

Valuable lessons in IP

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For nearly 30 years, the Swedish Intellectual Property Office (PRV) has cooperated with the government's agency for development cooperation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Sida's activities are funded through Swedish tax revenue, and through cooperation with civil society, multilateral organisations, public agencies and the private sector, Sida works on sustainable development projects and assists in creating conditions for people living in poverty and oppression to improve their living conditions.

Sida's geographical focus is on countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe.

In this respect, knowledge about IP and how this can lead to economic development is a very important part of its activities.

Before COVID-19, international IP training programmes (ITPs) were held at the PRV main office in Stockholm, where participants spent three weeks meeting experts from PRV, as well as other agencies, organisations and companies, and visited Swedish businesses. The goal was (and is) to study how IP, including copyright, patent, trademark and design protection, can lead to economic development.

After the first phase of the course, each participant continued to work on their project back home, with a follow-up about six months after the course in one of the participants' countries, in which the participants reported their results and how they planned to continue developing their projects.

At the last physical meeting in 2019, 25 participants from 14 countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, participated for three weeks in seminars and roundtable IP discussions, as well as international negotiation and project management.

Virtual training

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has closed the doors for international travel and physical meetings, the pandemic shows that it may be more important than ever to keep up the development and protection of IP rights, in order to find solutions to medical problems, develop the general industry and improve living conditions. Therefore, PRV is now offering virtual versions of the ITPs.

During 2021, the PRV arranged three training programmes: ITP: 313a and 313b: “Intellectual Property for Least Developed Countries (LDCs)”, with initial virtual meetings in February and May, and virtual follow-up meetings in September and December 2021. The main objectives, as presented by PRV, for the programme include:

- To increase the familiarity with the foundational concepts and the different categories of IP for the achievement of national development objectives including the strengthening of IP institutions and systems in LDCs.
- To inform about and discuss a number of specific issues, related to development, in the area of IP, including the impact of IP to enable solutions of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To discuss and provide examples of various aspects of international negotiations in the field of IP to strengthen capacity and multilateral cooperation.

The programmes explain the role of IP in key national public policy issues as well as the importance of patents and other IP rights and their role in promoting innovation, economic growth, increased competitiveness, and socio-economic development.

The third training programme, called “ITP: 313c IP and Genetic Resources—in Support of Innovation”, scheduled for April 2021 with a follow-up meeting in November 2021, is described by PRV as a programme that “will build human capacity in IP in the field of genetic resources and traditional knowledge in support of innovation”.

The programme focuses on how IP can be used and have a positive influence on daily life, contribute to public health, address climate change, make new technologies available, support rural development, empower small businesses, promote scientific research, and contribute to inclusive economic growth and reduced poverty.

This programme is something that all politicians, financiers and decision-makers around the world, including in Sweden, should actively participate in, in order to learn and understand the importance of IP for our daily life and economic growth.

The participants in the ITPs may return to us next year and give Europe a necessary update on how to secure a healthy future based on well-used IP rights.

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