

COMBATING ZIKA
AND FUTURE THREATS
A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Citizen Science at Center of New Initiative to Combat Zika

Arlington, VA—As part of USAID’s Combating Zika and Future Threats Grand Challenge, the Arlington, Virginia-based Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) was selected as one of 26 potential “game-changing” solutions to mitigate the spread and impact of the Zika virus.

The IGES solution will demonstrate the use of citizen science data by communities and public health officials for local response to Zika.

Focusing on Brazil and Peru, this initiative connects health education, environmental awareness, scientific discovery, and community-based action in a citizen science effort with direct benefits to both science and public health decision-making. The project capitalizes on technological innovations and takes them one step further—evolving citizen science to citizen action. The idea is simple: citizen scientists collect and share mosquito data and then health officials and community leaders use the data to develop a local mitigation strategy that reduces the risk of disease in their communities.

Partnering with the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), the IGES team will collaborate on a crowd-sourced science and action initiative that leverages NASA’s GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) Program networks of scientists, teachers, students, and citizen scientists.

“This is the best of opportunities to prove the power of citizen science,” said IGES President, Nancy Colleton. “The Institute’s work focuses on leveraging Earth science data and information for improved decision making. This project has potential to protect local populations from the threat of Zika through improved and targeted mitigation can have immense global impact.”

Changing seasonality resulting from climate change is exacerbating problems with vector-borne disease worldwide. UCAR President, Antonio Busalacchi, adds that, “We know that citizen science will be key to understanding and responding to numerous changes at the local level as a result of climate change. UCAR is pleased to work with IGES on this new initiative.”

About IGES

IGES is a nonprofit organization and leader in Earth and space science education, communication and outreach, and in fostering national and international cooperation in Earth observations. These efforts—designed to improve understanding of and response to natural and human-induced changes in the Earth system—require multidisciplinary approaches to complex and critical social, environmental and economic challenges. For more information go to www.strategies.org

About UCAR

UCAR is a nonprofit consortium of more than 100 North American member colleges and universities focused on research and training in the atmospheric and related Earth system sciences. UCAR manages the GLOBE Implementation Office (GIO) through a NASA cooperative agreement award. For more information, go to: <http://www2.ucar.edu/>

About GLOBE

The GLOBE Program is an international science and education program that provides students and the public worldwide with the opportunity to participate in data collection and the scientific process, and contribute meaningfully to our understanding of the Earth system and global environment. GLOBE is sponsored by NASA and the National Science Foundation and supported by NOAA and the U.S. Department of State. Internationally, GLOBE is implemented through government-to-government agreements. For more information, go to www.globe.gov

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