

# CUTS HRC Activity Report

January-December 2012

## PAST PROJECTS

### Holding Broadband Service Providers to Account

CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre (CUTS HRC), in partnership with the Vietnamese Standards and Consumer Protection Association (VINASTAS), implemented a project entitled “Holding Broadband Service Providers to Account”, a new project of Consumers International (CI) funded by Ford Foundation. The project aims to empower consumer organisations around the world to demand more equitable and accessible broadband service offerings, respecting consumers’ rights and broader human rights, as a necessary condition of achieving a socially-inclusive information society.

According to the division of responsibility, HRC took charge of writing a secondary research report and VINASTAS was responsible for carrying out a consumer survey with regard to broadband services. Besides, VINASTAS and HRC jointly did research on the legal and regulatory environment.

The project consists of two main phases. The research and capacity-building phase involving about 20 CI members, involved country level research and a global meeting, to assist CI to develop an advocacy resource manual on broadband issues that is attuned to members’ needs. This lasted from mid-2011 to early 2012. The advocacy and campaigning phase, conducted on a pilot basis with about six CI members, employing the resource manual in their countries, and follow-on global advocacy work by CI on issues of concern identified during pilot testing. This lasted from mid-2012 to early 2013.

## ONGOING PROJECTS

### Study on Unfair Trade Practices in select ASEAN countries

The project, a two-year programme lasting from 2011 till 2013, supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, aims at generating and promoting substantive discussions/dialogues in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on issues related to unfair trade practices (UTPs). The project is implemented in five countries of the ASEAN region, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam by HRC in cooperation with research partners in respective project countries.

The project implementation is designed two main pillars – research and advocacy. Capacity building and networking elements are built in the whole implementation process of the project.

In terms of research, country-specific research was undertaken by country partner, in consultation with the project implementation unit and incorporated into a Country Report in electronic format. Besides, two important by-products of the process included two short and concise Policy Briefs in reader-friendly format which were printed for widespread distribution.



The project website was set up and accessible at <http://utp.cuts-hrc.org> with an e-discussion forum built in. In terms of advocacy, the first policy dialogue was organised by HRC in cooperation with Vietnam Competition Authority (VCA) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on September 12, 2012. In addition to project partners, other stakeholders and representatives from competition authorities in the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam attended this event. Following up the success of the first Policy Dialogue, the second one was organised by HRC in association with the Indonesian Policy and Law Studies Centre (PSHK) on December 19, 2012.

Within the framework of the project, HRC in partnership with the Centre on Competition and Consumer Protection Law, Hanoi University of Law organised a conference entitled “Implementation of the Law on Unfair Trade Practices in Vietnam” on September 21, 2012.

## Trade Promotion through Standardisation

The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to economic development in the South Asia and Southeast Asian regions through increased access to markets by local and regional producers by complying with international standards. This project is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and implemented by the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS) from 2012-2014. CUTS is a partner in the overall programme. The total budget for the project is US\$4.7mn for 8 project countries and the budget for CUTS' activities is earmarked at around US\$35,000 per year. The Inception Phase of the programme began in June 2012 and ended in November 2012.

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## Competition Policy and Law in ASEAN Competition Assessment in Lao PDR

The activity of the project is to carry out a competition assessment for Lao PDR during the period October-December 2012 with a budget of US\$17,000 funded by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). This aims to provide an overview of the existing institutional and legal framework, as well as the knowledge of how key markets or industries are structured which can help substantiate efforts to discuss the necessity of a competition law in Lao PDR.

Pham Thi Que Anh visited Lao PDR to gather information on November 04-17, 2012. Besides, legal desk research including a legal inventory on competition and scanning of news clippings of Laos English newspaper was also carried out. The competition assessment was finished and sent to GIZ. The activity is expected to finish by March 2013 after the remaining balance of the fund is paid and the second field trip to Lao PDR is finished.

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## PUBLICATIONS

- The Economic Update with new format and approach, covering one topical issue for each volume, was published on a quarterly basis. The two first issues produced and published on the website are: (i) Economic Update on the WTO DSB's ruling in favour of Vietnam against the US over anti-dumping measures on frozen shrimps; and (ii) Economic Update on deposit insurance regulations.
- The Competition and Consumer Protection Dossier was published on a quarterly basis to gather facts about anticompetitive acts and acts that harm consumers' interests in Vietnam. Three issues of the Dossiers were produced and uploaded on to the website.
- As part of region-based research agenda, two policy briefs on trade issues were produced by Tran Thi To Tam and Thanh Ha and posted on HRC website. Tran Thi To Tam worked on the topic of "Unskilled labour in Mekong countries: An impediment to service trade" and Thanh Ha worked on the topic of "4 years after WTO accession: Do Vietnam's regulations violate WTO commitments?"

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## ADVOCACY & NETWORKING

- Pham Thi Que Anh participated in the kick-off meeting of the programme Jakarta, Indonesia on July 17-18, 2012.
- Pham Thi Que Anh and Thanh Ha attended a two-day workshop in Hanoi, Vietnam on September 26-27, 2012. More than 40 participants from National Standard Bodies, private organisations and enterprises from eight countries in South and South East Asia took part in the workshop to get understandings about ISO 14067 Carbon Footprint of products and discuss necessary preparations for upcoming events of the programme in Cambodia and Nepal.
- Pham Thi Que Anh and Thanh Ha attended a two-day workshop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on October 23-24, 2012. More than 40 participants from National Standard Bodies, private organisations and companies from eight countries in South and South East Asia took part in the workshop to get understandings about the methodology to implement ISO 14067 Carbon Footprint of products and discuss necessary preparations for upcoming events of the programme in Nepal.
- Pham Thi Que Anh and Thanh Ha attended a three-day workshop on "Trade Promotion through Standardisation in the South and South East Asia (SESA) regions" in Kathmandu, Nepal on October 21-23, 2012. More than 40 participants from National Standard Bodies, private organisations and companies from eight countries in South and South East Asia took part in the workshop to get understandings about the way to make comments and submit comments to the draft ISO 13065 on Criteria for Sustainable Bioenergy. They also discussed necessary preparations for upcoming events of the programme in Brisbane, Australia in 2013.

## REPRESENTATIONS

- Pham Thi Que Anh attended two meetings organised by Consumers International (CI): the Asia-Pacific Regional Members' Meeting on March 05-07, 2012 and the "Consumer in the Information Society: Access, Fairness and Representation" meeting on March 08-09, 2012.
- Dinh Ngoc Diep attended an information session on the Vietnam Civil Society Facility Guidelines at the Embassy of Ireland, Hanoi on April 04, 2012.
- Pham Thi Que Anh attended the conference titled "Rio for People: Strengthening People's Capacity for Genuine Sustainable Development" held in Hanoi on June 05-07, 2012.
- Thanh Ha and Tran Thi To Tam participated in a conference entitled "One year since the implementation of the Law on protecting consumers' interests" co-hosted by the Vietnam Competition Authority (VCA) and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) in Hanoi on July 18, 2012.
- Pham Thi Que Anh participated in a Stakeholder Consultation Workshop within the framework of the project "Competition Policy and Law in ASEAN" (CPL), a cooperation between ASEAN and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), working upon commission by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Vientiane on August 30-31, 2012.
- Udai S Mehta and Pham Thi Que Anh participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Competition Conference held by VCA on September 13-14, 2012.
- Thanh Ha participated in the Launch Meeting of the project "Get Green Vietnam" funded by SWITCH ASIA-European Union and led by Technology University of Delft (TUD), the Netherlands in Hanoi on November 07, 2012.
- Pham Thi Que Anh and Tran Thi To Tam participated in the Conference to launch the "Review Report on Vietnam Competition Law" held by the Vietnam Competition Authority, Ministry of Industry and Trade in Hanoi, on December 04, 2012.
- Pham Thi Que Anh attended the forum for trade and investment facilitation in the GMS organised by the Mekong Institute (MI) under the framework of a two-year project entitled "Enhancing Provincial and Local Chambers of Commerce Capacities in Trade and Investment Facilitation along East-West Economic Corridor" in Khon Kaen, Thailand on December 17, 2012.