

## **Plan of Action to Implement the Lower Mekong Initiative (2011-2015)**

*The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Plan of Action (PoA) is intended to implement the goals and objectives outlined by the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the Secretary of State of the United States at the Hanoi LMI Ministerial Meeting in October 2010. In July 2012, Myanmar officially joined as the sixth LMI partner nation. This PoA seeks to promote collaboration and connectivity between the five LMI nations over the next six years in a meaningful and mutually beneficial manner to address current and future regional social, technological, and environmental challenges.*

*The LMI PoA builds upon the strong cooperation among the six LMI nations. The LMI was developed in response to the collective policy challenges and opportunities shared by Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The LMI seeks to build capacity and human resources in these countries through mutual cooperation and the sharing of relevant human and technological expertise across six broad areas, or “pillars”: Education, Health, Connectivity, Environment and Water, Agriculture and Food Security, and Energy Security. The five regional LMI member countries each co-chair an LMI Pillar with the United States: Cambodia-Health, Laos-Connectivity, Myanmar-Agriculture and Food Security, Thailand-Education and Energy Security, and Vietnam-Environment and Water.*

*This PoA is a non-binding arrangement to promote coordination and implement capacity building activities related to the six pillars of the LMI. Our focus is on fostering partnership activities. Though activities listed herein have been recognized as of interest to the majority of LMI countries, a particular country (whether pillar co-chair or not) may lead, participate in, or not participate in any given activity herein. This PoA has been crafted to complement the existing and ongoing activities being carried out by partner countries or associated regional institutions in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.*

### **LMI Overall**

Establish the LMI as a platform for cooperation and exchange among and within the LMI countries, across multiple branches of government. As such, it intends to facilitate communication and capacity building within and between LMI partner nations to work towards LMI priorities.

#### **1. Develop and implement a strategy that establishes for the LMI a flexible mechanism, leadership, and metrics for determining successes:**

- a. Create national focal points and LMI Working Groups (WGs) that include representation from relevant ministries and agencies;
- b. Determine a mutually-acceptable LMI Concept Paper to articulate the way forward;
- c. Use WGs to support LMI goals and direction, as well as to define specific action items and deliverables;

- d. Use WGs to identify strengths and gaps in each of the pillars;
- e. Foster awareness of need for local, district, and provincial capacity to complement national capacity; and
- f. Develop Public-Private Partnerships within each pillar to enhance program sustainability.

**2. Facilitate communication/coordination between LMI nations and between LMI pillars:**

- a. Develop a Virtual Secretariat as a platform by which to strengthen LMI coordination, intergovernmental communication information sharing, discussion of ongoing issues, and to enhance decision making;
- b. Designate LMI Points of Contact (PoC) within Technical Agencies and Ministries of Foreign Affairs;
- c. Train LMI PoCs on use of Virtual Secretariat; and
- d. Use the Virtual Secretariat as a repository for information on LMI activities and successes.

**3. Use the LMI concept/vision to identify and align already existing activities that could be enhanced by application in an LMI context:**

- a. Emphasize strategic benefits of reprogramming existing regional programs and bilateral programs for application in an LMI context; and
- b. Enhance communication and coordination with other nations and initiatives engaged in the Lower Mekong region to complement efforts and to build synergistic approaches.

**4. Convene regular LMI meetings.**

- a. Working Group Meetings – Each pillar country coordinator “shepherds” work plans and facilitates discussions around its respective pillar(s); further, at least once each year, on a rotating and alphabetical basis, one regional LMI country, in conjunction with the United States, intends to co-host a Joint Regional Working Group Meeting for all five pillar Working Groups
- b. Senior Officials Meeting – An annual meeting for the interaction of LMI Senior Officials; and

- c. Ministerial Meeting – An LMI Ministerial meeting to confirm annual progress on implementing the plan of action and to provide clear policy guidance for the following years.

**5. Integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout all LMI pillars and programs.**

- a. Each of the LMI countries will integrate gender into the six focus pillars within its own government structure.
- b. The LMI Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Policy Dialogue (WPD) can be held on the margins of the ASEAN women's ministerial meeting every three years to share lessons learned on gender integration.
- c. On an ad hoc basis, working level LMI WPD meetings can be held on the margins of the annual ASEAN Committee on Women meeting.
- d. Ensure the Friends of the Lower Mekong (FLM) are informed of, and when appropriate involved in, LMI Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Policy Dialogue initiatives.

**6. Enhance dialogue between scientists, technical professionals and policy makers:**

- a. Share best practices in engaging scientists, health professionals, engineers, and other technical professionals and policy makers in science based decision making in social and natural sciences; and
- b. Utilize existing University and research institution internet platforms to foster greater communication and cooperation.

**7. Enhance capacity building of LMI countries and coordinate with other donor countries and multilateral organizations to complement activities.**

## **LMI Education Pillar**

The LMI countries seek to foster regional education aimed at human resource development cooperation, narrowing economic and social disparities and ensuring economic and social development in the region in a sustainable manner. This can be realized by increasing opportunities for the peoples of lower Mekong, increasing competitiveness of lower Mekong countries in the global market, as well as enhancing the benefits of regional cooperation and integration in an equitable manner. This includes improving knowledge sharing of best practices within the LMI nations in a variety of strategic and technical areas; increasing technical English skills among relevant LMI participants; and enhancing communication between scientists and policy makers across all pillars.

### **1. Bring existing English language opportunities more in line with LMI goals:**

- a. Seek opportunities to make greater use of Public Diplomacy, USAID, Peace Corps, and other ongoing programs in the service of LMI goals.
- b. Explore new ways to use emerging technologies, such as internet-based distance learning (webinars, chats, Facebook, etc.) and mobile delivery systems to provide focused, distance learning and training.
- c. Seek other approaches to increase English language training capacity, including potentially partnering with other donor countries, working with U.S. colleges and universities, NGOs, etc.
- d. Enhance English language training programs with emphasis on English for a Specific Purpose. Use creative ways to develop technical English language ability among experts working in the fields of the LMI pillars, such as educational technology transfer, web technologies, and online education tools.
- e. Enhance capacity of existing centers for technical English language skills in the Lower Mekong Countries.

### **2. Continue International Visitor programs and possible other exchanges in each of the LMI pillars: Education, Health, Environment and Water, Connectivity, Agriculture and Food Security, and Energy Security:**

- a. Engage decision makers, managers, and trainers from the LMI countries through projects focusing on the specific goals of the LMI strategic plan.
- b. Advance the numbers of scholarship, fellowship and training grants programs, as future LMI funding permits.

**3. Strengthen Human Resource Development to promote regional competitiveness:**

- a. Enhance educational and HRD program quality and ensure the relevance of the programs to regional human capital as well as market needs and challenges.
- b. Improve adaptability of education as well as technical/vocational/skills development training in LMI through technical assistance programs.
- c. Raise awareness of good practices and training sessions by convening best practices workshops and conferences in areas of mutual interest, encouraging participation of other regional and international partners.
- d. Promote the use of existing LMI host country regional training centers and institutes in human resource development programs.

**4. Strengthen institutional links and mechanism for cooperation among LMI countries and with other regional and international institutions to develop partnerships to promote capacity building in education and human resource development:**

- a. Encourage partnership and networking among academic institutions, training centers, and development agencies for educational and human resource development activities as well as development agencies for educational and human resource development activities.
- b. Support academic cooperation such as joint research, publication, and joint degree program.
- c. Provide assistance in curriculum development, teacher training and capacity building for educators and administrative personnel.
- d. Support wider access of rural communities to education and training by expanding distance learning opportunities into rural areas.

**5. Take advantage of programs from other LMI pillars, specifically the Environment and Water and Health pillars, to promote health, climate change, and environmental education.**

## **LMI Health Pillar**

LMI countries concur on the importance of health working group activities through the LMI to improve human health and thereby narrow poverty and development gaps. This PoA more clearly defines specific health programmatic goals and areas of cooperation under the LMI, and is based on the outcomes of the meeting in Vietnam in June 2010. Cross border and migrant issues are a particular concern and should be examined under each of the Health Pillar four main areas of activity, which are:

- 1. Communicable and Emerging Infectious Diseases. The LMI partners plan to focus attention on certain diseases, including TB, HIV/AIDS, malaria, dengue, and other emerging infectious diseases including pandemic influenza, and to build on the report on the LMI Infectious Disease Conference in Hanoi and the need to build on recommendations contained in that report.**
  - a. Develop and strengthen a coordinated response to the management of these diseases in the Lower Mekong countries.
  - b. Areas of cooperation should include laboratory capacity, risk communication, and business continuity planning.
  
- 2. Prevention and control of counterfeit and substandard medications (CSM), which pose a public health problem and also contribute to drug resistance in communicable and emerging infectious diseases of particular concern in LMI countries. Actions to combat CSM include information sharing and capacity building.**
  - a. Share information and good practices related to counterfeit drugs and substandard medications and drug resistance, including good manufacturing practices (GMP);
  - b. Establish an informal network of single points of contact within LMI countries to share information.
  - c. Cross border collaboration on prevention and control of smuggling of counterfeit drugs.
  
- 3. Regional collaboration to support implementation of the International Health Regulations. Countries are at varying degrees of compliance due to varying capacity. There is an opportunity share expertise by countries further along in compliance in different IHR capacities to share techniques and lessons learned with the other LMI countries.**
  - a. The entry into force of the revised International Health Regulations (2005) paves the way for LMI countries to attain core capacity requirements for surveillance and response at designated ports of entry.

- b. LMI countries should share practices and coordinate communications with neighboring countries and the public in the event of public health emergencies of international concern in LMI countries.
- c. At the regional level, emphasis should be on surveillance and response, laboratory capacity strengthening, cross border collaboration, and pandemic preparedness and response.

**4. Sharing good practices in other areas, including, for example:**

- a. Infection control in health facilities.
- b. Information about other alliances and activities, such as the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, the Partnership for Clean Indoor Air, the Emerging Pandemics Threats program, the Global Health Initiative, and the Pacific Partnership, where appropriate.

## **LMI Environment and Water Pillar**

Promote dialogue between LMI countries on sound and sustainable environmental management and strengthen capacity within and across LMI partner countries to manage shared water resources, improve water and sanitation access, and develop national and regional capacity to achieve water security and manage increasingly variable water resources while preparing to meet future demands, and link activities, where appropriate, to global and LMI countries' climate change policy.

- 1. Promote sound and sustainable natural resource management and climate change policies and improve institutional and human resource capacity to address transnational issues related to natural resources, with particular emphasis on forests, renewable energy, wetlands, and biodiversity.**
  - a. Share best practices in social and natural sciences related to impacts of natural resource management (with emphasis on forests, renewable energy, biodiversity, food security, etc.), perhaps on the margins of other regional dialogues;
  - b. Improve dialogue between scientists and policy makers to both better inform policy makers, and help scientists identify knowledge gaps that should be addressed through research and sharing of best practices; and
  - c. Build technical capacity and political awareness to address adaptation and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change on livelihoods, landscapes and ecosystems, including land management, wetlands, wildlife conservation, wildlife trafficking, and sustainable forestry management programs.
- 2. Strengthen existing regional institutions, cooperation among national institutions, natural resource related research, and ongoing partnerships between LMI countries:**
  - a. Enhance capacity for wildlife management and biodiversity management by sharing and utilizing best practices;
  - b. Where applicable, build LMI-centric sessions into regional workshops and seminars related to climate change, including impacts of sea-level rise, conservation efforts, wildlife trafficking, forestry practices, clean and renewable energy, and land management.
- 3. Encourage incorporation of good governance tools for sustainable management of natural resources into the basin development strategy and green growth initiatives into broader national development strategies:**
  - a. Promote political and community support for impact assessments on social, economic, and ecological systems;

- b. Promote integration of forests and biodiversity management considerations into broader development strategies supported by MDBs;
- c. Promote capacity building through cooperation and technical assistance within and among LMI nations' technical and relevant agencies;
- d. Promote community-based eco-tourism;

**4. Improve capacity in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) practices:**

- a. Strengthen techniques and procedures along internationally accepted standards and conforming to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER);
- b. Build capacity to enhance DRM efforts, including promoting regular training and exercises; and
- c. Build upon currently bilateral activities to expand into all LMI countries;
- d. Enhance monitoring and early warning systems and preparedness in disaster management and share best practices; and
- e. Share environmentally friendly disaster management technologies.

**5. Develop better natural weather and climate related natural disaster forecasting tools.**

- a. Develop and deploy weather forecasting tools, climate change predictive tools, and other climate services that allow identification, production, and timely interpretation of data and information related to weather and climate;
- b. Work with local and national governments to develop climate change adaptation strategies as a part of climate resilient development; and
- c. Build capacity to respond to potential disasters through training courses, workshops, seminars, etc. on disaster risk reduction and management.

**6. Work together to improve sustainable access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene in underserved areas to support economic development and poverty alleviation.**

- a. Provide joint technical support to assist those countries seeking to strengthen their water and sanitation sectors and accelerate progress towards achieving MDG goals.
- b. Involve high-level and inter-ministerial coordination around building the institutions, platforms, target-setting and reforms to accelerate water and sanitation coverage.

- c. Develop innovative strategies for expanding and sustaining access to services, particularly to the urban poor, through partnerships with water and sanitation companies and operators.

**7. Strengthen LMI Partner Country capacity to meet integrated water resource management (IWRM) goals, while building climate resilience.**

- a. Continue to develop the Forecast Mekong tool and other planning tools to support water management and meet regional watershed management goals.
- b. Build capacity to support decision making regarding water resources management and infrastructure development, furthering a sustainable balance at the nexus of water, food, and energy.
- c. Continue to strengthen climate resilience planning, particularly in infrastructure design, planning, and operations.

**8. Facilitate the introduction of new water technologies, best practices and knowledge to more effectively manage current water resources needs and meet future demands.**

- a. Continue to advance regional workshops, conferences and technical exchanges on water resources management, technologies and best practices.
- b. Build public-private partnerships on water designed to accelerate the introduction of new technologies and facilitate shared knowledge.

**9. Support national and regional capacity to manage shared water resources and build transparent, science-based common institutions for the shared development of common water resources.**

- a. Enhance capacity to implement regional frameworks on water resources utilization, basin development strategy, and to improve studies on the impact of water resources development.
- b. Strengthen the ability of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) through national Mekong committees to gather and communicate data to policy makers, including both findings within the Lower Mekong countries and lessons learned from Mississippi-Mekong River Commission (MRC-MRC) exchange program.

## **LMI Agriculture and Food Security Pillar**

The LMI countries seek to further collective efforts to improve food security and agriculture sector growth throughout the Mekong region in an environmentally sustainable manner, building on and using best practices. Activities in all areas will be planned and implemented with full consideration of promoting gender equality and female empowerment, and addressing climate change, environmental, health, and nutritional concerns, thereby contributing to the comprehensive integration of these issues into regional food security and agricultural initiatives. The overlap of issues among the LMI Pillars will lead to synergistic collaborations among the various Ministries within each country, and will help to avoid contentious policies that benefit one sector to the detriment of another, adding to ongoing work in the LMI region.

### **1. Promote collaboration in research and development, extension, institutional capacity building, and human resources development.**

#### **a. Networking**

- i. Improve opportunities for dialogue between international and national researchers and educators; agriculture extension agents and private sector service firms; health experts, nutritionists, and agriculturalists; and agricultural policy makers and advocacy groups across the region. Ensure that women are included in these networking opportunities.
- ii. Build institutional and human capacity to share and utilize existing national and international food security databases (e.g. ASEAN, IFPRI, IRRI, FAO, WFP), including data on the impact of climate change on regional food security, nutritional status of vulnerable populations, the distinct roles of men and women in food production and utilization, and the gendered impacts of global climate change and food security.
- iii. Build institutional and human capacity to share and utilize ICT databases and approaches for agricultural extension services.
- iv. Establish a regional network of extension specialists and nutritionists that understand the needs of female and male farmers, the role of men and women in agricultural value chains, and exchange extension methodologies.
- v. Leverage existing mechanisms and fora so that national policy makers of the five LMI countries can meet, exchange ideas, share lessons learned, and explore policy models to address food security issues, including a comparison of national agricultural strategies lessons learned; ensure that women are substantively involved in all aspects of the discussions.

#### **b. Capacity Building**

- i. Provide women and men farmers with equal access to regional training on agricultural production, natural resource management, household nutrition

/ food utilization, resiliency, soil fertility, agricultural policies, and conservation practices that lead to great household productivity and nutritional status.

- ii. Provide women and men technicians with equal access to regional technical training on conducting farmer field schools, integrated pest management, pesticide safety, fertilizer quality, quality control of agricultural products, food safety, measuring Maximum Residue Limits of pesticides on agricultural products, good agricultural practices, and organic farming.
  - iii. Support activities and training programs to improve the capacity for pest risk analysis, pest surveillance, diagnostics and inspections for key crop pests of the region such as the invasive coconut beetle (*Brontispa longissima*), cassava pink mealybug (*Phenacoccus manihoti*), and other migratory or invasive pests.
  - iv. Improve disease surveillance / detection mechanisms to prevent the spread of livestock diseases including building knowledge of the various animal handlers (male, female, children) in the household on disease case definition and how to report. Such diseases include highly pathogenic avian influenza, foot and mouth disease (FMD), and Newcastle disease.
  - v. Share knowledge and best practices for balancing biofuel and food crops.
- c. Research: improve adaptive research results and build human and institutional research capacity
- i. Coordinate field trials for improved crop variety development/selection and the demonstration of new technologies and or management practices used at the farm level.
  - ii. Exchange, on voluntary and mutually agreed terms, improved seed information or stocks to increase farmer adoption and local production in food insecure areas.
  - iii. Exchange, on voluntary and mutually agreed terms, germplasm for regional and national seed banks.
  - iv. Coordinate livestock breeding and animal genomics research and management practices and strengthen public and private veterinarian services and extension of best husbandry practices to improve overall productivity of animals.
  - v. Conduct research on farm machinery and equipment for pre- and post-harvesting.
  - vi. Conduct research on biological control and botanical pesticides.

- vii. Conduct collaborative research on reduced environmental impact, including the carbon footprint, of agricultural production.
- viii. Review innovative technologies for increased agricultural productivity and food storage and processing and how best to disseminate information and best practices to household producers.
- ix. Build capacity of women and men to gather, store, share, access, and analyze regional food security data.
- x. Conduct research to compare how microcredit and land tenure contribute to food security in the region, so that member nations can share lessons and use successful policies as models.
- xi. Conduct research to identify practices contributing to heightened malnutrition and anemia in women and children.

**2. Identify agricultural policies and enhance the implementation of agreements to improve food production, access, quality, and nutrition through technical cooperation.**

- a. Leverage existing mechanisms and fora so that national policy makers of the LMI countries can meet, exchange ideas, share lessons learned, and explore policy models to address food security issues, including a comparison of national agricultural strategies lessons learned, especially for rice; ensure that women are substantively involved in all aspects of the discussions;
- b. Compare national agricultural strategies and share lessons learned, especially for rice.
- c. Conduct research to compare how microcredit and land tenure contribute to food security in the region, so that member nations can share lessons and use successful policies as models.

**3. Enhance household capacity to meet food security and nutritional needs.**

- a. Review and share best practices and technologies that build household resilience to anticipate and manage shocks to food security.
- b. Encourage countries to join the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, a country-led movement that supports nutrition-sensitive development including investment in food security, health, and short-and long-term economic growth.
- c. Identify regional opportunities in the areas of maternal-child nutrition, infant and child feeding practices, household dietary quality and diversity, and access to nutrition-enhancing goods and services.

- d. Work together to improve food safety through the dissemination of best practices, international standards, requirements, and capacity building and ensure that food safety information is available and accessible (i.e. designed for low literate populations, local language etc.)

**4. Promote the implementation of sustainable land and water use management for agriculture and aquaculture.**

- a. Forge agreements for access to shared hydrological resources and integrated river basin management to ensure adequate water for secure and sustainable food production in each of the 5 Lower Mekong countries. This will include water for crops, wild and cultivated fish, livestock, household usage, and waterways for transport of food. Activities will take into account the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in water management. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) should participate in this process.
- b. Share technology and policies to promote sustainable terrace and contour farming and water management.

**5. Strengthen regional cooperation for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.**

Coordination of capture of fresh water and marine fish and other aquatic resources to ensure equitable access and availability. In the Lower Mekong, regional food security is highly dependent on protein from wild fish and other aquatic organisms, in addition to aquaculture. It is therefore imperative that upstream harvesting of aquatic resources does not significantly impact downstream access to these resources. Organizations to participate in this process could include ASEAN, FAO, the World Fish Center (WFC), the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA), INFOFISH, and national / regional NGOs.

- a. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
  - i. Develop and strengthen regulations, and surveillance and monitoring systems, over the time and place of freshwater fishing with regional impact.
  - ii. Build on existing marine fishing agreements to create sustainable no-fishing zones, with multinational patrols, between territorial waters to serve as barriers to illegal fishing, reservoirs of aquatic resources, and as fish breeding grounds. Use other marine agreements (e.g. Myanmar /Bangladesh) as models.
- b. Research
  - i. Conduct or review research on how damming would affect fishing, rice production, biodiversity, nutrition, food security, access to water for

domestic use, and any negative or positive impacts on men's and women's roles and incomes in these sectors.

- ii. Assess and forecast changes in marine resources and environment in order to forecast sustainable marine fishing potential.
- iii. Support measures to rejuvenate marine resources and ecosystems

c. Networking

- i. Share knowledge and technology for fresh water and marine fish breeding, for standards on fishing vessels' construction to reduce post-harvest loss, for eco-labeling standards, for disease management, and water and effluent management (aquaculture)
- ii. Establish an information-sharing platform for private and public sector partners

**6. Encourage trade of agricultural inputs and products to address food security needs.**

- a. Work to improve access to credit, access to land, and capacity building for women so that men and women farmers benefit equally from trade opportunities in both regional and global markets.
- b. Implement existing trade agreements related to agriculture and SPS that enables farmers' access to vital inputs such as fertilizer, machinery, improved seed, and access to markets.
- c. Work together to obtain Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification for producers of key export crops for the region to ensure that fruits and vegetables are produced in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards.
- d. Adopt and implement international sanitary and phytosanitary standards established by Codex Alimentarius, World Organization for Animal Health, and International Plant Protection Convention unless there is a scientific justification for a different level of protection.
- e. Develop and enforce science-based measures consistent with international standards, and build capacity, to regulate:
  - i. Transboundary livestock movement
  - ii. Maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides and additives on foods
  - iii. Transboundary movement of illegal pesticides

**7. Promote public-private cooperation for agri-business development and investment.**

- a. Review innovative approaches to public / private cooperation for technology transfer to:
  - i. Increase agricultural productivity, including agro forestry and fisheries for local and regional markets.
  - ii. Improve the quality and safety of agricultural products that respond to local and regional markets, including the development of value added products and cold chain facilities.
  - iii. Improve post-harvest management.
- b. Provide opportunities for increased public-private dialogue, such as forums that bring together appropriate private sector groups to work collaboratively with policy makers and other stakeholders to address food security challenges.
- c. Conduct research to develop recommendations for policies creating a favorable environment for foreign investments in Public/Private Partnerships in the LMI region to expand agribusiness services and new product development in response to local and regional market needs.
- d. Engage multi-lateral and private financial institutions and companies to assess and target infrastructure investment needs to promote agricultural growth.

## **LMI Energy Security Pillar**

### **Preamble**

Over the next decade, energy consumption in the Mekong Sub-Region is expected to increase at least 5 percent annually, propelled by overall economic growth. The use of limited and gradually exhausted fossil fuels is not only associated with environmental and health impacts, but the consumption of petroleum and the import dependence also greatly impact national budgets, trade balances, and household incomes. Developing new sources of energy, ensuring access to energy, and enhancing regional interconnectivity are important if countries in the Mekong Sub-Region want to increase their energy security and economic competitiveness.

### **Overarching Goals of the LMI Energy Security Pillar**

- 1. To enhance energy security and accessibility** with due consideration to health, safety, and environment for the sustained prosperity, growth, and integrated development of the Mekong sub-region in line with development in this area in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- 2. To ensure regional energy sustainability** through diversification, development, and conservation of resources, the efficient use of energy, and the wider application of environmentally-sound technologies.

### **Objectives in Support of Pillar Goals**

- 1. To strengthen international and regional cooperation** in the Mekong sub-region on the aforementioned areas, to develop and introduce clean, renewable, and alternative energy technologies; encourage greater reliance on renewable and non-conventional energy; increase regional energy trade and investment; and support and promote new innovations for energy efficiency and conservation.
- 2. To support the production, use, research, and development** of renewable and alternative energy sources.
- 3. To promote energy efficiency and conservation** with the goal of reducing regional energy intensity by an average of 8 percent by 2015, in line with ASEAN goals.
- 4. To encourage inter- and intra-regional information sharing and capacity building** on conventional and alternative energy sources, energy market development and investment, and integration of best practices on energy conservation.
- 5. To expedite regional connectivity projects** in the power, oil, and gas sectors, further facilitating energy trade, investment, and services; to enhance cooperation with partner countries to promote robust energy and power connectivity in the sub-region.
- 6. To engage and leverage private sector expertise and resources** through public-private

partnerships (PPPs).

## **Priority Areas of Cooperation**

### **Regional Energy Market Development:**

*Meets Objective: #1- strengthen international and regional cooperation; #5 - expedite regional connectivity projects; and #6 - engage and leverage private sector expertise and resources*

- a. Focus on the development of alternative energy sources, including renewable energy, and shale and other unconventional gas sources as a way to enhance energy security among countries of the Mekong Sub-Region.
- b. Support the development of alternative energy technologies in key economic sectors, particularly the manufacturing sector.
- c. Promote public-private partnerships in alternative energy production and utilization.
  - ❖ Focus on the Harmonization of policies, laws, and regulations, and build regulatory capacity to tap the synergies and competitive advantages that exist from inter-country energy trade
  - ❖ Formulate strategies to minimize the environmental impact of unconventional gas extraction. Build regional understanding of development issues including available technology, production management and effective regulatory policies.

### **2013-2014 Proposed Activities**

- **Regional Natural Gas Event:** *Co-hosted by the United States and the Indonesia May 6 – 8 in Jakarta, the event will focus on the changing global gas markets and the development of unconventional gas. It also will provide an opportunity for private sector engagement, particularly related to unconventional gas resource commercialization issues.*
- **LMI Gas Infrastructure and Policy Assessment:** *The United States will conduct an assessment of existing gas infrastructure in LMI countries to ascertain what further investment is necessary to promote interconnectivity. The assessment will include an analysis of the policy environment and what steps could be taken to harmonize regulations and technical standards.*
- **Regulatory and Market Development in the Power Sector:** *The United States will provide targeted technical assistance for engagement with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), which will impart experiences and lessons learned from comparable and applicable regional settings on topics ranging from consensus-building, regulatory policy and system planning coordination, and other participatory models of regulation. The development of these components will lay the necessary foundation for the creation of an enabling environment to attract private sector capital.*
  - *First event: In a technical workshop setting, regulatory experts will cover a narrow set of issues and engage the attendees in interactive discussions to self-identify key issues/priorities. There may be opportunity for continued engagement through which NARUC will work with counterparts on planning and implementation.*

- *Resource identification and technology transfer options for traditional and alternative power generation, including options for clean coal.*
- *Regional market survey to identify firm and ancillary opportunities for private sector investment in renewable energy*

**Power Interconnection:** Recognizing that: (1) substantial regional interconnection plans have been discussed for over two decades and most of the projects that were planned for 2003-2015 have not yet begun; (2) interconnection efforts of the broader ASEAN context must be considered because most proposed interconnection initiatives involve nations both inside and outside of the Lower Mekong Basin; and (3) it is critical to coordinate with groups already working on regional power interconnection, such as the ASEAN Ministers on Energy, the ASEAN Power Grid Consultative Committee (APGCC), and the Heads of ASEAN Power Utilities/Authorities (HAPUA) Council.

*Meets Objective: #1 - strengthen international and regional cooperation; #5 - expedite regional connectivity projects; and #6 - engage and leverage private sector expertise and resources.*

- a. Explore how best to create a regional regulatory framework robust enough to ensure that power interconnection projects are completed and achieve stated goals and outcomes within appropriate time periods.
- b. Support the establishment of a regional power coordination center to facilitate power trade among countries in the Mekong sub-region.
- c. Undertake a technical review of existing ASEAN and Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) power interconnection plans to identify potential barriers to regional interconnection.
- d. Explore financing models for cross border projects that can be used by the countries and multilateral development banks to raise the necessary capital – either public sector or private - to develop these projects

### **2013-2014 Proposed Activities**

- ***LMI Power Sector Integration Technical Assistance:*** *The United States will provide targeted technical assistance to lay the groundwork for the eventual creation of an effective and well-regulated regional power market. This could include a regulatory session that would cover topics of mutual interest such as regulatory standards for interconnection, synchronizing systems, developing common performance standards and reinforcement of standards (building on GMS work)*

### **Energy Efficiency and Conservation:**

*Meets Objectives: #1- strengthen international and regional cooperation; #3 - promote energy efficiency and conservation; and #6 - engage and leverage private sector expertise and resources.*

- a. Promote high-performance energy efficiency technologies and practices as well as focus on how to transfer knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned amongst LMI nations.
- b. Develop policy and institutional capacity building and how to create energy efficiency and conservation awareness and build greater technical, financial and regulatory expertise.
- c. Strengthen human capacity and harmonize standards, such as those for electrical

- appliances among LMI countries in order to promote energy efficiency.
- d. Create mechanisms or policies to promote cooperative projects on energy efficiency and conservation.

### **2013-2014 Proposed Activities**

- ***Rural Electrification with Renewable Energy Project:*** *In 2013, in concert with the annual meeting of the ASEAN Renewable Energy-Sub-Sector Network (RE-SSN), the United States will work with partners to explore the potential for the use of distributed renewable power to meet the energy needs of rural communities. This will include information exchanges to examine lessons learned from previous applications, the technologies employed in these systems, and the financial and regulatory structures that are necessary to make these systems commercially viable. The ultimate goal of these exchanges will be to help countries develop strategies for financing and widespread deployment of appropriate distributed energy systems.*

### **Transparency and Good Governance:**

*Meets Objective: #1 - strengthen international and regional cooperation; #3 - promote energy efficiency and conservation; and #4 - encourage inter and intra-regional information sharing and capacity building.*

- a. The working group could build capacity for stakeholders to implement good and transparent energy management.
- b. The working group could utilize academic institutions with a focus on energy issues in ASEAN as a training and discussion platform.

### **2013-2014 Proposed Activities**

- ***Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)*** *The United States will share general information on EITI for consideration by LMI countries.*
- *The working group will consider arranging further discussions regarding mutual challenges countries face in managing their oil and gas sectors, at a future event.*

### **Energy Research and Development:**

*Meets Objective: #1 - strengthen international and regional cooperation; ; #2 - support the production, use, research, and development of renewable and alternative energy sources; #3 - promote energy efficiency and conservation and; #4 - encourage inter and intra-regional information sharing and capacity building.*

- a. Support the synergy of research and development centers and think tanks in providing comments and recommendations on strategies for overcoming challenges with developing alternative and renewable energy sources.
- b. Promote mechanisms or policy instruments to accelerate research and development on energy.

### **2013-2014 Proposed Activities**

- ***Energy Smart Communities Initiative (ESCI):*** Implemented through APEC for the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. Department of Energy leads the ESCI Initiative that currently demonstrates through 16 projects the practicality of clean energy technologies to reduce energy intensity both through research, development and demonstration of new technologies and through establishment of best practices for deploying the technologies that are already available. RD&D efforts focus on research, testing, scaling, and development of technologies as well as small scale pilot projects and project demonstrations of the technologies. Best Practice efforts focus on codes, standards, testing methods, regulatory frameworks, and public awareness policies. New projects will be added and reach expanded to include all the ASEAN members.

## **LMI Connectivity Pillar**

*Strengthen capacity within and across the LMI partner countries to support programming under all LMI pillars and to complement existing regional mechanisms, using information technology, training, and donor coordination to accelerate ASEAN integration, and achieve sustainable, trans-border hard infrastructure objectives.*

### **1. Mobilize private sector funding through public-private partnerships to provide a market-based approach to infrastructure development:**

- a. Enhance the reach of technology throughout the LMI countries to promote corporate social responsibility, further rural development, and foster small and medium business development; and
- b. Enhance capacity through best practice sharing, including training of logistics and infrastructure management personnel.

### **2. Increase information technology throughout the LMI nations:**

- a. Engage with projects where appropriate to increase access to mobile technology for disadvantaged and marginalized groups;
- b. Promote networking to manage appropriate technology growth and increase engagement, connectivity, and social interaction among people, academic institutions, public organizations, and private enterprises; and
- c. Foster coordination among Ministries and across borders on LMI related infrastructure programming.

### **3. Support and promote social and environmental impact assessment and effective remediation methods related to infrastructure development:**

- a. Build capacity in alternative use and cost-benefit analyses, trans-boundary impact assessment, and impact and mitigation monitoring;
- b. Build capacity to develop and implement social and environmental impact assessments and use best practices in infrastructure and development planning among the LMI nations; and
- c. Address changing infrastructure needs in light of climate change, biodiversity loss, and potential displacement associated with infrastructure development projects.

**4. Enhance the economic development and capacity for cross-border commerce**

- a. Build capacity for LMI countries to participate in a Single Customs Window, in harmony with the ASEAN Single Window, in order to make customs processing more efficient and compliant with international norms.
- b. Support development and adherence to appropriate international standards, particularly pharmaceutical, medical, manufacturing, and in food processing.
- c. Conduct trainings aimed at attracting private sector investment, including intellectual property rights enforcement, transparency, and building business frameworks.

**5. Develop internet connectivity to advance all LMI pillar objectives, enhance communication, increase public awareness of LMI activities and programs, and facilitate cross border trade and transportation.**