

Communications Package & Business Roundtables on the AANZFTA Upgrade



The upgraded AANZFTA, which includes a dedicated Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSME) chapter, creates new opportunities for MSME participation in regional trade. Enhancing the knowledge and capacity of MSMEs to utilise and benefit from the opportunities created by Free Trade Agreements is an important part of this agenda.

The Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) initiative, through the AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP), provided targeted assistance to businesses, including MSMEs, women-led businesses and people with disabilities, on the benefits of the AANZFTA Upgrade. This included the delivery of MSME-focused communication materials and business roundtables in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam.

These seven activities reached more than 750 stakeholders from business and government, fostering stronger public-private dialogue and ensuring that trade benefits everyone, including MSMEs, women and people with disabilities.

What Was Delivered?

MSME-Focused Communications Materials were co-designed with MSMEs to maximise accessibility, relevance, and usability, which included:

Key Outcomes Brief

providing a summary of the AANZFTA Upgrade.

Four Thematic Briefs

covering Goods, Services, Investment, Trade and Sustainable Development and Digital Trade outcomes.

MSME Operational Guide

providing practical business guidance, tutorials and case studies on how to access and apply the Upgrade's benefits.

Business Engagement Roundtables were attended by 757 attendees from all AANZFTA Parties.

- The roundtables aimed to foster public-private sector dialogue and increase awareness and promote the utilisation of the AANZFTA Upgrade among MSMEs (328 attendees), women-led businesses (47 attendees) and persons with disabilities (29 attendees), ensuring the Agreement’s implementation benefits everyone.
- The roundtables were all held in ASEAN Less Developed Economies (LDEs), strengthening the skills, knowledge and capacities of LDE institutions and businesses to implement the AANZFTA.

Lao PDR 04 June 2024, Vientiane

Focused on understanding trade barriers and encouraging Lao businesses utilisation of the Upgrade in in sectors that include agriculture and handicrafts.

135
Attendees

Women **44%**



Viet Nam 10 Jun 2024, Hà Nội

Focused on building awareness of barriers to trade and making recommendations that support Viet Nam business utilisation of the Upgrade.

110
Attendees

Women **61%**



Regional Dialogue 21 Sep 2024, Vientiane

Held at the sidelines of the 2024 AANZFTA Economic Ministers Meetings, focused on facilitating dialogue between public and private sector stakeholders from AANZFTA Parties on maximising the Upgrade’s benefits.

247
Attendees

Women **50%**



Cambodia 28–29 Apr 2025, Phnom Penh

Focused on addressing trade-related business needs and enhancing Cambodian business utilisation of the Upgrade’s goods, services, investment and e-commerce benefits.

265
Attendees

Women **34%**



Total Engagement

Accross all four stakeholder events

757
Attendees

Women **45%**



What were the Outcomes?

Significant increase in awareness, understanding and application of the AANZFTA Upgrade among businesses and government officials.

- 82.5% of participants reported that materials and information shared were relevant to their work and needs.
- 89.3% participants reported increased knowledge and understanding of the Upgrade’s objectives and benefits.
- 85.56% of participants reported they would likely apply what they learned, demonstrating changes in knowledge translate into behavioural change.

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As a Cambodian business owner with aspirations to export our local products, I find this AANZFTA truly beneficial. I'm very excited to be part of this business roundtable and gain such helpful knowledge today. My sincere thanks to the Ministry of Commerce and RT4D for organising this crucial event.

— Mrs Khan Sokchan, Golden Egg Enterprise

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

- Roundtable planning and delivery prioritised the engagement and participation of women-led MSMEs (47 total attendees) and people with disabilities (29 attendees).
- 75% of attendees reported increased understanding of GEDSI issues relevant to AANZFTA implementation.

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As an entrepreneur, it's crucial for me to understand the cooperation offered by the FTA, including its benefits and conditions, especially important to know how entrepreneurs with disabilities like me can benefit from it.

— Ms. Um Amraroeth, Executive Director of SAORI¹

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Fostered stronger and more sustained connections between public and private sectors.

Roundtables facilitated discussion between policymakers (41% of attendees) and businesses (43% of attendees) on the issues businesses encounter when utilising the AANZFTA. This included officials indicating that trade compliance related issues raised by businesses would inform future national AANZFTA implementation roadmaps.



¹ SAORI is an organisation that promotes economic empowerment and social inclusion for people with disabilities through vocational training and hand weaving skills development.

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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