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USAID MEKONG SAFEGUARDS

USAID Mekong Safeguards provides policy makers, government regulators, major financiers, and contractors with the information and tools they need to apply environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards for infrastructure development in the Lower Mekong region. This activity advances the U.S. Government's Indo-Pacific Vision by helping Lower Mekong countries build locally-developed solutions, improve transparency in infrastructure decision-making, and accelerate the role of private sector as a driver of development.

The Mekong River Basin is a vital biodiversity area and the source of livelihood for an estimated 70 million people. Major donors and lenders are ramping up infrastructure investments in the region, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy Infrastructure Fund, which have the potential to economically transform the region. However, without sound environmental and social safeguards, many infrastructure projects are developed at the expense of the surrounding environment and communities. USAID Mekong Safeguards, implemented by The Asia Foundation in partnership with the Global Environment Institute, and The Stimson Center, helps countries apply ESG standards to improve the environmental and social outcomes of new infrastructure development in the region.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Integrating ESG standards into infrastructure development and financing decision-making processes ensures that the region will remain an attractive destination for investors and a vibrant source of economic prosperity for those who live there. Through training workshops, innovative tools, proprietary research, information sharing, and strategic partnerships, USAID Mekong Safeguards fosters greater understanding and capacity among decision-makers on the importance of these standards.

IMPROVING THE APPLICATION OF ESG STANDARDS

USAID Mekong Safeguards facilitates regulators and financiers to require developers and contractors meet ESG requirements by: identifying key gaps in policy and legal frameworks mandating ESG standards; improving these standards and practices among regulators and financial institutions; supporting regional bodies to advocate for regional standards; strengthening stock exchange disclosures on companies' ESG activities so investors can incorporate these considerations into their investments; and facilitating civil society engagement on infrastructure projects.

USING INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS

USAID Mekong Safeguards aims to increase information flow to key stakeholders in the region; enhance the awareness and capacity of decision makers on using planning tools and approaches that help track, monitor, and quantify the environmental and social impacts of infrastructure projects; and increase donor/investor collaboration through discussions on ESG standards.

IMPACTS AND RESULTS

USAID Mekong Safeguards will lead to improved environmental and social outcomes as new infrastructure is developed in the region. The application of consistent ESG standards will contribute toward the development of more sustainable infrastructure plans and help countries operationalize their own sustainable development visions that were put forth in their respective national green growth strategies.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, please visit <https://www.usaid.gov/asia-regional/sustainable-mekong> or info-rdma@usaid.gov.