

Laos BTA/WTO Project



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M E M O R A N D U M

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COTR, Laos BTA/WTO Project, USAID RDM, Asia (RDMA)

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Contract No. 486-I-00-07-00008-00, Task Order 02

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SUBJECT: Laos BTA/WTO Project Quarterly Report: April 2009 – June 2009

The Assistance to Laos BTA Compliance and WTO Accession (Laos 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

In the second quarter of 2009, the Laos BTA/WTO Project successfully implemented Part II of the Fact Sheet workshop; initiated hiring of a local Project Analyst and discussed implementation of ongoing and future work plan activities; confirmed the Intellectual Property Rights activity slated for early August of 2009; completed the roundtable discussion on the telecommunications assessment; proposed an outline for the Lao export guides; continued progress on the Trade website; and accelerated efforts for defining and implementing the Trading Rights and Public Private Dialogue activities.

Project highlights for the second quarter, April - June 2009, include:

Implemented a successful Part II of the Fact Sheet writing workshop. On April 28-29, the project sponsored the second of a two-part fact sheet writing workshop that engaged participants in one-on-one sessions yielding thirteen (13) finalized trade-related fact sheets, which was three (3) more than the activity target. Communications specialists trained over fifteen staff members from five departments of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC) on how to write trade-related fact sheets for public consumption in order to ensure all stakeholders remain informed and involved in Laos' domestic reform and liberalization process. These fact sheets will be housed on the Foreign Trade Policy Department's new website when it is finished.

Initiated hiring of a local project analyst and discussed implementation of work plan activities. In May, project coordinator Kim Martin visited Vientiane. She accomplished two main tasks while there. First, she started the hiring process for a local project analyst. Ms. Martin established the recruitment process for the Project Analyst with the FTPD and EDC and finalized the position's TOR for publication in the local newspapers. Second, she discussed with Lao counterparts how best to insure project results, emphasizing the importance of tracking work plan implementation progress, keeping as close to on schedule as possible and of trying to expedite an alternative work plan activity to compensate for a significant delay of any activity. During Ms. Lojewski's trip to the region in June, she and FTPD representatives interviewed several potential candidates. The project is currently negotiating an offer to a top candidate.

Solidified Intellectual Property Right activity. During Ms. Martin's trip to Laos in May, she discussed the proposed IPR Assessment with Mr. Makha Chanthala, Director of the Industrial Property Division of the Department of Intellectual Property, Standardization and Metrology, and confirmed implementation dates. Nathan's consultants will be on the ground completing this assessment from August 3 – 14.

Held roundtable discussion for Telecommunications Assessment. We neglected to report on this activity in the first quarterly report. In February of 2009, project and USTR representatives conducted a roundtable meeting with the project's Laotian counterparts, including Mr. Snith and one other representative of the Telecom Authority, to discuss the Telecommunications Assessment. The MOIC was the only department to provide comments. We are addressing the comments and will finalize the report for submission.

Proposed an outline for the Lao Export Guides. After discussions with the FTPD, the project proposed draft outlines for the Lao Export Guides. The FTPD is currently reviewing the proposal and will send comments and feedback, at which point the project will revise and submit the activity for USAID approval. We hope to start this activity in August of 2009.

Continued progress on the design and development of FTPD Website. The project facilitated the collaborations between Cyberia, the web developer, and the FTPD to finalize site specification and visual design, database structure, and administrative interface specification. However, there continues to be a significant delay in FTPD's provision of content for the site. We anticipate that once the project analyst position is filled, the project analyst will help facilitate and speed up the FTPD process for populating the site. In the meantime, the project is preparing to provide server administration training in order to improve technical capacity and improve the website's reliability. We are also analyzing the current FTPD Internet connection capacity and considering possible avenues for improving it. The FTPD website is tentatively scheduled to go live in the 3rd Quarter of 2009.

Accelerated efforts for developing the Trading Rights and the Public Private Dialogue Activities. In addition to several conversations with counterparts at USTR, both Ms. Martin and Ms. Lojewski held on-the-ground discussions with Laotian counterparts on next steps to determine a trading rights activity. The project is considering a multi-pronged approach for this activity, including conducting an assessment of the extent to which the present Lao laws and regulations comply with WTO commitments; holding a one-day workshop to help the Lao identify features that they deem important to create or preserve in its trading rights regime while maintaining compliance with the WTO; providing detailed

recommendations on reforms that Laos could make to its trading rights regime; and providing one-on-one technical assistance to Lao officials to answer any questions or review drafts of legislation. We are consulting with our counterparts regarding timing but are tentatively scheduled to conduct this activity mid-September 2009. Discussions on the Public-Private Sector dialogue workshop have also commenced with the Lao and USTR. Currently, the project is exploring options for possible speakers. This activity is also tentatively scheduled for mid-September 2009.

OTHER WORK PLAN ACTIVITIES

There are no other activities to report at this time.

OTHER ISSUES

There are no other issues to report at this time.