

Lao ADVANCE Project



LAO-09-012

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Chanyut Nitikitpaiboon
GDO USAID RDM, Asia (RDM/A)

FROM: Matthew Reisman
Project Director
Contract No. 486-I-00-07-00008-00, Task Order 02

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SUBJECT: Lao BTA/WTO Project Quarterly Report: October – December 2008

The Assistance to Lao BTA Compliance and WTO Accession (Lao BTA/WTO Project) program is the second task order awarded under the ASEAN Development Vision to Advance National Cooperation for Economic Integration (ADVANCE), a five year indefinite quantity contract of the U.S. State Department and U.S Agency for International Development.

CURRENT STATUS OF ALL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS

For the fourth quarter of 2008, the Lao BTA/WTO Project's leaders undertook a short trip to Vientiane to discuss Phase II work plan development supplemented by an additional trip to transition staff and further develop activities; submitted a briefing paper on GATS Enquiry Point to MOIC; initiated work on FTPD's website; and accelerated preparation efforts for the National Assembly Workshop slated for the first quarter of 2009.

Project highlights for third quarter, October – December 2008, include:

Short trip to Vientiane to discuss Phase II work plan and ongoing activities (October 15 - 17). During a trip to the region, Former Project Director, Ms. Waite, took advantage of her proximity visiting Vientiane October 15-17 to discuss the Phase II work plan as well as progress on ongoing activities. Work plan items that benefited from further discussion/development included the FTPD website and plans for the National Assembly Workshop on WTO Accession and BTA Compliance.

Briefing note on Establishing a GATS Enquiry Point. Approval was requested in late September for Peter Collins, a former Deputy Assistant USTR for Services, to undertake a short technical

consultancy to research and draft a briefing note on establishing a GATS Enquiry Point as part of Laos' WTO accession requirements. The draft briefing note was submitted to the MOIC for review in mid-October. Mr. Collins is currently revising the draft based on MOIC's requested changes.

Initial development work on FTPD Website (October 26 - 31). On October 26 - 31st website development consultant Peter Miller conducted a site visit of FTPD and collaborated directly with the FTPD Website Task force executing a needs assessment for the design and development of the FTPD Website. Based upon this assessment Mr. Miller's identified an appropriate web developer, Cyberia, for FTPD. Mr. Miller will continue to coordinate with FTPD and Cyberia and monitor this activity's progress.

Activities development and leadership transition trip to Vientiane (December 8 - 12). New Project Director, Mr. Matthew Reisman and former Project Director, Ms. Victoria Waite traveled to Vientiane in mid-December to further develop the Phase II work plan, discuss format and logistics of the National Assembly Workshop in greater detail, and to formally transition leadership of the project from Ms. Waite to Mr. Reisman.

Preparations for the National Assembly Workshop on WTO Accession and BTA Compliance. In December, the Laos BTA/WTO Project accelerated preparations for the National Assembly Workshop on WTO Accession and BTA Compliance. During this period the project established a working outline of workshop activities, identified a field of international experts as well as Vietnamese and Cambodian officials and experts available to serve as presenters, and coordinated with EDC and MOIC on logistical planning and potential workshop venues.

Other Work Plan Activities.

- The IPR assessment was postponed pending further clarifications by both the USG and the GoL on the precise objectives of IPR activities.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project staff and MOIC are doing their best to implement project activities as timely as possible. Distance, the lack of an in-country advisor, and limited capacity at MOIC sometimes slow progress on activities. The Project Director has discussed with USAID the possibility of sending advisors to Laos for extended periods and is presently exploring options for doing so.

OTHER ISSUES

There are no other issues to report at this time.