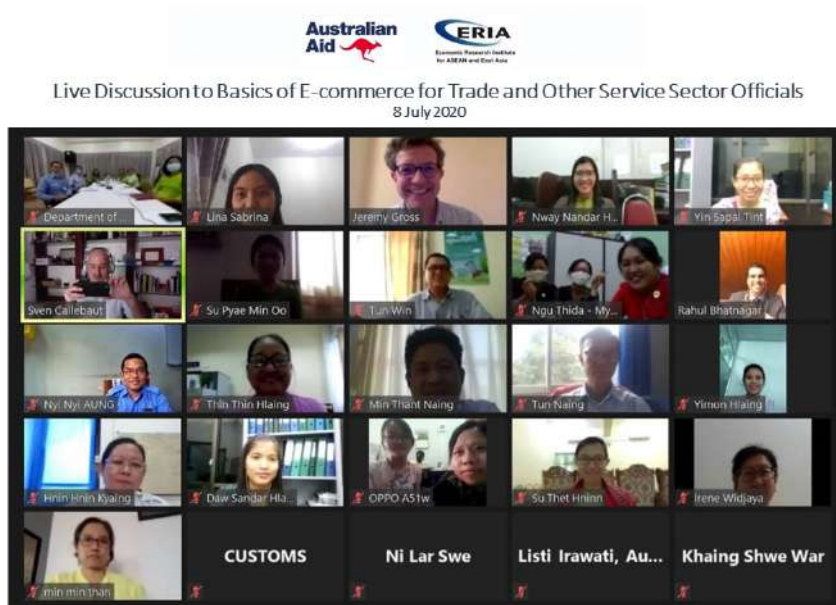


Capacity Building Programme



Like every other sector of global society, the Capacity Building Programme (CBP) was hit hard by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the start of the year, a full schedule of events had been planned, addressing key themes and issues for participating partner countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar. Activities were again to be organised around three components: 1) ERIA Research; 2) ASEAN Priorities; and 3) Increase Research Capacity, as successfully rolled out in the previous year.

In the preceding year, a key achievement of the CBP was a pivot away from holding joint activities

for officials from all three countries to organising workshops and trainings in-country for each country. This allowed us to reach out to a far greater number of officials. However, with the onset of Covid-19, all travel, along with face-to-face workshops, ceased.

Thus, in a short time, the Capacity Building Programme had to rise to two challenges. The first was how to reach out to government officials in a time when travel had ceased; the second was to draw up a new list of activities that were implementable and responsive to emerging needs,

notably, supporting governments to address Covid-19.

As the year progressed, the CBP had to continue to adapt, taking into account additional changes in the regional environment. The first was ASEAN's response to the Covid-19 pandemic – the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF). The second, in November 2020, was the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Taken together, these entailed making sure the CBP could gear up to the new challenge of being responsive to the ACRF and RCEP for the future, whilst still dealing with the practical problems of moving activities on-line.

By the end of the year, the CBP was pleased to have been able to facilitate a total of seven discrete activities for the three participating countries, resulting in a total of 26 online learning sessions. This allowed the Capacity Building Programme, funded through a grant from the Australian Government, to reach out to 147 government officials, of whom 66 were men and 81 were women.

Component 1: Participation in Research

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the schedule for holding technical workshops for ERIA research was much delayed. By the end of the year, only one meeting for each of the ERIA studies had been held. However, ERIA also enabled government officials who had participated in ERIA's 'Advancing Disaster Resilience and Climate Change Adaption' study to observe and contribute to an ASEAN Secretariat organised meeting. One-off webinar workshops

were also held in Cambodia and Lao PDR as a spin-off from the 'Cities, Urban Amenities' study.

Although fewer activities took place than originally anticipated, integrating government officials into research studies alongside national and international academics continues to be beneficial for officials, to help them gain a strong understanding of the complexity of issues, exchange data, promote a policy focus to studies, and network with peers from the region and beyond.

1) Cities, Urban Amenities, and Global Production Value Chain: New Developments in Trade and Service Liberalisation in East Asia and ASEAN

This research looks at the relationship between the growth of cities, trade, and global production value chains – key to understanding how cities can become the focal point for trade, investment, and the services liberalisation required to support it.

2) Services, Economic Liberalisation, and Global Production Value-Chain: Managing the Second and Third Stage Unbundling in East Asia

Through the CBP, six government officials from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar observed the technical workshop for this study before a CB session was held just for the government officials. In the CB session held following the study workshop, key issues concerning the economic effects of unbundling of GVC, and the 2nd and 3rd stage unbundling on competitiveness and its likely effects on the global production value-chain in East Asia and ASEAN, were discussed.

3) Enhancing Food Supply Chain Resilience and Food Security in ASEAN with Utilisation of Digital Technology and Innovations

Long-standing ERIA CB partners were able to observe and participate in the discussions for this workshop, organised by the ASEAN Secretariat. They were particularly pleased to share how the workshop had contributed to their understanding of investment levels for digital agriculture and setting up platforms and mechanisms for new farming technologies, and how to incorporate concepts of digital technology into existing strategic plans.

4) Services, Urban Amenities, and Global Value Chains: New Growth Paths

These webinars, an offshoot of the Cities, Urban Amenities study (above) allowed a large number of government officials from Cambodia and Lao PDR to benefit from initial learnings from this study and focus on key policy and institutional gaps in the structural transformation of their domestic economies to position and maintain competitiveness in the dynamic GVCs.

Component 2: ASEAN Priorities

1) Workshops on E-Commerce

Two on-line courses were held, first for Myanmar and then Cambodia. The courses covered many aspects of e-commerce, from legal and regulatory aspects for domestic trade, cross-border regulations, women in e-commerce, trade logistics, and facilitation and E-commerce in national and regional development plans.

2) Regulatory Stock Take for E-Commerce

As the region prepares to implement comments under RCEP, a regulatory stock take in support of e-commerce provisions got underway in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

Component 3: Increase Research Capacity

All planned face-to-face policy modelling courses had to be postponed due to the difficulty of making multi-day, interactive courses on-line. Instead, the focus was strategies for addressing Covid-19.

1) Pandemic Policy, Trade, and Economic Cooperation

Consisting of two webinars for each of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, the webinars focused on the economic and social effects of the pandemic, such as disruptions in production and the services sector, with discussions held around health and economic policies for better outcomes and the importance of regional cooperation through the ASEAN Pandemic Task Force to oversee and coordinate policy responses across ASEAN.

Strategy and Partnership Programmes

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Strategy and Partnership Programme (SPP), funded by Australia, redesigned originally planned activities to adapt to the new context. It developed online activities and knowledge products (papers, videos, and op-eds) linked to several areas of work of ERIA. It developed ERIA's first webinar series on ASEAN MSMEs, it launched a new stream of work on the economic empowerment of women and the participation of women in the digital economy in ASEAN, and contributed to developing and strengthening connections and partnerships with relevant regional and global economic development organisations. SPP works closely with colleagues in the Communication team, PDD, Research department, and Capacity Building.

A. Policy Dialogues in collaboration with ASEAN stakeholders

The SPP supported a number of policy dialogues and research initiatives to support ASEAN stakeholders:

- At the request of the ASEAN Secretariat, SPP (with support from PDD colleagues) together with ASEAN Secretariat colleagues organised a virtual expert brainstorming meeting on the Fourth Industrial Revolution in May and June 2020. This virtual brainstorming exercise gathered several stakeholders such as Asian Development Bank, DFAT Australia, the European Commission, OECD, UNESCAP, World Economic Forum, and business sectors representatives.
- In October 2020, at the request of the ASEAN Secretariat, SPP and the ASEAN Secretariat jointly organised the ASEAN–ERIA Dialogue on Digital Trade. This dialogue was organised for AMS officials to advance policy initiatives and measures to promote e-commerce as a way to revitalise the economy during the pandemic crisis, especially after the ASEAN Agreement on E-commerce entered into force at the end of 2020. This policy dialogue was attended by officials from ASEAN Sectoral Bodies including the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on E-commerce under the Chairmanship of Viet Nam, the Digital Trade Standard and Conformity Working Group (DTSCWG) under the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ), the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME), and the ASEAN Digital Senior Officials' Meeting (ADGSOM).

B. Webinar series: ASEAN MSMEs in a Covid-19 World

The disruptive effect of the Covid-19 pandemic hit MSMEs across ASEAN hard. To provide a platform for discussion on this topic, SPP developed a webinar series titled 'ASEAN MSMEs in a COVID-19 World' which consisted of 10 episodes to discuss the key issues, challenges, and opportunities for ASEAN MSMEs during the pandemic and to build back better during the post-pandemic recovery. The webinar series was conducted from June to December 2020. It discussed several key themes

related to ERIA's research activities including trade and GVCs, e-commerce, the digital economy, financial inclusion, innovation, economic empowerment of women, and sustainable development. Bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders including entrepreneurs, policymakers, academics, and experts from the region, the webinar series attracted more than 1,300 participants across ASEAN and East Asia (and beyond). Speakers included 21 entrepreneurs from all 10 AMS, speakers from regional and international organisations (including the ASEAN Secretariat, OECD, World Economic Forum, ILO, UNDP, UNESCAP, APEC, and CSIRO, Australia), academics, and ERIA economists and experts.

SPP produced two reports and a video summarising the main findings and take-away messages from the series. These reports detail how to develop a more inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem during the post-pandemic economic recovery in ASEAN. The reports and the video recordings of the webinar series have been acknowledged and covered by the ASEAN Secretariat social media accounts and featured in several AMS' local and English language newspapers.

C. The Economic Consequences of Covid-19

SPP contributed to developing and strengthening partnerships and strategic outreach with key stakeholders including ERIA Governing Board Members and senior economic officials. For example, the programme organised economic policy dialogues to discuss efforts and policy initiatives to revitalise national and regional

economic development during and after the pandemic. Examples include:

- A webinar with ERIA Governing Board Members including Mr Adrian S. Cristobal, Amb. Barry Desker, and Dr Tran Thi Hong Minh to discuss the Economic Impact of COVID-19 in ASEAN were held in August 2020.
- A webinar jointly organised in September 2020 with the AustCham ASEAN to discuss the findings of a survey they carried out in the region. H.E. Amb. Will Nankervis, the Australian Ambassador to ASEAN, gave the keynote speech at the event.
- A policy dialogue to discuss trade integration and the post-pandemic recovery organised in cooperation with the New Zealand Mission to ASEAN was conducted in October 2020. The dialogue was led by Dr Alan Bollard and opened by His Excellency the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi.

D. Economic empowerment of women and their participation in the digital economy

Narrowing the gender digital divide is crucial to promote more inclusive digital economies and societies. SPP produced data analysis, a policy brief, a discussion paper, two op-eds, and a video on this issue. One of the op-eds and the video were used to mark international women's day 2021 and the policy brief and the discussion paper were featured on the World Economic Forum intelligence platform website and local newspapers across ASEAN.

Additional activities around the theme of economic empowerment of women include:

- Two of the episodes of the MSMEs webinar series were also dedicated to fostering women in entrepreneurship and STEM.
- SPP was invited to give policy advice during a brainstorming session to discuss women entrepreneurs and women in the digital transformation organised by the Mission of Canada to ASEAN.
- Participation in the UNCTAD meeting on women in e-commerce in October 2020.
- SPP engaged with the Capacity Building Programme in one of the e-workshops for government officials in Cambodia and Myanmar in December 2020.

E. Collaboration with other International Organisations

SPP contributes to strengthening ERIA relationships with international organisations such as the Asia–Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Examples include:

- ERIA participated in the OECD Digital 4 SME roundtable, of which it is now a regular participant. The last OECD Roundtable was opened by the OECD Secretary General Mr Angel Gurría and chaired by Minister Hon Stuart Nash of New Zealand, Minister for Economic and Regional Development, Forestry, Small Business

and Tourism, and Chair of the OECD Digital for SMEs Initiative.

- In partnership with OECD, SPP organised a policy dialogue to discuss the perspective of urbanisation trends across Asia in November 2020.
- A number of meetings were held with the APEC Secretariat to discuss possible synergies and potential future collaborations.
- The involvement of several UN agencies (UNESCAP, UNDP, and ILO), World Economic Forum, and APEC in the ASEAN MSMEs in a COVID-19 World webinar series, which is leading to potential new collaborations during 2021.
- An online dialogue to support ERIA's work on Non-Tariff Measures organised jointly with UNCTAD. SPP has been in contact with UNCTAD regarding work related to economic empowerment of women, as mentioned above.