

27 May 2020

European Union Delegation to Thailand
Athenee Tower, 10th Floor,
63 Wireless Road
Bangkok, Thailand

Dear [REDACTED],

I am pleased to enclose the First progress report for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) programme, “Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women at Work in Asia (WeEmpowerAsia)” (project ATLAS number 00119817, your reference PI/2019/404-960). This report covers the period from April 2019 to March 2020; a financial report, an updated workplan and request for payment accompanying the narrative report. UN Women is grateful to the European Union, through the European External Action Service, for its generous contribution to the programme which has the overall aim to empower more women to lead and participate in business to advance sustainable and inclusive growth.

During the period under review, WeEmpowerAsia has implemented an innovative and catalytic approach to make significant progress towards achieving all programme outcomes. The groundwork has successfully been laid through strategically setting up the right partnerships, engaging the right stakeholders and networks, conducting assessments and starting to develop strategic materials and assets. WeEmpowerAsia fundamentally seeks to strengthen the European Union-Asia linkages for inclusive trade and business, and as such the programme has a strong emphasis on partnering and working with European companies and organizations. There has been collaboration with ‘sister’ WeEmpower programmes in Europe (G7) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Win-Win) to share experiences and integrate their learnings into the Asia-Pacific context.

To create an overall enabling environment for women in business (Outcome 1), WeEmpowerAsia has developed several influential knowledge-based products. For example, Women’s Economic Empowerment Policy Reviews are ongoing in India and Vietnam, allowing the analysis of evidence, gaps and knowledge needs. This is complemented by a Policy Review with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in assessing the landscape of relevant public policies and private sector reporting criteria and practices in alignment with the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

To support women-led and gender-inclusive entrepreneurship (Outcome 2), WeEmpowerAsia has also conducted women entrepreneurs needs assessment consultations to have a thorough understanding of their capacity, needs and gaps, which has subsequently informed the capacity-building workshops. WeEmpowerAsia has also engaged with key influencers to build a network of champions for women's economic empowerment and gender equality. A widespread survey of the regional entrepreneurship ecosystem was also completed, kickstarting a major 'entrepreneurship accelerator' component of the programme, which is incorporating European countries and entrepreneurs.

WeEmpowerAsia has also made substantial progress in promoting inclusive business culture by raising awareness and uptake of the WEPs (Outcome 3). Through active engagement with key stakeholders, the programme has successfully increased the number of signatories to WEPs from 588 to 718 in the Asia-Pacific and 172 to 228 in the seven programme countries. Aiming to create sustainable change, WeEmpowerAsia is also developing contextualized tools and materials for the promotion of WEPs to be used in the region and across all seven countries.

Although the coronavirus pandemic posed challenges to implementing the final months of Year 1 workplan, the team reacted quickly and, with the generous support of the European Union, developed a full mitigation strategy with amended workplans and new initiatives to ensure that COVID-19 response and economic recovery is gender-inclusive.

We wish to thank the European Union once again for its generous support and partnership in Asia and Europe. We welcome any comments or questions and would be grateful if you could share this report with the appropriate officials in the capital and elsewhere. We have also sent a copy of the report package electronically to the colleagues listed below, for any necessary follow-up.

Yours sincerely,



UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

