ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment

Information and Communication Technology

Young entrepreneurs take classes in information and communication technology to pass on their knowledge in rural communities in Bandung, Indonesia.

Photo credit: USAID ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment

"How we steer our ICT development over the next five years will greatly impact ASEAN, especially in the lead up to this region becoming an Economic Community in 2015."
-ASEAN ICT Masterplan

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Connectivity through Trade and Investment is a five-year project of the United States Agency for International Development and the Department of State to increase U.S. economic engagement and cooperation with ASEAN countries. Asia is an increasingly inter-connected region and with the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the U.S. Government has aligned its development assistance priorities in support of regional integration.

Trade between the United States and ASEAN is estimated at $200 billion. The project encourages ASEAN to adopt free, transparent, sustainable and inclusive trade practices as it moves toward economic integration. This includes technical support for customs integration, trade and investment facilitation, small and medium-sized enterprises, clean and efficient energy and information and communication technologies. These areas are also priorities under key U.S. strategic agreements and policies such as the ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement, Enhanced Economic Engagement Initiative and Enhanced Partnership Plan of Action.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR ASEAN

Among the lesser developed and poorest ASEAN countries, rural communities comprise an estimated 60 to 68 percent of the population. It is a major challenge for governments to ensure access to information and communication services to these populations. In support of the ASEAN Information and Communication Technology Master Plan, the project provides technical assistance at the regional and national level to prepare rural areas for broadband Internet access and help residents become more familiar with new technology. "TV White Space," for example, uses television frequencies to transmit broadband to rural residents to help bridge the digital divide in ASEAN. The project researches ways to help ASEAN Member States more efficiently utilize Universal Service Funds. These funds are used to create the infrastructure that will provide communication services in rural areas.

The project promotes good examples of Information and Communication Technology. The ASEAN Single Window for customs clearance, also supported through the project, is the most significant information and communication technology system currently under development for ASEAN. Support from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in collaboration with the U.S.-ASEAN Business Alliance for Competitive SMEs, helped develop the ASEAN Online SME Academy, an online portal for SME managers, which launched in 2015.

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