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Week-long workshop focuses on communal government in S.E. Asia

Wednesday, 01 December 2010 11:00 *By Peter Nordhues*

Public officials, NGOs and academics from five nations gathered in Pattaya this week to exchange ideas on how to raise the fortunes of the poor in Southeast Asia.

The “Partnership for Local Governance in Southeast-Asia” project, organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the European Commission, ran Nov. 18-25 at the Pattaya Marriott Resort & Spa. Ninety representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam participated.



(L to R) Peter Köppinger (left) and Dr. Paul Chamnien Vorratnchaiphan (right) present Prai Pattano with a check for 100,000 baht to support flood victims in Hat Yai.

“DELGOSEA is a network of local government associations, authorities, non-government organizations and academic institutions who work closely with the Municipal League of Thailand. We want to contribute to the aim for better living conditions of disadvantaged groups and promote their participation in local decision-making,” Konrad Foundation head Peter Köppinger said at a pre-event press conference.

Participating organizations include the Association of Cities of Vietnam; Local Government Development Foundation, Philippines; National League of Communes of the Kingdom of Cambodia; Thailand Environment Institute; United Cities and Local Governments for Asia Pacific, Indonesia; and Association of Indonesian Regency.

By exchanging experiences, the five nations should be able to launch communal projects adapted to the respective nation, Köppinger said.

“In our opinion, the cooperation on communal levels in the whole region should be improved. Problems like natural disasters and poverty can be found in the whole region. Many of these problems can be solved on a communal level.”

Prai Pattano, president of the Municipal League of Thailand, noted that flooding in Thailand this year has taken the lives of 220 people. “I’m sure if the communities had been better prepared for this natural disaster, there would be not so many lives lost,” he said.

Köppinger and Dr Paul Chamnien Vorratnchaiphan, director of the Thailand Environment Institute, presented Prai with a check for 100,000 baht to support flood victims in Hat Yai.

“I don’t believe in the myth central governments could regulate everything,” Vorratnchaiphan said. “Communal authorities are better to handle specific situations, if they got more scope for decisions. The participants of our seven-day workshop will exploit their knowledge in pilot projects in 16 cities.”

DELGOSEA has chosen five cities in Thailand as examples of communal governance: Prik, Phuket, Muang Klang, Khon Kaen and Udon Thani. These cities launched projects for improvement of

communal services, awareness of environment and participation of the communities on decision-making.

The Germany-based Konrad Adenauer Foundation promotes national and international peace, liberty and equity by political education. The foundation is funded mainly by the German government, but can spend their budget independently.