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Events: Dads Off to Thailand for the DELGOSEA Confab

Leading Bacolod City officials have flown to Bangkok, Thailand for the final conference of the Democratic Local Governance in Southeast Asia, August 6-9, 2012. Bacolod City as pilot area of DELGOSEA with other areas in Southeast Asia, is represented by Mayor Evelio Leonardia, Councilors Em Ang and Caesar Distrito, with Gilda Luisima, Sally Abelarde, Engr. Loben Ceballos, and Gloria Arguelles.

The final conference is the last activity of DELGOSEA member areas with funds from the European Union.

Over 100 participants, representing the project partners, local government associations (LGAs), pilot cities, best practice cities, academe, media, national governments and project teams from all five countries, will discuss the impact of good local governance projects, the successes of the pilot cities and the outcome of the project evaluation to sustainability issues, as well as new initiatives for reaching the goal of good local governance in all ASEAN countries.

The aim of the conference is to develop a strategy for a permanent dialogue on democratic local governance on the regional level, based on concrete experiences, reflected in the reports of the pilot cities. These have been extensively documented and will be presented at a market place session on the first day. The participants will also be looking to develop an exit strategy to secure sustainability and project results. The conference is also an occasion to celebrate the successes of the pilot cities and the enduring friendships and networks that have developed over the last 2 years. The project will end soon, but the DELGOSEA network will remain vibrant and strong.

It must be recalled that two years ago, Bacolod City was selected by the Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast-Asia (DELGOSEA) to replicate local governance best practice on People Private Public Partnership from Cambodia. Bacolod City Mayor Evelio R. Leonardia opted to adapt and utilize best practice model from the Toul Sangke Sangkat Council in Cambodia, in improving people participation and collaboration with government in public services management.

The People Private Public Partnership (PPPP) model from Toul Sangke Sangkat is focused on engaging all members of local communities, government constituents and public institutions in the planning, funding, and building of infrastructure such as the roadwork and inland waterways. It also emphasizes its key success on management transparency and outreach activities to all parts of the community, regardless of their status, political affiliations, and culture.

According to Mayor Leonardia, "Bacolod City is determined to involve the people and government elements so we could better address local needs and utilize local and external resources throughout all steps of public services' development and improvement. We are

honored to join this partnership with DELGOSEA and to learn from our colleagues in Toul Sangke Sangkat Council in Cambodia."

Hence, Bacolod City is replicating Cambodia's PPPP approach on the construction of a youth home for the children in conflict with the law (CICL) as the existing one is no longer in adequate condition. A Technical Working Group (project team) had been created by the City Mayor to deliberate on major issues/concerns currently faced by the City. Based on its assessment and problems identification, the city experiences some concerns on these following areas: environment, women, children and family.

Construction of a youth home was listed as priority. At present, it is one of the major programs of the City's Department of Social Services and Development. The construction of a youth home fits the criteria of being a social problem that works best under a cooperative-collaborative scheme with different sectors of society.

The city has experienced a significant increase in the number of street working children and children in conflict with the law (CICL) which can be clearly manifested by the number of beggars and children loitering around the city streets. These street children were also often involved in criminal cases of rape, robbery, pickpockets and drugs trade. With the increase in CICL being handled by the Department of Social Services and Development, and given the limitations on space of the present center and limited budget, the team in Bacolod City believes that a project with the involvement of private-public sector participation will be able to build a new and more spacious center for the youth. This is not going to be a mere infrastructure project but a project with a conscience that expresses social awareness and manifests social responsibility.

To concretize the PPPP approach, last July 31, the Bacolod consortium for People-Public-Private-Partnership was convened by Mayor Leonardia to discuss the further steps of the Bacolod Youth Home. The Bacolod community development consortium is composed of a management board with Mayor Bing as honorary chair, VM Sayson as honorary vice chair. Mrs. Milagros Ong, the overall chairperson from private sector and Councilor Em Ang is the vice-chair. Committee chairpersons for five committees were also named: finance and resource management, project design, monitoring and evaluation, procurement and inventory, and community and mobilization."

A one-hectare property in the Arao Relocation site has been designated as the future site of the Youth Home that will be constructed under the PPPP scheme. The groundbreaking at the site was held last August 2, 2012 attended by various stakeholders.

This project is one of the flag bearer reports of Bacolod City in the final conference of DELGOSEA that Bacolod City officials are presently attending in Bangkok, Thailand.*