

## Project on MDGs to benefit Pangasinan, Negros Oriental


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THREE local government units (LGUs) each in the provinces of Pangasinan and Negros Oriental stand to benefit from a two-year program which aims to boost the capacities of concerned LGUs to achieve important United Nations-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets.

The project, entitled "Cementing Pathways to Financing the Millennium Development Goals," a joint undertaking of the European Commission (EC) and the La Liga Policy Institute (La Liga) and its partners, Social Watch Philippines, LGUs and community-based organizations in the two provinces, will be implemented starting this month.

The project, which has a total cost of €282,159, including funding support from the European Commission of €239,835, aims to prepare LGUs in undertaking partnership-building activities geared toward financing and implementation of MDGs-related programs and services, said La Liga managing director Roland Cabigas.

MDG-related programs and services will be anchored on the achievement of MDGs targets around poverty and hunger, universal primary education, maternal and reproductive health, and environmental sustainability.

Specifically, the project aims to mainstream nationally committed MDGs targets, and incorporate these targets into local government programs and budgets.

The project will be implemented in two LGU clusters in Pangasinan and Negros Oriental. The first, within the first district of Pangasinan in Luzon, which includes Alaminos City, Bani and Burgos, while the second, within Negros Oriental in the Visayas, includes Sibulan, Dauin and La Libertad.

To "cement pathways" to financing the MDGs means being able to strengthen coherence and harmony toward achieving international commitments by channeling of public funds for the MDGs, Cabigas said.

He added that through partnerships, the project would, hopefully, bolster delivery of basic social services to the 1.6 million people of the project's target sites, especially to the marginalized sectors of fisherfolk, farmers, women, schoolchildren and out-of-school youth.

The project will ensure that citizens are equipped to directly participate in decision-making on spending for poverty reduction, reproductive and maternal health, education and environment.

The project also aims to strengthen capabilities of LGUs and national government agencies to effectively implement mechanisms on cooperation and people's participation toward monitoring, financing and achieving the specified MDGs targets; bond LGUs and citizens' groups on a common goal of helping achieve targets on poverty reduction, education, reproductive and maternal health, and environmental sustainability, Cabigas said.

He said the uneven progress of the country on the MDGs is attributed to several key issues.

"Full and common appreciation, awareness and tools have to be permeated in all levels of government," he said.

He added that there remains a disjoint in planning and implementation of MDGs initiatives between the national and local level of governments, particularly considering that programs related to several MDGs targets are within the mandate of local governments due to decentralization.

A critical issue, he pointed out, is the availability of resources to finance MDGs-related initiatives and programs that are unique to each area.

"The need for more coherent and harmonized efforts of the national and local governments to achieve antipoverty goals at the level of planning, resource mobilization and program implementation requires urgent attention. Speeding up and cementing MDGs achievements nationwide by 2015 will require renewed and concerted action among state and nonstate development stakeholders," he said.

Cabigas said six years before 2015, the Philippines is seriously at risk of not attaining targets to achieve the MDGs on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1), achieving universal primary education (Goal 2), reducing maternal deaths and increasing access o reproductive health services (Goal 5).

Meanwhile, environmental sustainability (Goal 7) and other efforts toward the achievement of MDGs are gravely hampered by frequent environmental disasters resulting from extreme weather conditions caused by climate change.

Local MDGs-monitoring reports revealed realities of poverty and exclusions that are often hidden and ignored

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by national aggregates and averages, he stressed.

Cabigas noted that no less than President Arroyo, in her foreword on the MDG Midterm Report of Social Watch Philippines, recognized that there is "uneven progress on the MDGs among the regions of the country and that there is concern on the adequacy of financing to meet the MDGs."

"Synchronizing local development plans to the country's commitments on the MDGs is a key strategy. Cooperative and constructive engagement between LGUs and local citizens' groups play a key role in ensuring that these commitments translate to better quality of life for the grassroots. MDGs Plan harmonization provides a common track toward ending the worst forms of human deprivation by 2015. This means generating local development and investment plans that are able to target the most pressing needs of the community," he said.

The main activities of the project include 1) Research for evidence-based targeting and planning; 2) Capability sharing and enhancement; 3) MDG partnership dialogues; 4) Production and dissemination of MDG budget advocacy resource materials; and 5) Documentation, publication and dissemination (Festival of Good Governance).

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United States, dollar	46.3920
Japan, yen	0.2576
United Kingdom, pound	74.8999
Hong Kong, dollar	5.9675
Switzerland, franc	44.3433
Canada, dollar	43.6754
Singapore, dollar	33.0639
Australia, dollar	41.7332
Bahrain, dinar	123.0687
Saudi Arabia, rial	12.3712
Brunei, dollar	32.9465
Indonesia, rupiah	0.0050
Thailand, baht	1.4650
United Arab Emirates, dirham	12.6323
European Monetary Union, euro	65.3107
India, rupee	1.0120
Malaysia, ringgit	13.5530
Korea, won	0.0400
Taiwan, dollar	1.4484

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