

Executive Summary

Report on Cooperation between the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Implementation of the WIPO Deliverables for the decade 2011-2020

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The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has been actively engaged with least developed countries (LDCs) to contribute to their efforts towards implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA).

The Organization has been providing support to LDCs in the well-defined thematic priority areas under the WIPO Deliverables for LDCs for 2011-2020, adopted on the occasion of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (UN LDC-IV).

WIPO's support and technical assistance to LDCs have been premised on building the technological capacity of the public and private sectors; providing access to scientific and technical information; the formulation and implementation of innovation and intellectual property (IP) policies and strategies; the establishment of technology and innovation support centers; the transfer of appropriate technology; branding; the strengthening of managerial and technical capacities; and the provision of service infrastructure. In addition, the importance of gender equality was emphasized throughout the implementation of the various activities.

More specifically, WIPO has been helping LDCs to develop and implement IP policies and innovation strategies, which set out the measures formulated and implemented by governments to encourage and facilitate effective invention, innovation, creativity and management of IP assets, institutions and systems. Since 2010, 29 LDCs have adopted and are in the process of implementing IP policies and strategies at the national level.

WIPO's support to LDCs has focused in particular on skills development and building national institutional capacity relating to IP for the use of innovation and creativity for development. These efforts have been made in various forms and partnerships. For instance, since 2015, WIPO has been organizing regional partnership initiatives for innovation and technological capacity building in the LDCs in Africa, as well as in Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), with participation from a total of 202 senior officials and experts from LDCs. Between 2010 and 2020, 871 individuals from LDCs participated in joint training programs on intellectual property rights (IPRs) for LDCs organized by WIPO in cooperation with the Swedish Intellectual Property Office (PRV) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Moreover, since 2010, 216 students from LDCs have participated in the Joint Master's Degree programs on IP for LDCs, established under the WIPO Academic Institutions Program.

WIPO has undertaken a number of key initiatives in the area of science, technology and innovation to contribute to LDCs' efforts to "build productive capacity", a priority area of the IPoA. These aim to facilitate and enhance LDCs' access to the global patent information system and provide them with free access to high-end technical and scientific information resources through the following three knowledge-sharing platforms, launched by WIPO together with public and private-sector partners:

- Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI). This partnership program focuses on increasing the availability of scientific and technical information in developing countries and LDCs in order to build their capacity to participate in the global knowledge economy. It also helps researchers in developing countries to create and develop new solutions to the technical challenges they face at the local and global levels. To date, a total of 309 organizations and institutions from 37 LDCs have participated in training on the use of the ARDI program.

- Access to Specialized Patent Information (ASPI). This WIPO-administered public-private partnership program was launched in cooperation with leading patent information providers. It provides eligible patent offices and academic and research institutions in LDCs and developing countries with free or low-cost access to sophisticated tools and services for retrieving and analyzing patent data. To date, 46 LDCs have been involved in training on the use of the ASPI program.
- WIPO Re:Search. The aim of this consortium is to stimulate research and development (R&D) for new and better treatment options, and to provide access to IP relating to pharmaceutical compounds and technologies, and, most importantly, to provide access to know-how and data for R&D to fight neglected tropical diseases, tuberculosis, and malaria. To date, ten LDCs have joined this initiative.

The overall objective of the above platforms is to contribute to LDCs' efforts to build capacity in science, technology and innovation, and to strengthen their integration into the global knowledge system.

One of WIPO's main initiatives to address the needs of LDCs is the establishment of Technology and Innovation Support Centers (TISCs), as an institutional and infrastructural response to help these countries to access technical and scientific information. TISCs provide the local research and business community with expert assistance in the effective retrieval of technological information, helping it to navigate online access to patent, scientific and technical journal databases. Between 2010 and 2020, WIPO established TISC networks in 27 LDCs.

In addition, WIPO has joined with other partners in helping LDCs to address their green technology needs through the establishment of WIPO Green, which is an interactive marketplace that promotes innovation and the dissemination of green technologies by connecting technology and service providers with those seeking innovative solutions.

One of the most important partnership programs between WIPO and LDCs involves the transfer of appropriate technology to contribute to LDCs' community and national development needs and efforts. The aim of this program, implemented by WIPO in cooperation with national partners, is to move beyond merely providing access to knowledge. This project seeks to identify ways and means of using patent information as a source of technology to address identified national development needs areas at the community and national levels. It also aims to explore how to effectively deliver appropriate technologies to the people, communities and organizations in LDCs who need them. In this regard, it coordinates access and retrieval of technical and scientific information, and facilitates the effective and practical application of relevant technology through appropriate know-how and business plans.

In this context, since 2010, pilot projects have been successfully implemented in six selected LDCs of Africa and Asia, namely: Bangladesh, Nepal and Zambia (Phase I); and Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania (Phase II). Throughout the implementation of the project pilot phases in the six beneficiary countries, a total of twelve appropriate technologies have been identified. This project is also being rolled out in Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda. After two external evaluations of these projects were completed, evaluating Phases I and II of their formulation, administration, implementation and impact, the WIPO Program on Appropriate Technology was launched, to be administered and implemented by the WIPO Division for LDCs.

WIPO initiatives on branding for LDCs have enabled the promotion and development of goods and services of local communities and the strengthening of marketing capacity at the community and national levels by focusing on the strategic use of IP for economic growth and development. During the period from 2010 to 2020, WIPO organized a wide range of training activities for over 21 LDCs, in the areas of branding and IP strategy, branding for business and community, development, trademark protection, collective marks, branding for value addition and branding and design for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Organization has also provided

policy and legislative assistance on trademark, industrial designs and geographical indications, upon request, to more than 24 LDCs.

A few LDCs, such as Ethiopia (coffee), Uganda (cotton, sesame and vanilla), the Republic of Tanzania (cloves, coffee), Cambodia (premium rice) and Mozambique ("Cabri de Tete" meat), have benefited from projects focused on supporting product branding and IP protection of a number of agricultural products. Product branding support initiatives have also been launched in other LDCs.

WIPO has offered its expertise to LDCs to help them to take inventory of and document their national traditional knowledge resources and develop IP strategies for their protection. WIPO also shared its expertise with LDCs on how to establish traditional knowledge digital libraries. Since 2010, WIPO has been conducting studies and providing legislative assistance and policy advice, upon request, to a number of LDCs, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Uganda and Vanuatu, in relation to traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Gender equality and women's empowerment relating to the use of IP tools for invention, innovation and technological capacity building are an integral part of the work of WIPO's Division for LDCs. Moreover, this Division has a gender focal point representing the Division in internal and external meetings. On average, the gender distribution of participants in technological capacity building and other training programs organized by the Division has been 55% women compared to 45% men. In addition, "IP and gender equality" is a stand-alone substantive program topic in training programs, and participants are encouraged to include such considerations in their project implementation. Cooperation and engagement with entities and institutions working on gender and IP issues in LDCs has also been strengthened. Partner institutions include the University of Dar es Salaam, the Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) in Tanzania, Grooming a Successful Woman with Intellectual Mind (GSWIM) in Uganda and Copper Belt University in Zambia. As a result of this engagement, training and capacity building activities for women entrepreneurs have been organized in Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Women inventors from Zambia and women entrepreneurs from Uganda made presentations during WIPO events on the transfer of appropriate technology. A woman inventor from Zambia has registered a patent on water distillation and participated in the application of other inventions using national technologies (inventions inspired as a result of the transfer and application of WIPO Appropriate Technology Projects) in the country.

Although some progress has been made, LDCs still have a long way to go towards the effective use of IP as a tool for development and wealth creation. According to data compiled by WIPO, from 2010 to 2018, the number of patent applications filed by LDC residents doubled, from 835 to 1,634; the number of trademarks applications filed nearly tripled, from 21,341 to 61,288; and the number of industrial design applications filed more than tripled, from 1,281 to 4,319. Nevertheless, the overall volume and share of applications filed by LDC residents within the global economy remains very low.