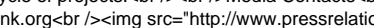




Learning Center Established to Promote Environmental and Social Sustainability in Vietnam

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Today, the Asian Institute of Technology and international development partners established a Vietnam Learning Center on Environmental and Social Sustainability to foster knowledge exchange and capacity building relating to environmental and social safeguards and standards in Vietnam. The center is being established with initial funding support from the Australian Government. Other development partners have committed to provide technical support. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed today to this effect. This was the result of efforts by different development partners, including The World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Asian Institute of Technology Center in Vietnam. Vietnams SEDS seeks more environmentally and socially sustainable development. This requires attention to environmental and social safeguards in executing the countrys huge infrastructure development program," said Victoria Kwakwa, the World Bank Country Director for Vietnam. "The mission of this center is to help fill the gap in Vietnams social and environmental safeguards capacity." The learning center, housed at the Asian Institute of Technology Center in Vietnam, will offer capacity building to project management units, district and provincial authorities, consultants and other stakeholders in social and environmental issues. "Vietnam has taken great strides in recent years in introducing legislation dealing with social and environmental safeguards, and is rightly seen as leading the way in Asia in areas such as payment for forest ecosystem services," said Mr. Tomoyuki Kimura, Country Director for the Asian Development Bank. "The challenge now is to ensure that the country develops the necessary technical skills and capacity to effectively implement its safeguard requirements. ADB is delighted to be supporting the learning center and believes it has a major role to play in developing highly skilled safeguard professionals in Vietnam, and so contributing to the country's move towards a path of environmentally sustainable growth." Given the surge of investments in infrastructure sector and Vietnams challenges on environmental pollution and climate change related vulnerability, the center is expected to play a critical role, in building long-term capacity on environmental and social aspects of development projects and programs in Vietnam on a sustained basis. "Investments in Vietnam's infrastructure will be more durable and effective, and benefit from a lower risk of serious problems, if Vietnam finds ways to incorporate social and environmental safeguards," said USAID Vietnam Mission Director Joakim Parker. "The Center will help provide the country with the latest information and capacity building to achieve this, as will other efforts like USAIDs to support a broader base for decision-making." The first activity of the center is a 2-week training of trainers course in resettlement so that trainers will be available to offer capacity building courses later on. Specific capacity building programs targeted to local institutions, including Program Management Units that are implementing donor-funded infrastructure, will be designed to promote sustainable infrastructure and ensure integration of environmental and social issues within the life cycle of projects.
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