

SE Asia in Focus

by Nathan Associates



A Roundup of Development News in this Dynamic Region

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Report Points Way for More Women in STEM Fields

A Nathan Associates study shows how to increase women's participation in STEM professions—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—throughout APEC's 21 member economies.

APEC Women in STEM: A Framework for Dialogue, Learning and Action presents a variety of methods to encourage participation in STEM, from educating girls and women in STEM subjects, especially math, to expanding opportunities for women as STEM workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders in the Pacific Rim.

In addition, the study offers recommendations for "developing and sharing APEC-wide models for STEM education, employment, and advancement policies." It includes the "wealth of initiatives" already taking place among members, who "have a great deal to learn from one another."

Nathan Associates developed the study as contractor for US-APEC Technical Assistance to Advance Regional Integration (US-ATAARI), a joint project of USAID, the U.S. Department of State, and the APEC forum. The study follows other Nathan work championing women's economic advancement and establishing baseline measures of progress within APEC.

"We are now setting very clear benchmarks for women's participation in the economy, for monitoring progress, and for supporting efforts to enable women in business to be able to lead and to inspire others," Secretary of State John Kerry said during a November 18 APEC ministerial meeting in Lima, where the study was distributed to APEC CEOs and other business leaders.

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Burmese Committee Drafts Medical Device Law

Burma (Myanmar) made major progress in 2016 toward adopting a medical devices law that will create for the first time a strong technical regulation to (1) ensure the safe, effective use of medical devices throughout the country, and (2) further facilitate trade in such devices.

Medical devices comprise a broad range of products, from bandages to surgical instruments to sophisticated equipment such as life-prolonging implants and machines. The vast majority of medical devices used in Burma are imported, and spending on devices will grow if the government increases outlays for health care and an expanding middle class increases private health care spending as expected.

Efforts culminated in December 2016, when a committee led by the Myanmar Food and Drug Administration produced a draft law embodying the ASEAN Medical Device Directive. The directive aims to create a

transparent and reasonably harmonious system of regulations among ASEAN's 10 members, easing imports and exports of medical devices.

The drafting committee received technical support from Nathan Associates, through the Private Sector Development Activity for USAID. Work on the medical device law leverages earlier support for the development of the ASEAN Medical Device Directive that was provided by Nathan Associates through the U.S.-ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment (ACTI) project.

The medical devices law will require further review within the government before being submitted to Parliament.

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Lao Exporters Test Self-Certification of Products



A truck delivers latex to LVF Rubber Company factory in Lao PDR for processing and export to Vietnam. A self-certificate of origin simplifies exporting and makes the products more competitive.
Photo: Souksamone Phoutsady, LVF Rubber Company

Six exporters in Lao PDR have recently signed up to issue their own certificates of origin, lowering paperwork costs and shortening export processing times. Certificates of origin allow exporters to take advantage of preferential trade agreements by virtue of their

sourcing products from Lao PDR. These certificates, however, are normally obtained from either a government agency or trade association, which can add to the paperwork and administrative costs of exporting.

ASEAN's self-certification pilot initiative allows Lao exporters to access lower tariffs within ASEAN with less administrative work than a traditional certificate of origin program. Such cost reductions are particularly welcomed by Lao businesses that export commodities hit by falling prices, where every bit of savings counts.

This self-certification didn't happen overnight. Company representatives attended self-certification workshops held in 2015 by the Department of Imports and Exports, which received support from the Lao PDR–U.S. International and ASEAN Integration Project (LUNA-II), a USAID project implemented by Nathan Associates.

ASEAN started its first program to test self-certification in 2010, and a second pilot followed. All 10 ASEAN members are expected to adopt self-certification by 2018.

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A Summary of Projects Covered in this Newsletter

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Connectivity through Trade and Investment (ACTI) is a five-year joint project of USAID and the U.S. State Department supporting the economic integration of ASEAN member countries by helping to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in the areas of: customs modernization, trade and investment facilitation, small and medium-sized enterprise development, clean and efficient energy, and information and communication technologies.

The Advancing Philippine Competitiveness project (COMPETE) is a five-year cornerstone of USAID's Partnership for Growth (PFG) with the Philippine government. COMPETE supports policy and regulatory reform of the business-enabling environment by promoting trade and investment through better infrastructure, improved productivity in key industries, and improved access to credit to spur investment and trade, create jobs, and promote inclusive growth.

The Lao PDR–U.S. International and ASEAN Integration Project (LUNA-II) is a four-year USAID-funded project helping the government of Lao PDR integrate more fully into the multilateral trading system by increasing the capacity of institutions to support and sustain reforms and meet commitments made under trade agreements.

The USAID Private Sector Development Activity in Myanmar (Burma) is a five-year program to increase broad-based economic opportunities by promoting and facilitating (1) more inclusive and transparent economic policymaking and implementation, (2) increased civil society, private sector, and government capacity to engage in inclusive economic governance, and (3) increased savings and foreign direct investment.

The US-APEC Technical Assistance to Advance Regional Integration Project (US-ATAARI), a five-year effort, supports the three pillars of the APEC agenda: trade and investment liberalization, business facilitation, and economic and technical cooperation. US-ATAARI focuses on helping the APEC Secretariat and developing-member economies advance regional economic integration and achieve the Bogor Goals of free and open trade and investment.

Paper Shows Path to Greater Entrepreneurship in Burma



Women promote traditional handicrafts in Loikaw as part of a Global Entrepreneurship Week Myanmar event. GEW events were funded by USAID, Awba Myanmar, Coca-Cola and others.

A white paper presented by the Myanmar Young Entrepreneurs Association (MYEA) outlines how Burma (Myanmar) can unleash the entrepreneurship so critical to building a dynamic economy. State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has cleared the way for the government to work with entrepreneurs on carrying out the paper's chief findings.

Entrepreneurship: Key to Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Myanmar offers general and specific recommendations for the country to become a "regional leader with a world-class entrepreneurial ecosystem that facilitates startups and innovative entrepreneurship" by 2025. The MYEA presented the white paper to the

Government of Burma at the first Myanmar Entrepreneurship Summit on October 22, 2016.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered the keynote speech at the event and gave approval for senior government leaders to work with the MYEA on implementation. The more than 1,300 attendees at the event included U.S. Ambassador Scot Marciel, government ministers, senior officials, members of Parliament, and over 800 entrepreneurs.

USAID's Private Sector Development Activity supported the white paper as part of the Activity's stated aim to "formulate and implement economic reforms that generate inclusive and sustainable economic growth." Nathan Associates is implementing the activity in partnership with subcontractors JE Austin Associates and Internews. The Private Sector Development Activity staff have already met with the MYEA leadership to discuss next steps.

The white paper and the Myanmar Entrepreneurship Summit support Burma's work to promote entrepreneurship. The Private Sector Development Activity also helped fund the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Week Myanmar, which held 55 events in 13 states and divisions and was attended by about 5,000 participants.

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Philippine Energy Projects Address Gender Equity

Using a newly developed gender toolkit, government workers in the Philippines are integrating the needs of women into their energy projects. The toolkit was developed by the Philippines' Department of Energy (DOE) with assistance from Advancing Philippine Competitiveness (COMPETE), a USAID project under the U.S. Government and Government of the Philippines' joint Partnership for Growth.

Staff at the DOE have undergone training in the toolkit, which provides project-proposal guidelines for substantively addressing women's issues. The Energy Policy and Planning Bureau (EPPB) now requires proposals to include a gender and development (GAD) section that is based on a checklist related to the toolkit and addresses (1) gender issues including women's participation in projects and (2) potential gender-related consequences of project implementation. Before the

EPPB's Project Review Committee began requiring proposals to include a GAD section, proposal authors could assume that simply citing "women and men" constituted gender integration.

Advancing Philippine Competitiveness is a five-year project with the goal of promoting competitiveness in the Philippines in order to strengthen its trade and investment. It provides technical assistance in infrastructure, power, tourism, agribusiness, manufacturing, and domestic credit. Gender issues are important to address in the energy sector in part because women are disproportionately affected by lack of access to modern energy sources, which results in women taking on an outsized share of the labor and personal costs incurred.

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ASEAN SME Academy Sharpens Entrepreneurial Skills

The ASEAN SME Academy is rapidly gaining users through targeted training. The Academy opened in May 2016 as an online resource for micro, small, and medium enterprises in Southeast Asia. Entrepreneurs can access the online Academy using tablets or other mobile devices to learn business skills, to network, and ultimately join global value chains.

To ensure that people benefit fully from the Academy's features, Nathan Associates has organized training for representatives of trade and entrepreneur associations, education institutions, and private organizations and government agencies so they can teach others to use the site.

The first of these train-the-facilitators workshops took place in the Philippines in late September. Subsequent ASEAN SME Academy trainings took place in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Lao PDR in 2016. More such training is on the way in 2017.

The Academy developed from a partnership between USAID and the US-ASEAN Business Council, which promotes commercial ties between its member U.S. corporations and ASEAN's 10 member countries. Business Council members supplied training material for the Academy, thereby connecting regional entrepreneurs with global companies.

USAID fosters small business development as part of the agency's five-year ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment project (ACTI), begun in 2013 and implemented by Nathan Associates.

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Participants at an ASEAN SME Academy workshop for facilitators in Jakarta help each other finish an online course from the ASEAN SME Academy. During the October 26-27, 2016 session, participants learned how to teach entrepreneurs to use the online Academy. Photo: Deborah Tomasowa



Participants at an ASEAN SME Academy workshop for facilitators in Cambodia. Similar workshops have been held in the Philippines and Lao PDR, with more to come. Photo: Deborah Tomasowa



Nathan Associates has been on the ground and actively committed to prosperity in Southeast Asia since the 1950s, working with donors, individual governments, and organizations to unleash the full potential of individual economies and the region as a whole. Our experts apply both tested and innovative tools and strategies to boost trade and investment, link markets, safeguard intellectual property, promote entrepreneurship, foster transparent government, and ensure growth that includes all.

Nathan Associates' economic consulting work supports economic development, litigation, and business and industry decision-making. Our international work encompasses trade and logistics, infrastructure planning and finance, economic policy and governance, private sector development, and financial sector development.

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