development of long term relationship with HITEACO is the best way to create stable market for their own tea product. In the view of HITEACO, the small production farmers are treated as strategic partners in ensuring the quality of the product and providing stable raw materials for processing, therefore, HITEACO will respect and recognize the contribution of the small scale producers in the tea value chain. The relationship between small production farmers have been change from normal service contracts to strategic partnership by promoting the co-benefit sharing mechanism. Both parties see high potentiality to develop this relationship to bring more benefits to both sides.

Detailed WEL Outcomes

By involving in tea value chain, the small production farmers, especially, the poor and ethnic women have more voices and powers in making decisions related to tea cultivation activities. By involving training events supported by HITEACO, the female small production famers have gained more knowledge and techniques on tea cultivation so that they have more confidence to discuss with husband to make decisions related to production activities. This is big change since women participated in such capacity activities. In fact, many women have experience in tea production, but they do not have enough confidence to make decisions in this activity. While men are often working far from home and they are not involved directly in tea production, but they are still expected to make all economic related decisions because they are considered as family leaders. This perception makes women are not able to make influence through the decision making process. Since having technical support from HITEACO, the women not only gain more knowledge and skills and they also improve their confidence to discuss and make decisions about tea production, such as, selection of seeding and technical options to make high quality of tea and borrow loan from bank. As a result, having more experience also mean that women can make their decisions.

By involving in tea value chain, the economic leadership of women have been changed significantly. It could be seen through the fact that earning more income from tea production helps to promote women roles. Women have received more respects and recognitions from men in particular and other family members in general. In the past, women are expected by men and community that they are caregivers for other family members and taking care of children. Men are expected to do economic leaders with family. Even women had been involved in many agriculture activities, but these activities brought low economic values to family, therefore, the economic leadership of women are not respected within family and community. In collaboration with HITEACO, the tea production now bring more benefits and high economic values, thus, the roles and voice of women have been changed. It means that giving women job opportunities will make

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them have more power in making decisions and promote their economic leadership and economic roles for the family and community.

In addition, by giving women economic opportunities and strengthen economic leadership for women, it makes women and men have more equal in sharing domestic works. In community view, domestic works are considered as women roles and in practice women are main persons who take these tasks in the family. By involving into tea production and this production bring more income for women, the role and position of women in the family has been changed. The production requires more investment of time from both women and men. Thus, men have to share production works with women. When women earn more from tea production, their voice and confidence have been improved. The discussion with small production farmers show that there is a share between men and women in production work. The number of hours for men to do domestic works have been increased from 1 hours to 2 hours since involving in tea value chain, while the numbers of hours for women to do domestic works have been reduced from 4 hours to 2 hours. Both male and female small farmers also see that sharing domestic works not only show gender equality in family, but also is the way to promote economic leadership for women. When women reduce burden at home, they will have more chances to develop their economic leadership. Therefore, they will contribute more to household's economy.

Story 4: Change in economic leadership of female farmers

Ms.Bich and her family have received some new knowledge and skills of tea cultivation provided by the processing factory, for example, caring, fertilizing and harvesting techniques since signing production contract with the processing factory. Before, nobody guides her family about these techniques. She cultivate tea based on her own experience, therefore, tea does not meet requirement of market. Up to date, she has been engaged in 2 technical training courses, which provided her basic knowledge and skills of planting, caring, fertilizing and harvesting, to ensure tea product meets requirement of HITEACO in particular and follow market driven in general. Thanks to participation in training courses, the technical knowledge and skills of tea caring, fertilizing and harvesting has been improved and the products meet the requirement of market.

Previously, all technical issues and economic investment in her family are decided by her husband, but now, thanks to technical knowledge and skills learned from training courses, she gained more confident to talk to her husband about technical issues in tea production. At the same time, he has improved her knowledge and better understanding prior to the decision to invest, expand the tea area of her family were also be discussed between husband and wife. Her opinions are respected husband than before and the family's decision is based on the spirit of the two parties to

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discuss and reach a consensus.

Due to expansion of cultivation area, both her husband and she had invested more time for tea production. The household's domestic work are also shared between husbands and wife. This share completely changed compared to the past, when her husband work mainly away from home. All household tasks were put on her shoulders. In her opinion, the tea production brings her family and other families in her village some significant change, not only economic values, but also social values like the share housework between husband and wife and creating alternative jobs for unskilled people like her.

(the story was captured from in-depth interview with Ms. Vi Thi Bich, small scale production farmer, Chieng Khoa commune, Moc Chau district, Son La province)

With a co-benefit mechanism for collaboration, the relationship between small production farmers and HITEACO have become tightly. It was developed from service contract into mutual benefit partnership. Result of in-depth interviews with production farmers and HITEACO leaders show the fact that the perception of both HITEACO and local farmers about the collaboration relationship between farmers and HITEACO has been changed significantly. According to production farmer's point of view, they said they are willing to work closely with HITEACO and they hope that the company have more success in business so that they also get benefits. From HITEACO side, they consider production farmers as a reliable partner in ensuring the quality of enterprise products.

Analysis

HITEACO has been selected as a good case study on social enterprise in Viet Nam because their contributions to address social issues and promote women economic leadership (WEL) in agriculture value chain is quite clear in comparison with others. These contributions could be seen through some positive impacts on lives of the small scale producers, who are involved in tea production activities. These impacts will contribute to demonstrate benchmarks for transformational partnerships in agricultural value chain interventions gained by social enterprises. It is same to other enterprise, the perception of social enterprise was not clear by leaders or founders at the beginning, but this idea has been come up since after they participate in training workshops on social enterprise. Most of common aspects of social enterprise is contribution to address social issues during implementation their production activities or service provision.

Fist of all, HITEACO established tea processing facilities in the rural areas, where target farming households are located. They equally engage both women and men as household partners in value chain by signing contract with them and providing an initial incentive package of seedlings and fertilizers, covering 70% of the farming inputs

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required. HITEACO also commit to by all products for small scale production farmers. The involvement of men and women in this value chain has **progressively improve the position women and men small producers to reap greater benefits from their engagement in value chain development over time.** Both men and women small producers gained more knowlegde and skills on tea cultivation so that they are confident to invest these knowledge and skills in cultivation. As a result, their productivity are increased. The most important thing is that they gain better price and stable market for their fresh tea product because HITEACO committed to buy all volum of fresh tea products for signed contract households so that these households do not have risks in access to market. Before, the smale producers faced with many difficulties, such as, nobody provide them technical supports so that their productivity are low and they also faced with unstable markets where the small scale production farmers are always controled by small traders.

HITEACO is also a best practice for case study because the tea value chain led by this company could be considered as one of success value chain in the market, where co-benefit sharing mechanism between the company and production farmers have been developed. This collaboration relationship have been developed in the way that both company and farmers gained their interests. Although the participation of local farmers into tea value chain is quite limited and their participation is only stopped at production segment, but they show high potential to develop the long strategy of collaboration towards strategic partnership development of tea value chain.

Not only develop good partnership during current production service contracts, HITEACO also has a long term vision to develop strategic partnership with small production farmers in tea value chain. To do this, HITEACO is trying to develop the relationship towards co-benefits mechanism and promote community ownership and integrity in producing and trading tea products. At present, HITEACO is in the process of initial public offerings to mobilize more financial resources for company development. According to view of HITEACO leaders, when the company has more financial resource, they can address social issues better than now. It is the best way to balance between business and mission to address social issues when HITEACO plan to become a social enterprise. Especially, HITEACO leaders also think about development of mutual understanding and strategic partnership with small scale production farmers by seeing high potential to encourage small farmers to buy share of company. This share will make this relationship to be stronger in the way of co-benefits sharing rather than simple service contract.

HITEACO also contribute to **pave the way for the empowerment of women and men small producers to become actors in their own development and that of their community and sector** by building their capacity and maximise their experience and available resources for community development. Before having HITEACO, the local people did not see tea cultivation can help them reduce poverty even the both men and women has had long experience in cultivation of tea in this area. Both men and women did not see the potentiality of poverty reduction from agriculture activities in general and tea cultivation in particular. More and more men leaving their village to seek job

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opportunities outside of their village. Women stay at home with child care burdens on their shoulder and do agriculture activities as a supplement income resource for their family. In general, men control the economic development of their family and women are controlled by men in their family. The contribution of women for economic status of the family is weak. But the strengthening the participation of both men and women in tea value chain not only help them to have enough capacity and confidence to do this job, but also empower women to promote their economic roles in economic development. By giving them a chance to participate as one main actors in the tea value chain, they have chance to make their own decisions for household economic development. At community level, the introduction of tea production and make tea production become a main agriculture activities will provide better job and income source for women. Therefore, the contributions of women at community are also improved.

In regards to gender equality, HITEACO is best practice for case study because they not only provide job opportunities for female workers, but also by giving part-time job opportunities, ensuring stable markets for tea product made by small scale production farmers and support to build their capacity on cultivation techniques help small scale production farmers to have enough confidence to make their own decisions in the cultivations and have more power to make decisions related to investment in tea cultivation within their family. The power relationship between husband and wife have been changed very much. Women and men have more equal in making decisions related to tea cultivation which was mostly made by men.