

New faces of development assistance

CSG's State Environmental Initiative encourages states to partner with developing countries to keep their environments clean.

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In 1994, The Council of State Governments launched the State Environmental Initiative, a matching-grants program designed to encourage international partnerships in environmental and economic development between U.S. states and Asian/Pacific nations and territories. Funding is provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development through the U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership.

Over the past seven years, this state-federal cooperative agreement has awarded \$5.4 million to 40 projects involving 23 states and 12 Asian economies. Many partners, including 105 U.S. companies, 116 state agencies, 38 academic institutions and several dozen other organizations, have matched these grants with more than \$8.3 million. The projects have resulted in at least \$6 million in sales by participating U.S. companies.

The SEI program provides incentives to states to share their knowledge and experience abroad. The states adjust their best practices to the requirements of developing nations and jointly build sustainable programs benefiting both the



Three boys carved a design into a log in the Van Ha village in Vietnam. The woodcraft industry there faces many environmental problems, including exposure to hazardous substances and disposal of waste.



A woman worked on a carving in the Van Ha village in Vietnam. Many people there make their living from traditional handicrafts.

U.S. and Asian countries. The program allows states to increase their international capacities by becoming members of a growing global market. The experience strengthens not only the state institutions directly involved in day-to-day operations of the project, but also the state's ability to meet the challenges and take advantage of growing international opportunities.

Here are four examples of projects supported by the State Environmental Initiative.

Washington: Clean Cities Center in the Philippines. When Washington state established the Clean Washington Center in Seattle in 1991, its purpose was to create new demand for recycled materials. The center was so successful at developing markets for waste materials that it reduced municipal solid waste going to area landfills by 40 percent to 60 percent in seven years.

The Clean Washington Center became nationally known for its recycling technologies. It is now operated by the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, a public/private partnership of five states and three Canadian provinces. Washington asked the partnership to expand the center's mission and services to the entire region and beyond. As a result, the center has signed contracts to build similar facilities in New Zealand, Australia, Spain and England.

With a 1998 grant from the State Environmental Initiative, the Clean Washington Center worked with the Philippine League of Cities and the Philippine Industrial Technology Development Institute to develop a Clean Cities Center for the Philippines. Now, 24 Philippine cities are part of the pilot Clean

Cities Center project and eight Philippine League of Cities members have established clean city center programs.

Philippine city managers heard about the Clean Washington Center from British Columbia and the cities of Seattle and Portland. The Northwest Environmental Business Council, the Washington State Office of Trade and Economic Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have all participated in the program. The Pacific Northwest Economic Region matched the SEI grant with more than \$300,000.

California: Air quality monitoring network in Vietnam. In the summer of 1999, Vietnam's national and provincial agencies for science, technology and environment asked the U.S. EPA for assistance. Ho Chi Minh City urgently needed an air quality monitoring network. Because Ho Chi Minh City already had a sister-city relationship with San Francisco, Vietnamese officials visited California to learn about U.S. technology and receive training on how to set up an air quality network.

The California Air Resources Board has continued to provide technical assistance to ensure air monitoring stations in Vietnam are properly operated and main-



Emma Luna, administrator for Tagaytay City in the Philippines, and Matt Morrison, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, both center, surveyed a mushroom-growing operation to assess how it could reduce waste.

tained. With an SEI grant, the board has launched extensive training in air quality management and laboratory best practices in Vietnam. Also participating are the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District and two California businesses, Andersen Instruments Inc. and Advanced Pollution Instruments Inc., which have contributed \$147,986.

Colorado and Malaysia: Cleaner production in Vietnam. Little did the Colorado Environmental Business Alliance know when it began a partnership of agencies and businesses in Colorado with environmental and industry groups in Malaysia in 1998 that the project would expand to Vietnam.

The project began when the Colorado Environmental Business Alliance worked with four manufacturing organizations in Malaysia to develop programs to reduce pollution. With a grant this year from the University of Colorado Business Advancement Center, the alliance expanded the project to include municipal, state and national agencies in Vietnam, which wanted to develop programs for cleaner production and environmental best practices in two villages near Hanoi that rely on traditional handicraft production.

The Vietnam project heavily depended on the skills and experience of the Malaysian participants as the Colorado partners were not allowed to travel to Vietnam after the Sept. 11 attacks. In this way, Malaysia and Vietnam have developed a new partnership that promises to be a dynamic and self-sufficient alliance for a clean environment for years to come. The Colorado-led project is matching the SEI grant with \$155,565.

Maryland: Air quality management in Thailand. The Maryland Department of Environment had already conducted several exchanges with the Pollution Control Department of Thailand when it applied for an SEI grant to assist Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city, with air quality management. As part of the effort to decentralize the federal government, the Pollution Control Department of Thailand is delegating responsibility for air quality to its provinces and municipalities. For the SEI project, the



Officials from the Maryland Department of the Environment gave a workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to help officials there develop a plan for improving air quality. The U.S. team was led by Merrylyn Zaw-Mon (standing, fourth from left), deputy secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment, and included representatives from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Environmental Training Institute.

Maryland Department of Environment trained federal and local environmental staff in Thailand on how to develop an air quality management plan.

The partnership of U.S. and Thai governmental agencies was a key element of the project's success. The Maryland Department of Environment worked with the U.S. EPA, U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Environmental Training Institute, as well as the Pollution Control Department and the city of Chiang Mai in Thailand. These close working relationships demonstrated to Thai federal and local environmental officials how federal and state agencies can cooperate.

Another key was participation at the highest agency level from Maryland. Jane Nishida, secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment, and members of her senior staff have met several times in both Maryland and Thailand with the Thailand Pollution Control Department director as well as the national air and water quality directors.

In addition, air quality officials and staff from the Pollution Control Department and the city of Chiang Mai plan to hold a workshop for representatives of other Thai cities and provinces on how Chiang Mai developed its air quality management plan, which will serve as a

model for cities throughout Thailand. Staff members also hope to conduct regional training for environmental officials from neighboring countries, so Chiang Mai's air quality plan might serve as a regional model as well. Thai officials plan to provide this national and regional training, with Maryland staff acting only as participants.

Results

The results of the SEI program are numerous, ranging from strengthening environmental laws and regulations, establishing joint state/country resource centers for continued information-sharing, to selling American technology, equipment and services abroad. Most important, SEI is an effective way to build long-lasting, multi-faceted relationships between U.S. states and their Asian counterparts. Such relationships foster trust, open a broad spectrum of opportunities, and communicate the importance of international economic development. ★

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