

INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH ACCESS TO ACCREDITED TESTING

PHILIPPINES

Like many countries, the Philippines was ravaged by the health and socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country also faced a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) brought about by mass impulse-driven purchases and heavy reliance on importing this product. The absence of a testing laboratory in the country for medical textiles at the onset of the pandemic was further challenging. Local manufacturers, traders, and the government had to send PPE samples for testing to international laboratories in China, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This led to additional shipment costs and longer result lead times—a difficult approach for micro, small and medium enterprises.

As part of the government's COVID-19 response, the Department of Trade and Industry collaborated with local textile manufacturers to expand and diversify their production to produce locally manufactured PPE. Moreover, the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) of the Department of Science and Technology expanded their operation and launched a medical textile testing center to fill the gap in rapid and affordable testing of textiles used in the healthcare and hygiene sector.

To further support these government-led initiatives, the GQSP Philippines will assist the PTRI Medical Textile Testing

Center in developing a business plan consisting of the center's objectives and development goals, including the scope of services and their target market for testing services. A market assessment will provide baseline information, focusing on the demand for quality testing services of PPE. The GQSP Philippines also supports the development of an implementation roadmap for the business plan—with a training and capacity building programme for the laboratory—and application for accreditation of the new testing scopes of three component laboratories in the fields of chemical, mechanical, and microbiological testing.

Ultimately, the efforts of the GQSP Philippines will, allow local PPE producers to compete with lower-priced, imported PPE and ensure compliance of PPE with international standards and certifications required for exporting PPE, thus improving the capacity of local manufacturers to access global markets and value chains.

The Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP) is a global initiative to strengthen the export competitiveness of twelve partner countries, supported by Switzerland through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).



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