

USAID and NASA using technology for development in Lower Mekong

Media Release

BANGKOK, Thailand – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have announced a five-year project that will promote the use of satellite imagery to help Asia's Lower Mekong region better predict and cope with floods and other natural disasters and increase resilience to the negative effects of climate change.

SERVIR Mekong, funded by USAID and NASA and implemented by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and its partners, will help governments and other key decision-makers in Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam take advantage of publicly available satellite imagery, geospatial data and maps to make more informed decisions on issues such as water management, land use planning, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure development and natural resource management.

“Use of the best available science and technology is essential to safeguarding this region's vital ecosystems and the goods and services they provide to society,” said Michael Yates, Director of USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia. “Under SERVIR Mekong, Asian scientists, NASA scientists and others will work hand-in-hand to develop tools to build resilience and address some of the region's greatest challenges.”

“ADPC and its partners are committed to improving public safety. We support governments to make better risk-sensitive decisions towards sustainable food security, ecosystem management, disaster risk management, addressing climate change phenomena, and promoting community awareness,” stated Shane Wright, Executive Director of ADPC.

Operating as a regional hub, SERVIR Mekong will promote collaboration between technical institutions in the region and develop analytical tools, services and products that are tailored to the needs of the Lower Mekong region's decision-makers such as government officials and disaster management professionals and regional institutions such as planning agencies and development partners.

SERVIR Mekong is one of four SERVIR hubs currently operating across the developing world. SERVIR connects USAID's development network in data-poor environments with NASA's science, technology and extensive satellite data. Together with leading regional organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, SERVIR has developed 43 climate change adaptation and mitigation products to provide information, tools and training to more than 30 countries.

For example, in Bangladesh, where climate change has altered rainfall patterns and disrupted formerly predictable flood cycles, a new satellite-based flood forecasting system developed by the SERVIR hub based in Nepal is helping communities and supporting agencies design measures to better protect lives, homes, crops and livestock. SERVIR Mekong will bring similar tools to bear on the challenges of the Lower Mekong region.

ADPC will be working with Spatial Informatics Group, USA (SIG); Stockholm Environmental Institute, Thailand (SEI); and Deltares, Netherlands (Deltares).



NOTE TO EDITOR:

As the most hazard prone region in the world, Asia-Pacific must proactively manage its disaster risk. For nearly 30 years, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) has been making Asia-Pacific safer by strengthening disaster resilience at all levels.

Established in 1986, ADPC is an independent non-governmental organization. With headquarters located in Bangkok, Thailand, ADPC has country offices in Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar.

ADPC's well-established networks with government line agencies and strong partnerships with regional organizations and development agencies provide the foundation for their work.

ADPC deploys disaster risk management (DRM) information and systems to reduce local, national and regional risk across Asia-Pacific. Its portfolio focuses on DRM capacity building, improving DRM for cities and climate change, mainstreaming DRM into national and local development, improving DRM systems and undertaking disaster risk assessments. To achieve its aims in disaster risk reduction, ADPC works closely with local, national and regional governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, donors and development partners.

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