

Gender at the Heart of ARISE Plus Project

Gender empowerment and mainstreaming in the entire work of the project

In Cambodia, women remain economically, politically, and socially disadvantaged. Gendered inclusion and equal treatment are difficult goals to achieve as strict traditional and patriarchal structures and social biases make progress slow.

However, gender equality is a core value for GIZ Cambodia and globally and an integral part of how we, as GIZ staff, plan and implement our activities together with our partners.

The GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia project aims to support greater connectivity and economic integration between Cambodia and the rest of ASEAN. The project streamlines gender topics in all of its workstreams: capacity development, coordination of trade facilitation, SME export development, trade information, and advocacy. To encourage more women participation in the trade sector, ARISE Plus Cambodia has set a clear quota for women applicants/participants in terms of consultancy contracts, recruitment, training, and workshops. Additionally, the project also supports capacity development for young female government staff, women-led/owned SMEs, and women's business associations.

Trade has an impact on women's empowerment and well-being, and gender inequality has an impact on the country's trade performance and competitiveness. Early this year, the project initiated the discussion with all relevant stakeholders on how to empower women in the workplace by discussing and identifying what are the key impact, and challenges for women's empowerment in economics and trade in different roles and how to foster further knowledge to overcome the challenges/obstacles/impact in the future.



ARISE Plus Cambodia-discussion on women empowerment at the workplace © GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia

From the result of the discussion, some suggestions and recommendations have been provided and applied with positive changes. For example, more women are promoted from officers to management levels such as deputy office chiefs, office chiefs, deputy directors, directors, and so on.

Moreover, the project has contributed practically to strengthening the export capacity of 15 SMEs of which 50% are female-led in Cambodia with tangible results. It also helped to fill information gaps on export and SME-related topics, for example on export regulations for the EU.

This outcome contributes to the broader SME trade competitiveness agenda of Cambodia, via direct export-readiness support for selected SMEs, and contributions to trade information and public-private dialogue agenda. The combined medium-term impact of the corresponding workstreams – SME export development, trade information, and trade advocacy – is expected to result in improved enterprise capacities for meeting international market-entry requirements (export-readiness and trade information workstreams) and an improved business

environment based on trade advocacy work.

- SME export/business performance measured by increased annual turnover, export value (in USD), direct employment (staff/workers) and indirect employment (farmers, collectors, etc.).
- Accelerated PPPD nationwide, and successful integration of Provincial Chambers/SMEs in the G-PSF mechanism.
- Improved generation and sharing of topical knowledge related to exports and strengthened SME-SME networks.

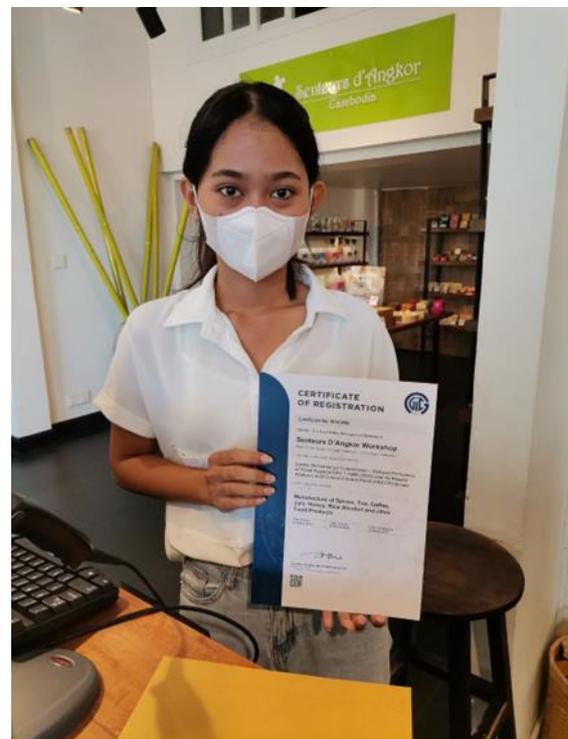
Project activities under the SME export development workstream were directed towards supporting SMEs in implementing individual, tailor-made Export Development Strategies (EDS). Secondly, this workstream covered the building of a pool of local consultants to conduct pre-audit advisory services to SMEs for select ISO standards.

In 2022 and 2023, 15 SMEs 50% of them are female-led were supported in the implementation of EDS, which included different types of Technical Assistance (TA) support measures. These measures



Group work in the formulation stage of the Export Development Strategy © GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia

aimed at increasing business turnover, export value, and direct/indirect employment of each of the 15 SMEs. The measures included, among others, obtaining various International Quality Standard Certifications, such as BODIA (ISO 22716:2007 Certification for natural cosmetics), Khmer Green Charcoal (ISO 9001:2015 for product consistency), Kirirom Food Production (British Retailer Certification, for dried mangoes), Thaug Enterprise (ISO 9001:2015 and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) for sea salt, Sang Tours D'Angkor (ISO 22716:2007) for cosmetics, etc.



Sang Tours D'Angkor obtained the ISO 22716:2007 © GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia



Thaug Enterprise obtained ISO 9001:2015 and HACCP © GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia

In addition to EDS support for SMEs, the project found that there is a lack of qualified local consultants able to conduct pre-audit guidance to SMEs seeking IQSC such as HAACP, ISO 9001, and others. This is a problem because SMEs require external, professional guidance before the actual IQSC audit. To fill this gap, the project conducted a series of training programmes to build a pool of local consultants who will be:

- qualified to conduct professional pre-audit consultancy services for ISO 9001:2015 (Quality Management System-QMS) ISO 22000:2018 (Food Safety) ISO 45001:2018 (Occupational Health and Safety) and
- pre-qualified to become accredited IRCA-certified Lead Auditors
- In summary, from this training series, there are 10 successful participants (28% out of the total 36 participants), who received official IRCA accreditation, including certificates among them 50% are female. All of them now provide paid professional services to Cambodian SMEs, either as external-, or in-house consultants, as described above.

Additionally, a unique pool of local consultants was built. These trained consultants among which 50% of them are female, are certified by the International Registry of Certified Auditors (IRCA) and are now qualified to provide paid services to guide SMEs in implementing pre-audit processes, that comply with the requirements set by the International Standard Organization (ISO) and other trade-related standards. This model is about building local expertise/capacities and closes an important gap for SMEs seeking to improve access to international markets.



Group discussion in the QMS Auditor/Lead Auditor Course (ISO 9001, 22000 and 45001) © GIZ ARISE Plus Cambodia

This model successfully builds local capacities in the International Quality Standard Certification (IQSC) service market and closes an important gap for SMEs to improve access to international markets. This intervention is currently nonexistent but is very much needed, especially to scale up these operations.

For further information, please visit our project website at <https://www.cambodia-ariseplus.asean.org/> or our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/arisepluskh>