



Accelerating Women's Advancement in Intellectual Property (IP) in Lao PDR



The upgraded AANZFTA, through a dedicated Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) chapter, creates new opportunities for MSME participation in regional trade.

Strengthening access to Intellectual Property (IP) systems is an important part of this agenda. For many MSMEs, especially those owned by women, greater familiarity with IP tools can help protect innovations, build recognisable brands, and better position their businesses to benefit from regional trade agreements such as the AANZFTA.

The Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) initiative, through the AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP), supported Lao PDR deliver tailored IP support to women-led MSMEs across 11 provinces. Through trainings, one-on-one mentoring, and direct assistance, the project supported more than 140 participants (73% women) to gain the technical skills and confidence to leverage IP tools.

What Was Delivered?

National and Regional Events

2023

World IP Week (November 2023)

ten women entrepreneurs showcased products and shared their IP journeys.

2024

Regional Educational Workshop (March 2024)

Delivered technical training to 56 participants (72% women) on trademark law, branding, industrial design, and IP enforcement.

Targeted Trademark Development Assistance

- **Participant Selection**

Fourteen women-led MSMEs representing **11 provinces** were selected through a competitive call.

- **Mentorship and Capacity Building**

Two in-person workshops (held in June and November 2024) and five months of **one-on-one coaching** supported selected women-led MSMEs through every stage of the trademark registration process.

- **Additional Support**

To **strengthen their export readiness**, participants received brand audits, packaging upgrades, and digital marketing advice.

- **IP Booklet Launch and Showcase (December 2024)**

Allowed participants to showcase their upgraded products and launched a user friendly IP booklet highlighting registered trademarks and success stories.



What were the Outcomes?

The activities strengthened protection and market recognition for women-owned MSMEs, allowing them to develop and distinguish their products for domestic and international markets.

Supported women-led MSMEs to strengthen the value of their Products

The selected **14 women-led MSMEs** successfully developed new brand identities and filed trademarks, showcased in the IP Booklet.



Increased confidence and capacity to leverage IP tools to improve business processes

- Participants who received trademark development assistance reported an increase in technical confidence from an average rating of 2.63/5 to 3.39/5.
- 94% of workshop participants indicated increased knowledge and understanding of IP tools, approaches and best practices.
- 94% of workshop participants specified they would apply new knowledge and skills to their own work.

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I have expanded my product range after joining the program. With a proper brand name, logo, and registered IP, my products have increased in value and market recognition. I have also started using online platforms as new distribution channels.”

— **Mrs. Phin PANYATHONG** – Pun Thong Brand (natural dyed cotton fabrics)

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Embedded Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles across delivery

- 96% of participants across workshops indicated increased knowledge of the relationship between GEDSI factors and trade.
- Prioritised the engagement and support of organisations of people with disabilities, including one MSME from a disability-focused handicraft group that successfully developed a trademark.

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As a disabled person, I'm grateful to be selected for this programme. It helped me understand the importance of IP. I now have a registered logo and trademark for my business.”

— **Mrs Soukitta Sisoulath**, Disabilities Handicraft Group of Luang Prabang

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About RT4D

The \$48.7million Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) initiative, funded by both the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, assists ASEAN Member States (AMS) in meeting their commitments and realising the advantages offered by the Agreement establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RT4D supports AMS in benefitting from an open, free and rules-based trading system.

Through the AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP) and the RCEP Implementation Support Program (RISP), RT4D provides tailored support to enhance the capabilities of ASEAN Member States by strengthening skills, building networks, facilitating policy options and ensuring that trade benefits everyone, including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), women and people with disabilities.

The Regional Trade for Development Initiative:

- provides ASEAN with access to world class technical expertise to support economic cooperation activities.
- delivers economic cooperation activities, working closely with ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Secretariat.
- has a strong focus on less developed ASEAN economies to ensure that it responds to the different needs and readiness of ASEAN.
- facilitates implementation of the provisions of selected FTAs to support inclusive development outcomes.



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