

ENABLING THE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF LAO PDR INTO ASEAN - PHASE III

Project ID: 00085761

Project Description

Lao PDR joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July of 1997. Integration into the ASEAN community has brought both opportunities and challenges for Lao PDR.

In terms of opportunities, Lao PDR has experienced an increase in trade and investment since its integration, as well as an increase in tourism. Moreover, technical assistance and human resource development delivered by ASEAN member states, other development partner countries and international development agencies has also been a positive evolution resulting from ASEAN integration.



Outreach activity: Dissemination of ASEAN-related information at the Morning Market in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Photo: Lao National Television.

Project Summary:

- Duration: April 2013 – December 2015
- Geographic coverage: Vientiane Capital
- Focus Area: Poverty Reduction
- Implementing partners: ASEAN Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR
- Websites: www.la.undp.org/content/laopdr/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/enabling-the-effective-integration-of-lao-pdr-into-asean.html

Despite these valuable developments, Lao PDR has also encountered significant challenges resulting from ASEAN membership. Primary challenges are low capacity of Government officials to manage the complex process of integration and limited understanding of costs and benefits of ASEAN integration across public and private sectors. Ensuring comprehensive understanding of ASEAN integration among policy-makers and economic actors is necessary to ensure that all potential benefits from ASEAN integration are capitalised and the challenges are well managed.

With the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) set to be completed by the end of 2015, the Government of Lao PDR has requested UNDP to continue supporting the smooth integration of the country into ASEAN, after the end of the phase II project. With fast approaching formation of the Economic Community, it is more crucial than ever to address challenges in terms of competitiveness of the Lao PDR labour market, the attractiveness of its business environment, its macroeconomic stability and other related concerns.

Therefore, there is a strong need for Lao PDR to continue to build the Government and private sector's understanding of the

complexities of integration, as well as to increase their ability to access information so that both the challenges and opportunities of ASEAN and Economic Community integration can be managed.

Main Objectives and Outcomes

The main objective of this project, now in its third phase, is to raise awareness of ASEAN and AEC-related concerns and strengthen the information distribution process to the Government, private sector and general public at both central and local levels. Since its first phase, this project has provided significant assistance to the Government in effectively managing its integration into the ASEAN community to minimise inconvenience and maximise benefits, especially for poor and vulnerable groups in rural areas.

This project works directly with the ASEAN Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for informing all people of Lao PDR of ASEAN-related news and development.

Given the improved knowledge and capacity of the Government, this third phase of the project focuses on sharing ASEAN-related information to business groups, students and the general public through workshops, outreach activities and mass media, while also conducting studies on ASEAN and Economic Community- related topics.

- Increasing awareness among Government officials, the business community and general public on ASEAN political and economic issues through workshops, ASEAN anniversary events and other public awareness-raising activities.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs outreach strategy has been finalised to serve as a guideline for the systematic dissemination of ASEAN information to the public and private sectors.
- ASEAN-related documents are regularly collected, summarised, interpreted, translated and uploaded to the ASEAN webpage on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.
- Student forums, debates and speeches were organised with the National University of Lao PDR to increase the awareness of the general public, particularly youth, on the benefits and challenges of Lao PDR’s integration into ASEAN.
- A youth-focused quiz has been developed for the ASEAN Facebook page to increase knowledge.
- A study on the linkage between ASEAN integration and Human Development is underway.



A 'Seminar on the Outcome of the 24th ASEAN Summit: Opportunities and challenges for Lao PDR's preparation for ASEAN Community in 2015' was held in Champasak Province as part of the preparation for ASEAN integration. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR

The ASEAN phase III project has played an important role in increasing national commitment to the process of Lao PDR’s integration into ASEAN while also strengthening capacity to coordinate ASEAN affairs within the Government of Lao PDR. Some of the significant achievements so far are:

Funding:

- Total project budget: USD 240,000
- Donors: UNDP USD 240,000
- 2014 delivery: USD 79,797

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