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# Supporting the Lower Mekong Initiative

*“The Lower Mekong Initiative reflects the commitment of the United States to the well-being of the people and the long-term success of the nations in the Mekong River area.”*

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S.-Lower Mekong Ministerial Meeting, Bali, Indonesia  
July 22, 2011

## BACKGROUND

The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) was launched in response to the July 23, 2009, meeting between the United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and the Foreign Ministers of the Lower Mekong Countries—Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam—in Phuket, Thailand. The Ministers agreed to enhance cooperation in environment, health, education and infrastructure development. Under this Initiative, the United States and the four Lower Mekong countries will strengthen cooperation in these areas building on their common interests. U.S. assistance to the Lower Mekong countries through USAID totaled more than USD \$235 million in Fiscal Year 2011. USAID supports LMI countries through the environmental and health pillars of the Initiative.

## GOALS

A primary objective of the LMI is to build local capacity to promote collaboration between countries and across borders to effectively overcome the obstacles and meet the challenges and opportunities within the region. The Initiative's goals are to build stronger communities through improved health systems, environmental cooperation, strategic natural resource management, joint education initiatives, expanded use of technology (especially in rural areas) and sustainable solutions in infrastructure, energy and economy.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING THE LOWER MEKONG REGION

The overarching goal of the Initiative's Environment Pillar is to promote dialogue among LMI countries on sound and sustainable environmental management. Within this goal, the LMI promotes natural resource management and climate change policies; improves institutional and human resource capacity to address related transnational issues; strengthens cooperation among LMI countries; encourages green growth, including incorporating good governance tools for sustainable natural resource management into the development strategy for the Lower Mekong Basin; and improves disaster risk management practices and climate change adaptation strategies by developing and deploying better weather and climate simulation tools. Major activities implemented through USAID Asia supporting the LMI Environment Pillar are listed below.

- A Climate Resilient Mekong River; Maintaining the Flows that Nourish Life
- Researching Adaption and Resilience to Climate Change
- Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests
- Strengthening Water Resources Planning
- Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking

## HEALTH CHALLENGES FACING THE LOWER MEKONG REGION

The LMI countries are committed to activities that improve human health, which in turn reduces poverty and impediments to economic development. Cross-border and migrant issues are a particular concern. LMI Health activities focus on four major areas: infectious diseases; prevention and control of counterfeit and substandard medications; regional collaboration to support implementation of the international health regulations; and sharing best practices related to disease management. Major activities implemented through USAID Asia supporting the LMI Health Pillar are listed below.

- The President's Malaria Initiative
- Control and Prevention of Malaria; Flagship Project of The President's Malaria Initiative
- Combatting Emerging Pandemic Threats
- Enhancing National Responses to HIV/AIDS
- Promoting the Quality of Medicines