



Mekong Institute

# TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION (TIF)

## Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth for Regional Cooperation and Integration

Removal of trade barriers has contributed to the expansion of global trade in the recent years and the bilateral and multilateral trade agreements further accentuated the importance of trade facilitation process. This gave the opportunity for producers to offer their goods and services to more customers and consumers have more choices, lower prices and access to innovations. Open markets increased the prospects of producing and selling new ideas and products locally, regionally and in global markets, which leads to more income opportunities and the improvement of living standards.

Trade facilitation can provide important opportunities for GMS countries by increasing the benefits from open trade and contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. The development of economic corridors in the Greater Mekong

Sub region (GMS) and integration initiatives such as ASEAN Economic Community (AEC 2015) highlights the importance of complementary measures related to policies and institutions in regional trade. It is widely acknowledged that; for GMS countries to have better market access to global trade are insufficient unless the capabilities to trade are addressed more timely and effectively. While the economic philosophies in the GMS countries have changed to become more market oriented, there is a constant shortage of capacities in the Government and Private sector organizations involved in trade and investment promotion activities to meet with the requirements of up adequate knowledge and information to participate effectively in the globalization process.

### Our Aim

The aim of the Trade and Investment Facilitation Division is not simply to expand trade but also to focus on the broader goal of sustainable and inclusive economic growth for regional cooperation and integration. The expectation is that economic growth becomes a catalyst for poverty reduction by creating more and broad-based job and income opportunities. For achieving this, the Trade and Investment Facilitation Division efforts focus mostly on establishing a fostering environment for SMEs by addressing the entire trade value chain through engaging with Business associations, Chamber of Commerce and Government agencies involved in Trade and SME development in the GMS countries.

#### For more information;

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## AREAS OF FOCUS OF TIF IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

For GMS countries to maximize gains from trade and investment flows, MI is directed to advance knowledge and skills of stakeholders so they may better facilitate inclusive and balanced trade and investment in the region. Enhancing cooperation among GMS countries on cross-border measures is necessary to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on trade and investment.

The effective functioning of supply chains, upskilling and reskilling of labor, and SME internationalization are important elements to strengthen regional value chains and to promote regional pandemic recovery efforts. In this context, MI will focus on the following:

- (1) Improve trade facilitation to establish more efficient and cost-effective cross-border trade flows.
- (2) Promote cross-border digital services such as e-customs and cross-border e-commerce.
- (3) Create business information platforms to widen networking among business groups and companies in local, regional, and international markets.
- (4) Support the integration of SMEs into global and regional value chains
- (5) Conduct research that will contribute to an enabling environment for trade and investment promotion, particularly through economic corridors and special economic zones.
- (6) Advance knowledge on the linkage between post-pandemic recovery, trade competitiveness, and cross-border trade of goods and services for the development of business strategies that will enhance firm-level competitiveness of countries and SMEs in a post-pandemic situation.
- (7) Respond to other opportunities and challenges to strengthen cross-border trade facilitation and investment promotion.

### Modalities

- Design and coaching on need-based capacity building programs for specific target groups in the Government and private sector particularly the Chamber of Commerce and Business associations.
- Conduct action research and policy research on trade, SME and logistic development.
- Inform policy makers on current trends, issues on trade and investment through policy dialogues and forums.
- Conduct structured learning visits for Business to Business development.
- Promote regional integration through networking and other regional and sub regional cooperation initiatives in trade and investment.
- Follow an impact creating project approach through modular based training and Training the trainers.