

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DepEd strengthens ARMM / Mindanao interventions

The Department of Education is intensifying efforts to improve access to quality education and open livelihood opportunities for children and out-of-school youth in Mindanao particularly in the ARMM provinces in partnership with foreign governments and the private sector.

With support from the USAID's Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQUALLS), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and other foreign and local agencies, DepEd is steadily mobilizing support for education and livelihood programs in Mindanao.

Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus, together with USAID Philippines Director Jon Lindborg recently visited Mindanao schools to see first hand the impact of the education interventions in Mindanao in partnership with USAID EQUALLS.

Lapus and Lindborg engaged students, teachers and administrators in discussions on strengthening peace in their communities through use of an EQUALLS –provided 10-part video production series on peace entitled *Salam*.

"There is an urgent need for a stronger public-private sector alliance to meet the education needs of Mindanao especially in the ARMM. A framework to pool various initiatives into one program assures efficiency and effectiveness," Lapus said.

The EQUALLS-supported alternative basic education and livelihood skills programs provided youths who have dropped out of school with an opportunity to re-enter the formal education system or receive livelihood training and work experience. EQUALLS support program for out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) is the largest in the country with a target of 100,000 OSCY.

In partnership with DepEd and DepEd ARMM, EQUALLS has helped improve the quality of education of some 480,000 public elementary students in Mindanao, trained nearly 10,000 educators in teaching of English, Science and Math and provided almost 2 million books in Mindanao schools.

Part of the program includes the improvement of training for teachers, development of training materials and in mobilizing school level support by providing managerial and leadership training to school principals.

Another intervention program adopted was the Text to Teach (T2T) project of the Ayala Foundation and Nokia which aimed to improve the teaching of

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English, Mathematics and Science among Grades 5 and 6 pupils in 13 selected public schools and one private school in Cotabato City.

As proof of improving student performance, the division of Cotabato City topped the examination given by the T2T program for three school divisions. Cotabato City was also ranked 3rd in the recent Regional Achievement Test both in elementary and secondary.

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