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USAID OPENS REGIONAL OFFICE IN THE PACIFIC



Photo Caption: Acting Director of the USAID Pacific Regional Office Daniel Miller; PNG National Planning and Monitoring Department Minister Sam Basil, Ambassador Michael Maue, Secretary of the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and U.S. Ambassador Teddy Taylor cut a ribbon to formally open the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Pacific Regional Office. The event took place at the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby October 5.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) opened its new Pacific Island Regional office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea October 5. A special ribbon-cutting ceremony commemorated the occasion. Special guests included National Planning and Monitoring Department Minister Sam Basil; Ambassador Michael Maue, Secretary of the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and United Nations Development Program Head David MacLachlan-Karr.

U.S. Ambassador Teddy B. Taylor, who led the event, said the United States remains dedicated to the Pacific. “This is a region where thousands of U.S. troops sacrificed their lives to preserve peace and democracy in World War II,” said Ambassador Taylor. “We remain committed to their memory and to the region. We forged ties with Papua New Guinea long before its independence and now that close relationship is maturing.”

Despite the lack of an official office in the region, stressed Ambassador Taylor, the U.S. “never disengaged or left the region.” The U.S., he said, has engaged in major initiatives to support women’s empowerment, help nations in the region adapt to climate change, and buttress the health care infrastructure and delivery system, said the U.S. Ambassador. “The U.S. spends millions per year to assist Pacific Island nations,” he said.

Daniel Miller, Acting Director of the USAID Pacific Regional Office, said: “The U.S. government, through USAID, is committed to sustainable development in the Pacific Islands. The opening of the USAID office will allow for better coordination with Pacific government officials, donors and non-governmental organizations on a regular basis.”

The office will manage regional environment and climate change programs, disaster assistance programs for the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and an ongoing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment program in Papua New Guinea.

Minister Basil formally thanked the United States for opening a USAID office in Papua New Guinea. “It could not have come at a more opportune time,” he said.

The U.S. Embassy confirmed that US\$8.9 million has been transferred to USAID to add to the already existing US\$3.5 million in 2010 Pacific Adaption funds. Program goals are to develop capacity in regional organizations to allow for regional capacity building and benefit, said U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy Officer Brian Asmus. Regionally, according to Asmus, the U.S. also is spending US\$66 million in Coral Triangle Initiative funds, US\$21 million to help nations adapt to climate change and US\$5 million per year to increase raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea.

One of USAID’s key objectives, said Mr. Miller, is to assist countries and regional institutions in the Pacific to increase adaptive capacity and resilience to the negative impacts of climate change.

According to Mr. Miller, USAID will achieve this goal in the following ways: by enhancing scientific and technical capacity of partners to understand climate risks; identifying and engaging vulnerable sectors and populations; evaluating costs and benefits of adaptation options; formulating strategies and plans; and accessing funding. It will also implement effective adaptation activities that support broader development goals and increase long-term climate resilience of vulnerable sectors, such as agriculture and water, and populations.

Across these objectives, the program will seek to strengthen knowledge in the region on the efficacy and impact of adaptation programs, including through the identification and dissemination of lessons learned and good practices, said Mr. Miller.

Mr. Asmus stressed that the USAID program will coordinate closely with other bilateral and multilateral donors to determine how best to complement and leverage investments and reduce duplication so that collective efforts on adaptation in the region yield the greatest results.

USAID maintained a mission in Suva, Fiji, and a satellite office in Papua New Guinea, from 1978 until 1994. Since that time, USAID has remained engaged in the region's most pressing development issues through its Regional Development Mission in Asia. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the re-opening of a USAID office in the Pacific to Pacific leaders at the 2009 U.N. General Assembly as part of U.S. government re-engagement in the region.



Photo Caption: U.S. Ambassador Teddy Taylor, PNG National Planning and Monitoring Department Minister Sam Basil and Acting Director of the USAID Pacific Regional Office Daniel Miller at the opening ceremony for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Pacific Regional Office at the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby October 5.

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