ADVANCING PEACE AND STABILITY IN MINDANAO

Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago comprise one-quarter of the Philippines’ total population and hold significant potential for economic growth; however, instability—brought about by poverty, marginalization and conflict—has impeded development in many areas throughout the region. USAID partners with national and local governments and civil society to address the root causes of these challenges. By enhancing governance and civic engagement, improving access to quality social services, protecting life-sustaining natural resources and expanding economic opportunities—especially among youth in the most vulnerable communities—USAID is helping make way for families and communities throughout the region to pursue a more stable future.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Governance challenges in Mindanao have permitted marginalization and perpetuated economic instability among communities throughout the region. To help address this, USAID has mentored 30 local governments and 46 civil society organizations from Central Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago to be more responsive to citizens’ interests, build relationships between local government officials and citizens, and improve access to water, sanitation and other public services. These governments have enhanced their transparency and accountability and have institutionalized avenues, such as citizen charters and local committees, for people to participate more fully in decision-making and constructively address sources of grievance. Through these measures, community development plans cover more inclusively issues like gender equality and public safety. With a more civically engaged public, USAID is also helping to further peace dialogues between conflicting identity groups. For example, USAID trains women, youth and religious leaders in Cotabato City, Marawi City, Zamboanga City, Lamitan City and the municipality of Ampatuan in Maguindanao to mobilize their communities for peace and reconciliation.
ENABLING YOUTH TO ACCESS PRODUCTIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Poverty rates exceed 70 percent in some areas of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, stamping out opportunities for young people and leaving them vulnerable to the influence of extremism. Since 2013, USAID has helped improve the education outcomes, life skills and employability of nearly 16,000 youth, ages 15-24, in conflict-affected areas where the out-of-school youth incidence is highest. Youth have also participated in community service activities and life skills workshops, leading nearly 70 percent of participants to report improved perceptions about their government and their community. USAID also established out-of-school youth development alliances in eight communities, convening local governments, academia, the private sector and national government agencies to address issues important to out-of-school youth and link them to employment. These alliances have raised nearly $550,000 to provide scholarships, tools and support for community service projects.

IMPROVING HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Decades of poverty and internal conflict in certain parts of Mindanao have imposed tremendous economic costs, often leaving local governments unable to adequately serve people. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is marked by the worst health indicators in the country, especially in maternal and infant deaths. USAID helps the Department of Health to strengthen health systems, sustain health service improvement and reach people living in remote areas. USAID also provides humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas, including Marawi. Since 2013, USAID has helped establish 21 service delivery networks of public and private healthcare facilities, allowing more people to receive better care, especially for those in geographically isolated and low-income communities. More than 35,000 adults received their choice of family planning methods and 26,000 women received antenatal care. In targeted sites, 25,000 women and children were immunized or were beneficiaries of maternal care and family planning services.

PROTECTING WILDLIFE

Millions of Filipinos depend on Mindanao’s rich habitats for food, water and livelihood. USAID helps local governments sustainably manage their wildlife resources and integrate conservation practices into local development. Since 2012, USAID has been working with indigenous peoples in the Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park, a major watershed in Northern Mindanao, to reduce
forest degradation. Nearly 400 USAID-trained indigenous people from all 28 barangays (villages) that surround the park now patrol the forests for threats and report geo-referenced data to local officials for their response. In Zamboanga City and the Sulu Archipelago, USAID works with local governments to strengthen environmental law enforcement. Since 2016, USAID has trained over 160 government officials on countering wildlife crimes and prepared them to become deputized with legal authority to respond to wildlife threats. USAID also educates citizens on common, illegally traded wildlife species to reduce demand for wildlife products.

USAID RESPONSE TO MARAWI CONFLICT

In May 2017, conflict broke out between armed groups and the government of the Philippines in Marawi, displacing nearly 360,000 people. USAID has committed $14.3 million (Php 730 million) to support affected communities in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur and the surrounding areas. USAID’s early assistance involved restoring access to water by distributing 12,000 water containers and nearly 100,000 chlorine tablets to 12,000 families. USAID also began distributing 6,500 desks for schools where displaced students are enrolled. In coordination with the Philippine government and humanitarian organizations, USAID will continue delivering relief items, like hygiene kits and shelter materials, to improve conditions in evacuation centers and other alternative housing, including for women and children. To restore people’s access to health services, USAID is facilitating the delivery of anti-TB drugs and supplies to evacuation centers. USAID will also provide 18 facilities in Marawi with critical supplies and services to address tuberculosis and maternal, newborn and child health needs. To support Marawi’s recovery, USAID is helping restore public services, like water and electricity, and is jumpstarting livelihoods, promoting community dialogue, rebuilding resilient health systems and offering skills training and psychosocial counseling for youth for longer-term stabilization and rehabilitation.

CONTACTS

MISSION
Lawrence Hardy II, Mission Director
USAID/Philippines, U.S. Embassy
Annex 2 Building, 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Ermita
Manila, Philippines 1000
Phone: 632-301-6000
E-mail: infoph@usaid.gov

HEADQUARTERS
Melissa Kennison, Desk Officer
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC, USA 20523
Phone: 202-712-4521
E-mail: mkennison@usaid.gov