

## *U.S.-Sponsored Climate Change Adaptation Activities – Enhancing Resilience*

“To clean the air, and to address climate change, we need to recognize that economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand. Affluent societies are the ones that demand, and can therefore afford, the most environmental protection. Prosperity is what allows us to commit more and more resources to environmental protection. And in the coming decades, the world needs to develop and deploy billions of dollars of technologies that generate energy in cleaner ways. And we need strong economic growth to make that possible.”

— President George W. Bush, February 14, 2002

Economic growth, environmental protection, and poverty alleviation go hand in hand, for affluent societies are not only inherently more resilient and adaptable to changing economic, social or environmental conditions of all kinds but are in a position to afford higher levels of environmental protection. Thus, the best way to address climate variability and change is through economic growth that takes place in a manner that preserves the environment for future generations. We encourage nations to help themselves, and create thriving, prosperous economies, recognizing that successful growth must be predicated upon education, rule of law, good governance, the protection of human freedom and economic reforms. This successful and proven approach underpins our wide range of programs and activities that assist developing countries, ranging from our trade policies, development assistance programs, and international environmental initiatives, as well as our support for such internationally-agreed strategies as the Doha Development Agenda, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the Delhi Declaration. Countries that have flexible and resilient societies and economies are best placed to address both the challenges and the opportunities presented by changing climatic conditions.

The United States has undertaken a broad range of activities to assist countries to become stronger and more resilient in addressing potential climate change impacts. The U.S. was one of the first nations to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to build core capacity to undertake vulnerability assessments through its Country Studies Program (CSP). Between 1994 and 2001, the CSP helped 56 such countries build the human and institutional capacities necessary to assess their vulnerability to climate change. Subsequent activities build off those efforts with the goal of furthering knowledge gained through the assessments and mobilizing adaptation actions. This document describes some of the wide-ranging adaptation activities the United States is pursuing.

### **Highlights of some U.S. projects and programs to address adaptation to climate variability and potential climate change include:**

Earth Observation Efforts — Earth observations provide critical input for understanding the Earth system—its weather, climate, oceans, land, geology, natural resources, ecosystems, and natural and human-induced hazards—that is crucial to achieving sustainable development. The U.S.-hosted the first-ever Earth Observation Summit, in July 2003 which generated strong international support to link thousands of individual technological assets into a coordinated, sustained, and comprehensive global Earth observation system. The purpose of the system is to provide the tools needed to substantially improve our ability to identify and address critical environmental, economic, and societal concerns. A second Earth Observation Summit was held in Tokyo in April 2004. The Group on Earth Observations, created to carry forward this international initiative, now includes 57 countries, the European Commission, and more than 30 international organizations. The third Earth Observation Summit will convene in February 2005 in Brussels to approve its international plan.

Building Resilience through Development Assistance — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has broadened its climate change portfolio to include a new program aimed at strengthening the capabilities of developing and transition countries to respond to the challenges posed by climate-related impacts and risks. This new, multi-year program seeks to strengthen the capabilities of program managers, host country institutions, project implementers, and sectoral experts to assess relative vulnerabilities and to evaluate and implement adaptation options for agriculture, water, and coastal zone management projects within USAID's development assistance portfolio. The first coastal zone management pilot is underway in La Ceiba, Honduras and pilots in Africa and Asia are forthcoming.

Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) — The National Atmospheric and Space Administration (NASA), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and USAID are working in collaboration with local, regional, and international partners to provide early warning and vulnerability information on emerging or evolving food security issues in twenty countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, three countries in Central America, and in Haiti and Afghanistan. A primary goal of the FEWS NET program is to produce high quality information for disaster and crisis prediction. FEWS NET provides demand-driven information products that pinpoint and assess emerging or evolving food security problems. Program professionals in the United States and Africa monitor data and information—including remotely sensed as well as ground-based data on meteorological, crop, and rangeland conditions—for early indications of potential threats to food security. The program also works to strengthen African early warning and response networks by increasing local technical capacity, building and strengthening networks, developing policy-relevant information, and forming consensus about food security problems and solutions.

Regional Climate Outlook Forums — NOAA and USAID jointly fund Regional Climate Outlook Forums, which have become a principal vehicle for providing advance information about the likely character of seasonal climate in several sub-regions in Africa, the Americas and Asia. The Forums bring together climate forecasters and forecast users to develop a consensus forecast from multiple predictions and to discuss methods of dissemination and application of information. They provide a unique opportunity for stakeholders to meet, share information and concerns, and forge an informal network to address common problems.

RANET: Radio and Internet for the Communication of Hydro-Meteorological and Climate-Related Information for Development — USAID and NOAA are working with a range of humanitarian and meteorological organizations to provide useful weather and climate information to rural communities. The RANET program, which operates in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Western Pacific, uses reserve capacity on the WorldSpace digital satellite system to transmit forecasts, bulletins, imagery, seasonal assessments, and data to remote areas. The goal of the program is to provide environmental information that assists governments and populations in coping with hydro-meteorological hazards and environmental fluctuations. RANET also supports the formation of community groups and associations that are instrumental in disseminating information and extending the network to new communities.