

Facilitation of intra-ASEAN trade through the use of technical regulation and standards based management systems

The Strengthening ASEAN Standards and Conformity Assessment Systems Project, funded under the AusAID ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program (AADCP) Program Stream commenced in August 2004 and concluded in May 2007.

Throughout the three-year project duration a number of activities were implemented focusing on standards and conformity infrastructure within all ASEAN Member Economies, but with an emphasis on Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV).

The goal of the project was to: 'strengthen ASEAN economies by facilitating the free flow of intra-ASEAN trade through the elimination of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) to be made possible by adopting a harmonised system of standards and conformity assessment of goods'.

The purpose of the project was to: 'facilitate the development of the legal, institutional physical and technical capabilities and capacity of ASEAN member countries, particularly the new members, to identify, design, adopt and manage a harmonised standard and conformity assessment system'.

StanCert Pty Ltd in association with its partner PDP Australia Pty Ltd was awarded an extension to continue the activities of the project. This extension focused on the needs of CLMV countries and sought to assist them to: i) support the implementation of CLMV national development models; and ii) enhance the capacity of regulators to use standards and conformity assessment procedures in select priority sectors.

This objective built upon the urgent priorities identified at sub-regional (CLMV level) and national and regional focal point and sector Working Group levels. It met a critical demand to continue the development of conformity assessment infrastructures in the CLMV Mutual Recognition Agreements in key priority sectors.

Project Achievements

The project increased the capacity of ASEAN members economies to engage in better inter-ASEAN and international trade. While the project strengthened the standards, conformity, regulatory and metrology infrastructure across all member economies, the biggest potential impact came from CLMV countries, where an improved performance in their respective national standards development activities has been seen. Not only has there been an increase in the national standards developed, but also in the number of these that are aligned with international standards. The project has seen improvements in regulatory, metrology and conformance knowledge levels and expertise. It also gave ASEAN member economies the capacity to cascade this knowledge and expertise within their countries through the train-the-trainer initiatives.

The project delivered a number of achievements during its four-year lifecycle. In particular it achieved a greater understanding by ASEAN member countries of the importance of:

- managing a harmonised standard and conformity assessment system;
- increasing intra-ASEAN participation in international standards development; and
- strengthening regional economies by facilitating the free flow of intra-ASEAN trade by eliminating technical barriers.

Project Contribution to Regional Efforts

The impacts and benefits created through the delivery of key activities included:

- increased recognition of the importance of standards and conformity assessment systems both nationally, regionally and internationally;
- better understanding of key areas for improvement within standards development, good regulatory practice and the need to further strengthen current practices established key intra-ASEAN contacts and relationships;
- the introduction of general basic level best practice principles and knowledge in standards development and internationalisation, development models, good regulatory practice, and international standards accreditation and certification practices;
- the delivery of proven best practice processes and structures;
- provision of guidance and direction to support next steps and activities; and
- a focus on key issues and concerns of CLMV countries.