



**French Ministry of
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**UNCTAD
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CONFERENCE ON TRADE
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION
TRAINFORTRADE PROJECT
FOR CAMBODIA AND LAOS**

Evaluation carried out from January to May 2007 by
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**The views expressed in this paper are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of UNCTAD and of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

Executive summary of the TrainForTrade project for Cambodia and Laos

1 – Framework

The Mid-Term evaluation of the TrainForTrade (TFT) project, implemented in Laos and Cambodia, was carried out at the request of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (M.F.A.).

The evaluation, which lasted four weeks in total, was conducted in three phases:

1. The first, carried out in Geneva on January 18 and 19 and February 9 2007, allowed the evaluators to get acquainted with the objectives and the team of the project, and included the collect of documents to feed the desk phase.
2. The second phase was devoted to a 14 day field visit on the two sites of the project: Cambodia and Laos. It took place from February 19 to March 2 2007 included.
3. The third phase was dedicated to the elaboration of a draft report, and of the final report, taking in account comments aroused by the intermediary report. This phase also included restitution of core conclusions and recommendations to the main stakeholders.

2 - Short description of the project

The objective of this project, which relies on the TrainForTrade methodology of UNCTAD, is to build the capacities of Cambodia and Laos, two of the least-developed countries (LDC) of Asia, in the fields of international trade, investment, competition policies, trade and environment, and trade- facilitation This objective is implemented through the training of trainers, the use of distance learning techniques as well as cooperation between training institutions located in the LDCs. In addition to capacity building the project promotes and initiates operational changes, in cooperation with relevant officials and decision-makers, both at the legislative and a the regulatory level.

The project started in November 2003 with the support of French funds (1 856 485 Euros) for a period of four years. This independent evaluation takes place half-way through.

3 – Conclusions

1- *UNCTAD's project strategy* is perfectly relevant as regards the M.F.A's project document. As part of the action matrix of the Integrated Framework, the TrainForTrade programme strives to reinforce the institutional capacities of beneficiary countries and supports steps and commitments taken by both countries in the framework of trade related agreements at the regional (ASEAN) and international (WTO) level.

2-*The identification of training needs*, as far as the specific objectives of the project are concerned, must be considered as a permanent process taking in account the emergence of new needs resulting from changes in the local context. This process could further be improved by a more efficient organisation of the steering committees..

3-*Inter-institutional collaboration*: The lack of access and contacts with other training institutions and international networks, as well as the weakness of the inter-ministerial dimension, could hinder the project's achievements.

4-*The impact of the programme* on local ownership of trade-related issues is tangible in the highest spheres of the state and at the top hierarchy of line ministries in both beneficiary countries.

5-*The project, however, targets in priority the intermediate level of the hierarchy* (project target), with a more limited impact because of the low human resource potential in both countries.

6-*Steps were successfully taken* in some specific components (port, competition, e-commerce issues) to combine the three dimensions: awareness raising, training and support to the decision and policy-making on the themes dealt with during the training sessions.

7-*Project documents and training programmes* demonstrate a genuine intention to adapt the programme to the evolution of both beneficiary countries' agendas.

8-*Statistical indicators show that quantitatively*, half-way through, the project has met the objectives in terms of number of persons trained and number of trainings which were planned and carried out despite delays experienced during implementation.

9-*An effort to adapt the training programmes has been made*. It is noticeable in the translation of the training material in Lao and Khmer, as well as in the adaptation to local situations. This better prepares for the sustainability of the programme's achievements.

10- *Training sessions* are generally too brief to allow a fully sustainable transfer of knowledge.

11-*The use of distance learning* techniques opens promising prospects, despite initial resistances.

12-*16% of the operators trained in both countries are women*; over a total of 493 participants, 79 are women , among which 20 in Cambodia and 59 in Laos. Over the 45 instructors locally trained, 6 are women.

13-*The coordination by donors and national authorities*, included within the Integrated Framework, is not efficient. This makes coordination with other training programmes very difficult and prevents the TrainForTrade programme from efficiently handling training demands that cannot be satisfied within the framework of its sphere of activity.

14-*The cost of the project per participant to training seminars*, without being competitive, is not out of proportion with similar programmes.

4 – Recommendations

This is a good project which has obtained tangible results in a difficult context and it would be prejudicial to suspend activities at the project's end planned for 2009. Indeed, to have a real impact, this type of project has to be set in a long term perspective.

In the framework of the current project, activities of the next years should consist essentially in reinforcing training actions already implemented. This should contribute to strengthen the project's impact on the institutional capacities of both countries and to help national authorities to implement the recommendations issued by the evaluation. **On a longer term**, measures should be adopted in order to facilitate the extension of the TrainForTrade programme to other developing countries, in a national or regional framework.

4.1 – Recommendations jointly addressed to the national authorities (Lao and Khmer), to UNCTAD and to the French delegations on the field.

- To share the experience acquired through the TrainForTrade project with the main stakeholders of the Integrated Framework.
- To broaden the scope of training activities and, as far as the identification of thematic priorities is concerned, to increase the technical content and the support to the beneficiaries in order to reach concrete outcomes.
- To intensify the training in local languages (Lao and Khmer), and at the same time, to strengthen the training of officials in the provinces.
- To strengthen the involvement of the private sector.

4.2 – Recommendations addressed to Laotian and Cambodian authorities

Overall, the definition of priorities and of direct objectives (contents, levels) of training activities must be clarified and better coordinated with national agendas. Currently, agendas are known for the next five years in both countries. Therefore, it is desirable that officials in charge of the project address, from now on, the thematic priorities and the target audience within the framework of those national priorities.

a) Architecture of the project

It is desirable to improve the functioning of the steering committees by creating thematic sub-committees and by filtering, at an earlier stage, demands for training and support, so that they can better match the agreed priorities.

b) Management of the project

It is necessary to develop, among national counterparts, a wider concern about the project, namely through more direct decision-making by national heads of project.

4.3 – Recommendation addressed to UNCTAD

On the short term:

a) Architecture of the project

- To reinforce inter-divisional cooperation within UNCTAD in order to strengthen actions already developed by the project.
- To institutionalise the support structure to the project at the UNCTAD secretariat in Geneva

b) Management of the project

- To continue activities while reinforcing local adaptation (translations) and the regional dimension.
- To develop technologies for distance learning.

On the long term:

- The TrainForTrade programme is a privileged vector of UNCTAD's technical assistance, because it adopts a global, multi-strand approach, associating the many complementary competencies of the organisation. By enlarging dissemination, it optimises the use of its intellectual production. Moreover, it increases its audience and reach targets (i.e. mid-level managers) that are usually out of reach because of UNCTAD's modes of delivery (ex: documents in English, high level seminars). Lessons must be derived from this project as a privileged support for technical assistance. Also, a reorganisation enabling more inter-divisional cooperation within UNCTAD ought to be engineered.
- To consider the extension of the TrainForTrade approach to other developing countries, in the framework of national or regional programmes of technical assistance.

4.4 – Recommendations addressed to France

It seems necessary, in a long term perspective, to:

- Build on the TrainForTrade experience to strengthen intervention capacities of the French cooperation in trade-related technical assistance (TRTA), bilateral and multilateral, in terms of integration to the world trade and the definition of appropriate trading policies.
- Consider France's support to the extension of the TrainForTrade approach to other countries.