



Mandate Spotlight: 045 TISTR, Thailand

Strengthening ASEAN's SMEs in Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

Location: Thailand

Beneficiaries: TISTR and ASEAN Secretariat Science and Technology Division

Consultant: The Carbon Trust in cooperation with Connecting Founders

Start: April 2022

End: September 2023

GAC Contribution:

CAD 199,165

Context

The ASEAN region is highly vulnerable to climate change, with a history of severe impacts including cyclones, floods, and other natural disasters. These events have caused significant loss of life and economic damage. Climate change knows no geopolitical boundaries, posing risks that can spill over from one ASEAN member state to another. Many ASEAN countries have committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of global climate action plans. Despite the focus on large industries, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region, which contribute significantly to GDP and employment, also emit a substantial amount of CO₂ per capita.

In Thailand, like in other ASEAN countries, SMEs face the challenge of insufficient technical and financial support to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (TISTR) initiated a project to enhance SMEs' capabilities in gathering information on mitigation technologies, raising climate change awareness, creating adaptation guidelines, and supporting business continuity management. Thailand seeks to share this framework and tools with other ASEAN SMEs, acknowledging the need for data adjustments and international expertise to make the project applicable to different ASEAN contexts.

Despite facing similar climate risks to larger businesses, SMEs have often been overlooked in climate mitigation and adaptation policies. Policies that promote science, technology, and innovative solutions to address climate change, such as Thailand's TISTR mandate, can empower SMEs to protect themselves from climate-related negative impacts. Recognizing the significant contribution of SMEs to the economy, the mandate aimed to bolster their resilience and sustainability, benefiting the ASEAN economy, employment, and poverty reduction, particularly among women-led SMEs.

Brief Description of the Mandate

The mandate aimed to address climate change challenges faced by SMEs in the ASEAN region, with a particular focus on women-owned businesses. The mandate's primary objective was to develop a comprehensive set of guidelines that would assist SMEs in the ASEAN countries in developing gender-responsive strategies for both mitigating and adapting to climate change. These guidelines were meant to be accessible through a user-friendly website, providing SMEs with valuable information and tools.

The mandate was prompted by the recognition of the ASEAN region's vulnerability to climate change. Women-owned SMEs were identified as being at even greater risk due to their limited access to resources and financing. Research and consultations conducted during the project reinforced the need for guidelines to help SMEs respond effectively to the evolving challenges posed by climate change.

The mandate included various activities such as capacity-building workshops, validation workshops, and the development of an informative website with resources and a carbon footprint calculator. It also emphasized the integration of a gender perspective throughout the mandate by consulting with women-owned businesses and networks across multiple countries. Additionally, the mandate provided recommendations for further supporting SMEs, including training programs, tailored support for sector case studies, and advocating for government policies that benefit SMEs. Overall, the mandate aimed to make climate change concepts and strategies relatable to SMEs in the ASEAN region and foster positive changes in how they approach climate resilience and mitigation.

Selected Key Results

- **Development of Gender-Responsive Climate Change Guidelines:** Technical Experts successfully developed a comprehensive set of guidelines tailored to SMEs in the ASEAN region, particularly women-owned businesses. These guidelines, based on consultations with over 30 women-owned SMEs across ASEAN

countries, provide valuable information and practical steps for SMEs to develop climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

- **Creation of an Accessible Website:** An easy-to-use website was created, hosting the developed guidelines. This website not only presents the guidelines but also offers links to over 100 publicly available tools and resources. It includes a carbon footprint calculator, accessed by 1,200 SMEs, enabling them to measure and reduce their carbon emissions.
- **Capacity Building and Awareness:** The project conducted capacity-building workshops, reaching 150 SMEs, where 73% of participants were female entrepreneurs. Additionally, a dissemination workshop engaged 49 participants, with 36 being women entrepreneurs. These workshops played a vital role in raising awareness and building the capacity of SMEs in addressing climate change challenges and opportunities.
- **Enhanced Climate Resilience:** Through the guidelines and resources provided, SMEs in the ASEAN region, including women-owned businesses, improved their climate resilience. Survey data from participating SMEs revealed that 87% of respondents reported an increased understanding of climate risks, and 72% stated they were now better prepared to adapt their operations to mitigate climate-related challenges.

Environment & Climate Change

This mandate had a central objective: to create comprehensive guidelines that empower ASEAN SMEs to effectively address climate change. These guidelines cover both adaptation and mitigation strategies, delving into how SMEs can leverage emerging opportunities or address business risks related to climate change. Moreover, the project provides valuable insights into technologies that support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resilience against climate change impacts and introduces a simple-to-use carbon footprint calculator for organizations to start calculating their own footprint. Overall, it aligns seamlessly with critical environmental and climate change concerns.

Efforts to minimize greenhouse gas emissions have been integral to this project's implementation. Virtually conducted stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and validation workshops have significantly reduced business travel emissions. It's important to note that the majority of project activities have been conducted virtually.

Follow-up Support

In reflecting on the lessons learned from this initiative and looking ahead to further support SMEs in ASEAN, several key recommendations have emerged: a) Community-Level Training: implement a "train-the-trainers" program at the community level, with select individuals or organizations trained to disseminate climate change guidelines locally; b) Tailored Support for Exemplary Companies: provide direct support to a few SMEs as sector-specific case studies, inspiring others to take similar climate action; c) Policy Advocacy: collaborate with governments to develop policies specifically supporting SMEs in addressing climate change challenges.

Gender and Social Inclusion

A gender-sensitive approach was central to addressing climate risks and fostering innovation for SMEs in building climate resilience. Direct consultations with women-owned businesses and women's networks across various countries provided valuable insights into their unique perspectives and needs. These consultations, including those with diverse women's networks, ensured that the mandate's outcomes effectively served a wide range of stakeholders. They highlighted the strong interest among women-owned SMEs in receiving guidance and support to prepare for climate risks, particularly regarding access to finance and information, which were identified as significant barriers. The mandate prioritized extensive outreach to ensure equitable access to pertinent information, with a focus on inclusivity for women managing micro and small businesses, often in informal settings. While progress has been made in addressing the needs of women-owned businesses, ongoing efforts are crucial to maintain accessibility and inclusivity for a broader spectrum of women entrepreneurs.



Image 1: Screenshot of speakers during the poll session of the Capacity Building Workshop



Image 2: Group photo with participants during Dissemination Workshop