



## NEWS RELEASE

---

### **SEA tourist centers are potential hotspots for infectious disease outbreaks**

**Manila, September 25, 2013:** Tropical tourist destinations are potential hotspots for transmission of infectious disease outbreaks. Contributing to this is the increasing tourist numbers, demographic and ecological changes, according to researchers.

This is the indication available from initial findings of a study on the complex dynamics between tourism, development and diseases in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Of course, the spread of diseases in tourist destinations can have a direct impact on the tourism business and the economy overall. Tourists, especially associating with animals, are at higher risk for the contact and spread of diseases. And these tourists could carry the diseases back to their home countries.

The study covered popular areas like Cat Ba in Vietnam, Vang Vieng in Lao PDR, Koh Chang in Thailand, Siam Reap suburbs in Cambodia, Palawan in the Philippines and Denpasar, Bali. Dr. Pattamaporn Kittayapong of Mahidol University in Thailand says “inadequate health systems, poor disease surveillance adds to the risk. Tourism development does not usually address the health and disease prevention needs of local communities.”

The effort is part of a larger Eco-health Emerging Infectious Diseases (Eco-EID) program, which brought together 17 institutions in six Southeast Asian countries and China on a three-year study of infectious disease threats in the region.

At a four-day (September 17-20) forum in Manila, researchers exchanged their initial findings with several high-level policy-makers from scientific and other organizations including the World Health Organization and Asian Development Bank

With viral outbreaks like bird flu and SARS Southeast Asia and China are currently being viewed as hotspots for disease emergence due to its rising population and animal densities. Recent outbreaks posed major challenges to the region’s public health systems which have limited healthcare capacity. Evidence from this research aims to make available control tools and also provide inputs to policymakers in the region, to decrease risks and enhance human and animal health.

The study is expected to generate the knowledge that can help decide on policies to control outbreaks of infections in the region.

Changes in climate, socio-economic factors, and ecological contexts contribute to changing risks of infections. The novel research project aims to understand the relationship between emerging infectious diseases, agriculture, land utilization and ecosystem management practices that give rise to them. This approach to health investigates the ecological, biological, and sociological factors that trigger the diseases and alter its transmission dynamics.

The CA\$9mln research initiative was funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Canada, through the Global Health Research Initiative, and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The program is an effort to understand and contain infectious diseases that cause global risks of epidemics or pandemics.

---

#### **About AFTMI**

*The Asian Foundation for Tropical Medicine, Inc. (AFTMI) was approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission in December 2005 as a non-stock, non-profit foundation under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines. The purposes for which it was incorporated are: a) to promote research in tropical medicine and infectious diseases; b) to develop manpower resources in consonance with the national health plan; c) to facilitate scientific investigations leading towards the formulation of appropriate diseases control strategies vis-à-vis the health care delivery system; d) to support inter-agency linkages and institution strengthening goals within the health sector; e) to assist in community development projects insofar as health promotion and protection are concerned; and f) to receive donations, endowments, grants-in-aids or other forms of financial assistance and administer the same in the pursuit of its objectives under the existing rules and regulations governing the activities within the law.*

**For information contact: Dr Remigio M. Olveda Email: [remi\\_olveda@yahoo.com.ph](mailto:remi_olveda@yahoo.com.ph)**

#### **About IDRC**

*Putting research to work*

*Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) funds practical research in developing countries to increase prosperity and security, and to foster democracy and the rule of law, in support of Canada's international development efforts. IDRC promotes growth and development, and encourages sharing knowledge with policymakers, other researchers, and communities around the world. The result is innovative, lasting solutions that aim to bring change to those who need it most. For more information visit [www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)*