

NEW ZEALAND'S AID IN THE PHILIPPINES

"The goal of New Zealand's aid programme in the Philippines is to contribute to the efforts of the Government of Philippines and its people to achieve poverty elimination through equitable and sustainable social and economic development".

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT – Consultative Group Meeting for the Philippines, Cebu, 7-8 November 2003.

NZAID – About us

NZAID is the government agency responsible for international assistance to developing countries. New Zealand's aid helps to eliminate poverty and create a safe and just world, particularly in our own neighbourhood of the Pacific. South-east Asia continues to be an important focus of New Zealand's aid.

Aid to the Philippines

New Zealand and the Philippines have shared a close relationship since the Philippines obtained full independence in 1946. Strong links have been forged between the two countries, including trade and education, defence co-operation and immigration.

The Philippines and New Zealand also have a close and successful aid and development partnership. The focus and nature of New Zealand's assistance has varied over the years. Support for geothermal power development was an early priority, while work in forestry – highlighted by support for the development of a sustainable plantation forest, Bukidnon Forests Inc – featured prominently until recently.

The incidence of poverty in the Philippines is greatest in rural areas and in regions such as Mindanao, where deprivation remains high. Ongoing conflict in Mindanao, inequitable access to services and resources, and shortcomings in the quality and accountability of governance are responsible for this. Indigenous people, including Muslims of Mindanao, are particularly disadvantaged. NZAID's programme works to help address a number of these problems.

NZAID has allocated \$3.37 million for the country programme in 2003/04. The Philippines also has substantial access to several regional and global programmes of NZAID, most notably through the Asia Development Assistance Facility (ADAF).

Support for Mindanao

Mindanao region has long been a priority area for New Zealand assistance. Social indicators and income levels tend to be lower in Mindanao than elsewhere in the Philippines, and the region is home to the majority of indigenous people in the Philippines.

The Bukidnon Forests Inc (BFI) project in northeast Mindanao has been a major recipient of past assistance. Thanks to NZAID, BFI has developed into a commercially viable and sustainable business. BFI employs local people, the 'leftover' timber is used locally, and support has extended to agricultural activities and scholarships.

While NZAID's involvement with Bukidnon has now basically concluded, it continues to be actively involved in projects in the Mindanao region. One such project is a literacy programme for members of the Matigsalug tribe in central Mindanao. Through this programme, more than 800 people of all ages are now learning to read and write.



Local communities in Bukidnon have benefited from an NZAID-funded portable community bandsaw using timber waste from Bukidnon Forests Inc.



The Matigsalug literacy programme is just one of the community-focused programmes throughout Mindanao supported by NZAID.

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Ecotourism contributes to sustainable development

The Philippines has a National Ecotourism Strategy, which encourages and supports sustainable ecotourism ventures that benefit local communities. NZAID supports the strategy by helping with product development, marketing and skills upgrading in several communities, including Mt Pinatubo and on the Visayan island of Bohol.

NZAID support helped develop treks around Mt Pinatubo, and helped the local Aeta community to improve their skills in tour guiding and management. The Pamilacan community on Bohol, where dolphin watching is a major attraction, benefited from NZAID support for marketing, providing safer facilities and a better quality tour package. The Bohol dolphin watching activity has recorded a fivefold increase in the number of tours since early 2003, and profits are being generated for the first time.

On a national level, NZAID assisted with the development of the ecotourism strategy and provides technical advice and mentoring support.

NZAID provides around \$300,000 a year to ecotourism.



Indigenous Aeta guides on the slopes of Mt Pinatubo. This active volcano holds considerable ecotourism potential.

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Future aid to the Philippines

NZAID and the Philippines agreed in October 2003 to a five-year strategy to deliver NZAID's aid and development programme. Key elements are:

Resource Management

- Support for a number of long term interventions to deal with environmental degradation and achieve sustainable livelihoods at the community level.

NZAID's work in ecotourism has helped strengthen national capacity and systems, as well as enhancing the quality of ecotourism activities in specific communities. NZAID expects to maintain involvement in this area for the duration of the strategy.

Indigenous People

- Help improve quality of life for indigenous people.

NZAID supports a UNDP/National Commission on Indigenous Peoples initiative, which focuses on skills development and the recognition of ancestral land rights. NZAID also supports a UNICEF-led initiative to improve basic education and health in the Mountain province of northern Luzon whose inhabitants are predominantly indigenous people.

Governance

- Support for public sector reform and local government capacity building.

NZAID contributes to efforts to enhance the quality of public sector spending. This is particularly relevant given the tight fiscal constraints facing the Philippines.

Human Resource Development

- Continue to fund scholarships and encourage new training activities, including workshops, secondments and in-country training.

More than a quarter of NZAID funding to the Philippines is directed to human resource development.

Peace and Development in Mindanao

- Contribute to reconstruction and longer-term development in Mindanao.

NZAID has committed a further \$800,000 for 2004 to the Philippines/UN Multi Donor programme for western and central Mindanao. NZAID funds will continue to be directed to improving sustainable livelihoods.

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