

USAID-NASA Partnership Bolsters Development

On Sept. 17, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) officials met in Washington, D.C. for a town hall on a joint USAID and NASA venture to improve environmental decision-making abilities for officials in developing countries. USAID Associate Administrator Eric Postel and NASA Administrator Charles Bolder were joined by two astronauts who had recently returned from the International Space Station – Terry Virts of NASA and Samantha Cristoforetti of the European Space Agency.

The officials and astronauts discussed the SERVIR program, which is a joint venture between the agencies that provides state-of-the-art, satellite-based Earth monitoring, imaging and mapping data, geospatial information, and other products to help manage challenges in the areas of food security, water resources, land use change, and natural disasters. (The name SERVIR is derived from a Spanish word meaning “to serve.”) SERVIR has already began activities in more than 30 countries, developed over 40 custom tools, collaborated with over 200 institutions, and trained more than 1,800 individuals, improving the capacity to develop local solutions.

Dan Irwin, Director of the NASA SERVIR Coordination Office at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, spoke of the USAID-NASA partnership in a panel discussion, saying the two agencies joined together to work on SERVIR because of “the unbelievable synergies that we could develop as two very different but complementary agencies.” He went on to say that “As NASA develops new Earth-observing capabilities and USAID advances food security and other related issues, we’re really bringing to bear the best assets of both agencies.”. **IAJ**

FEMA Collaboration Reviewed by GAO

In early September the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report assessing the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) disaster logistics efforts with interagency partners. GAO examined FEMA’s ability to deliver goods to disaster survivors, focusing on how well FEMA collaborated with federal partners and with state and local stakeholders.

GAO found that FEMA has taken actions described in the National Response Framework, Emergency Support Function #7 Logistics Annex, to work with its federal partners in a manner that reflects leading practices for interagency collaboration. GAO also found that FEMA has taken similar steps to collaborate with state and local stakeholders.

However, GAO noted that FEMA “could employ effective program management practices to strengthen the implementation of its Logistics Capability Assessment Tool (LCAT),” which is designed to help state, local, and tribal officials identify strengths and weaknesses and improve logistics processes and procedures using a standardized approach and measurement criteria.

GAO recommends that FEMA identify the resources needed to implement the LCAT, and establish and use goals, milestones and performance measures to report on the LCAT program implementation. The Department of Homeland Security concurred with the recommendations. **IAJ**