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Helping East Asian Pacific countries to become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic effects of natural disasters

Hanoi, October 5, 2009 — Donors from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), representing Finland, France, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the European Commission, UNISDR, and the World Bank, began a 3-day visit to Vietnam to know first-hand how this disaster-prone country is increasingly becoming more prepared and resilient to the devastating effects of typhoons, floods, earthquakes and other events that systematically affect this Asian economy and its neighbors. The visit, first of its kind, highlights the key role played by the region in the global agenda of disaster risk management and reduction. Donors will meet with government authorities, GFDRR, and World Bank staff to discuss the impact of recent disasters in the region and ways to further support government initiatives for sustainable recovery and longer term reconstruction.

The recent Typhoon Ketsana - which hit the Philippines and then Vietnam last week, killing scores of people and forcing over 700,000 to evacuation camps in Manila alone – is a reminder of the importance of mainstreaming disaster risk management and effectively incorporating community-based projects, as an integral part of dealing with disasters and adapting to climate change.

“Countries in the region are affected by 50 percent of all recorded natural disasters and 82 percent of all population affected in the world live here. GFDRR is bringing a systematic and innovative approach to disaster risk management and climate change adaptation that provide East Asian Pacific countries with adequate tools to account for disasters in their development planning and to have the adequate tools to mitigate the economic and social impacts once a disaster hits,” said Per Byman from the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency and GFDRR Co-chair.

With the support of GFDRR, a strategy is being implemented in the region, focused on supporting country-led disaster risk management programs and investments. GFDRR is actively engaging local authorities in strengthening its institutions for disaster risk management, introducing climate and disaster resiliency in development planning, having in place sustainable emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and developing adequate tools for catastrophe risk financing.

Since its inception in 2006, GFDRR has channeled over \$10.5 million to the region, with 14 projects in place across 17 countries. The Hazard Risk Management Institutional Development, Advocacy and Capacity Building Program in Vietnam, a crucial project which began just months after the Facility was established, aims to broaden the coordination and mainstreaming of hazard risk management in Vietnam socio-economic development planning process across different sectors. A second phase of the program is being implemented, focusing on strengthening early warning systems, community-based disaster risk management and mainstreaming disaster resilience in critical infrastructure investments.

Most recently, in June 2009, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the World Bank announced a cooperation program – under Track 1 of GFDRR – to strengthen disaster risk reduction and disaster

management in Southeast Asia. This program aims to help ASEAN – of which Vietnam is a member - reduce its vulnerability to natural hazards, thus protecting its citizens from the impact of natural disasters in the future. The program is the focus of the Memorandum of Cooperation on disaster risk reduction, a tripartite agreement between the ASEAN Secretariat, the UNISDR and the World Bank. The program lays a framework for technical support from the UN and the World Bank to help ASEAN formulate and implement strategies and action plans for disaster risk reduction and management, including building ASEAN’s capacity in the areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation; mobilizing resources for the implementation of disaster risk reduction initiatives in ASEAN; and helping ASEAN policy-makers gain knowledge of effective and practical ways to reduce disaster risks.

“The recent string of natural disasters in East Asia and the Pacific underscores the urgent need to help countries in this region to become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic effects of natural disasters. Donors are stepping up to the plate in this effort by supporting the work of GFDRR. This visit is an opportunity to share lessons and best practices to the other vulnerable areas of the world,” said John Roome, Director of the Sustainable Development Department within the East Asia and Pacific Region of the World Bank. “Our hearts and prayers are with the people affected by these events, their communities and rescue workers as they start walking on the painful road to recovery,” said Roome.

About GFDRR

The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) is a partnership of 21 countries, the European Commission, the United Nations and the World Bank, committed to helping disaster-prone developing countries and regions reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and adapt to climate change. GFDRR promotes technical and financial assistance to high-risk low- and middle-income countries based on a business model of ex-ante support to mainstream disaster risk reduction in national development strategies and investments, and ex post disaster assistance for sustainable recovery. As part of its mandate, GFDRR promotes global knowledge and good practices, supports initiatives for enhanced global and regional cooperation, and promotes greater South-South cooperation in disaster risk reduction. For more information, visit www.gfdr.org.

Fact Sheet – GFDRR current projects in East Asia Pacific

GFDRR Donors and Partners – Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, OFDA/USAID, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, UNISDR, and the World Bank.

Vietnam - With a total grant of about \$1 million from the GFDRR, the World Bank is working with the Government of Vietnam to (i) integrate disaster risk reduction into ongoing development initiatives in the Northern Highlands, (ii) improve drainage models for low-lying coastal cities, (iii) provide city managers with a tool to assess and improve their cities' disaster preparedness, (iv) increase communities' awareness of and resilience to natural hazards, and (v) provide an overview of current tools to finance disaster losses.

With GFDRR support, a consortium of government agencies, donors, and NGOs working on the field of disaster risk management have been involved in a communication program on Community Based Disaster Risk Mitigation. The program includes a documentary video produced to highlight effective local risk management solutions and lessons learned, a TV based Panel Discussion on how to effectively implement CBDRM in Viet Nam and a Photo Contest on "Viet Nam Images – Natural Disaster Proneness and Resilience". Both of the documentary and the Panel Discussion have been repeatedly broadcast on Vietnam Television, creating a great advocacy effect to Government to approve a new program on community-based disaster risk management in July 2009. The Government's new CBDRM program aims to reach over 10,000 communes nation-wide over the next decade.

The Hazard Risk Management Institutional Development, Advocacy and Capacity Building Program in Vietnam, a crucial project which began just months after the Facility was established, aims to broaden the coordination and mainstreaming of hazard risk management in Vietnam socio-economic development planning process across different sectors. A second phase of the program is being implemented, focusing on strengthening early warning systems, community-based disaster risk management and mainstreaming disaster resilience in critical infrastructure investments.

Lao PDR - In Lao PDR, over 500 government staff in agriculture, education and health sectors are being trained in early warning, preparedness, and recovery. The methodology for damage and loss assessment, including the preparation of recovery plans in flood situations, has been institutionalized within the Government and is expected to be replicated at province and district level in partnership with other development agencies.

Philippines - In the Philippines, Local Government Units have asked GFDRR for assistance to design a risk pooling facility that allow access to immediate cash after a disaster for the restoration of critical facilities, like water lines. GFDRR's assistance – over \$1 million thus far - is also helping the government develop private insurance products, including index-based schemes that pay out to farmers according to weather events.

Indonesia - In Indonesia, the GFDRR program, with over \$1.2 million grant support, is guided by the Steering Committee of National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), World Bank, and UNDP. The committee decided to support BNPB through Training of Trainers modules and programs for strengthening capacities in Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and recovery planning. Furthermore, at municipal level, an application of the Climate Resilient Cities Primer is being piloted in three cities ((Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Surabaya). This initiative is expected to lead to mainstreaming of DRR and Climate Change Adaptation in urban management through improved spatial/master plans, and land use and environmental rehabilitation.

The Pacific Island Countries - In the Pacific Islands, the GFDRR is facilitating the establishment of a regional catastrophe risk pool, which would combine the economies of scale of merging the emergency reserve funds of several island states with the financial capacity of the international capital markets. Several Pacific Island

countries are preparing country disaster reduction action plans will include a stocktaking review of ongoing and planned programs as well as the organization of country consultation meetings with key government counterparts and other development partners. These plans will leverage future GFDRR resources into a comprehensive vulnerability reduction program.

China - Over US\$1.5 million have been allocated to support the Government of China deal with the impacts of the Wenchuan earthquake with a strategic approach to recovery and rehabilitation, and a focus on longer term engagement in risk management efforts has been proposed. This is complementary to ongoing risk financing work in urban areas funded by GFDRR under track 2 and being coordinated by the Bank's East Asia region Finance and private Sector Unit. In addition, about US\$300,000 has been allocated to China for south-south partnerships to facilitate learning and knowledge transfer of post-disaster recovery experiences & lessons learned.