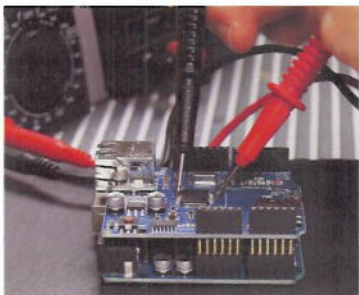




The TBT Enquiry Point
in the LAO People's
Democratic Republic

STANDARDS ALLIANCE

Standards and technical regulations are critical to global trade. Producers must understand the technical requirements governing their products in target export markets; and importers must ensure goods they bring in meet the relevant standards and technical regulations. To facilitate trade flows—as well as public safety and health—governments must have effective national standards bodies, transparent and participatory standards-setting processes, and up-to-date laws, regulations, and information portals.



How the alliance works

The Standards Alliance (SA) will provide technical and financial resources to advance reforms that help businesses participate in the global trading system while building the capacity of developing countries to implement the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). A U.S.-sponsored technical assistance facility, the SA will work with

government authorities to design and provide technical assistance and training based on international standards and best practice. Requests for technical assistance received from least-developed countries will be prioritized.

The SA is a flexible funding facility that will respond quickly to requests for assistance from developing country regulatory and standards authorities. The SA will also consider requests from regional economic communities. The SA will tailor the type and mechanism of assistance to specific needs, including opening access to a broad range of U.S. Government and private sector expertise in standards and technical regulations.

Alliance assistance

Since 2000, the U.S. Government has provided developing countries over \$14 billion in trade-related technical assistance and training in, among other areas, developing aspects of national standards regimes, implementing the TBT Agreement, and enhancing public-private dialogue on standards and technical regulations. USAID expands on this commitment through SA assistance, including:

- Development and provision of technical training programs for standards experts
- Institutional and organizational capacity building in standards development
- Development and implementation of legal and regulatory frameworks for standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment
- Outreach and communication strategies for increasing public and private sector awareness on the benefits of international standards and conformity assessment procedures.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



ALLIANCE SERVICE AREAS

Implementing an effective TBT enquiry point

Under the TBT Agreement, each WTO Member must set up a national enquiry point and notification authority. This entity, usually within a country's national standards body, acts as a focal point where domestic and foreign producers, consumers, or government entities can obtain information on a Member's technical regulations, standards, and certification procedures. The notification authority must also inform the WTO Secretariat when standards, conformity assessment procedures, or technical regulations are being proposed that could significantly affect trade of other Members.



Improving the standards development process

WTO members must comply with the Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption, and Application of Standards. The code also requires that the national standards body provide information regarding its work program at least twice a year, including where details of the program can be obtained. An effective national standards body facilitates participation in the development and effective use of standards through technical committees consisting of experts from industry, research organizations, government, consumers, and non-government organizations.

Strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for standards

An effective and updated legal and institutional framework is the foundation for the development of technical infrastructure to protect human health, safety and the environment while improving the competitiveness of domestic producers and facilitating international trade. Outdated standards and poorly crafted regulations can be a drag on productivity and growth. Strengthening the institutional processes on standards and regulations can ensure producers know which standards are relevant and applicable and improve regulators' ability to craft and implement efficient and effective technical regulations.

Private sector outreach and communication

Standards serve both public and private functions, which raises fundamental questions about the appropriate roles of government and the private sector. The United States' standards-setting process reflects a strong bias in favor of the marketplace. The U.S. government's role is focused not on setting standards, but on ensuring that the process undertaken by private sector entities is fair and balanced, as well as effective in enabling producers to compete in global markets. While respecting each nation's approach to standards formulation, the SA will focus on promoting a positive working relationship between government and private sector interests. A productive division of labor in the standards-setting area engages the appropriate experts and builds technical know-how.



NEXT STEPS

Governments interested in technical assistance from the SA should contact USAID at SA@usaid.gov with a brief expression of interest. The SA will then provide a one-page formal application. Applications received by March 31st, 2013 will be prioritized. Applications received after that date will be considered on a rolling basis. USAID will work with applicants directly to develop a detailed statement of work, timeline, and budget for implementation.