

## BACKGROUND

The creative industry plays a vital role in boosting the cultural tourism sector in the Mekong countries, significantly contributing to their economies. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted this sector. Heritage sites, in particular, are experiencing slower recovery compared to other areas and varies among the countries due to differences in economic development levels and their ability to respond and recover. This has put cultural skills and knowledge at risk, as workers leave in search of new opportunities, taking with them their local artisanal skills and cultural knowledge, potentially leading to the disappearance of traditional heritage and the foundation of cultural knowledge associated with key heritage monuments. Heritage locations are crucial to the tourism sector as they uniquely contribute to the Mekong countries' cultural identity.

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are one of the biggest economic contributors in all the Mekong countries. Most of the MSMEs in Mekong countries do not have a clear classification as to which businesses are labeled as creative industries or MSMEs that do not belong to the creative sector. The classification is important due to the creative industries require specific policy design approaches that cannot be generalized to most MSMEs. Hence, creating a regionally agreed taxonomy and definition of creative and cultural industries are priorities particularly for support policies and incentives because of the uniqueness of the businesses. However, MSMEs in the creative sector have not received due attention as an economic vehicle, so there is a lack of inadequate policy support and technical assistance for improving their competitiveness. Furthermore, Most of the Mekong countries, remains nascent in comparison with more developed Intellectual Property (IP) protection regimes and it will take some time before laws governing IP are in full *WTO* compliance. IP rights play an important role in supporting a thriving creative economy as they protect creativity and control the commercial exploitation of the products of scientific, technological and cultural creation. The ability to develop and use such products is a key driver of economic growth and for international competition, especially for the production and trade of technology-intensive goods and services.

Given the vital role of heritage locations in the tourism sector and their unique contributions to the cultural identity of the Mekong countries, multilateral and regional coordination is essential to address the challenges faced by the cultural and creative industries sector, ensuring their resilience, growth, and sustainability.

To address these issues, the Mekong Institute is implementing a three-year project titled "**Promoting Creative Industry for Heritage Tourism Development in the Mekong Region**" or (**Creative4Mekong**) from March 2024- February 2027. Funded by the Mekong – ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF), the project focuses on strengthening creative industries, cultural heritage conservation, tourism development for socio-economic recovery with digital platform in selected five World Heritage Sites of Mekong countries namely Siem Reap (Cambodia), Luang Prabang (Laos), Bagan (Myanmar), Ayutthaya (Thailand) and Hue (Viet Nam).

## **OBJECTIVE**

The overall objective of the project is to enhance the economic potential of the creative industries in the five Mekong countries by strengthening creative industries for cultural heritage conservation and tourism development in the World Heritage Sites for socio-economic development.

## **OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Output 1: Strengthened and Established Cooperatives among Cultural Groups/Creative Industry**

1. Formulate business plans for creative group associations, outlining functions, services, revenue streams, and membership development plans for sustainable growth and expansion.
2. Design and conduct training sessions for the management and development of creative industry associations.

### **Output 2: Strengthened Protection of Copyrights and Creativity through Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in the Heritage Sector, Arts, Media and Functional Creations.**

Activities:

1. Conduct country-wise studies to assess legal, regulatory, and institutional arrangements on IPRs for creative industries.

### **Output 3: Promoted Creative MSMEs through Digital Platforms**

Activities:

1. Conduct a training session on creative marketing on creative industries.
2. Assist creative MSMEs in developing creative content.
3. Develop an artificial intelligence (AI) application platform.
4. Create itineraries for sustainable heritage tourism in five target cities on five topics and promote them on digital platforms.

### **Output 4: Introduced Sustainable Solutions for Cultural Tourism and Creative Industries.**

Activities:

1. Conduct modular training on Creative Industry Cluster Management and Promotion.
2. Develop investment profiles to facilitate investment.
3. Organize investment meetings in five Mekong countries.
4. Facilitate Creative Cluster twinning activities focusing on joint programs related to music, food, art, and textiles.

### **Output 5: Promoted Innovative Practices in Cultural and Creative Industries**

Activity:

1. Conduct a familiarization mission on creative industries in the Republic of Korea for officials from organizations involved in promoting and developing the creative industry in the five Mekong countries.

### **Output 6: Baseline Data Established**

Activity:

1. Conduct a baseline study to map and develop taxonomy, industry classification, and a database of creative industries and associations in key sectors. Evaluate their current status, challenges, and prospects.
2. Output 7: Established and Conducted Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meetings (Online) in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3.

## **Key Targeted Stakeholders:**

Government: Heritage Site Management Authorities, Department of Tourism, Culture, Commerce, Industry, Standard and Certification at the National and provincial Level.

MSNEs/Artisans: Performing arts, food, festivals, craft villages, arts, media, functional creators, cultural sites, audiovisuals, creative services, and, etc.

Participating countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Republic of Korea.

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