



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **U.S.-Philippine Partnership for Development in Mindanao Highlighted In U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Leslie Bassett’s April 7-8 Visit to Cotabato**

United States’ partnership with the Government of Philippines, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations for the economic and social development of Mindanao was the focus of Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy Leslie A. Bassett’s April 7-8 visit to Cotabato.

Chargé Bassett began her trip to Cotabato with a visit to a rural health clinic in Maguindanao’s municipality of Talayan where she witnessed the community’s observance of the annual Child Health Week. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Philippine Department of Health, the annual event provides children with dietary supplements, immunization vaccines, and other child health services. “The Talayan rural health unit represents a long and fruitful partnership in health between the U.S. Government and the Department of Health in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao,” said Ms. Bassett.

During her visit, Chargé Bassett also held discussions on the business environment in Cotabato and vicinity during a forum with leaders of various chambers of commerce, officials from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and North Cotabato local government units, and representatives of USAID.

On the following day, she formally turned over to the municipal government of Libungan, North Cotabato, a steel-and-concrete bridge, constructed with P1.49-million in funding from USAID. Spanning the Demapaco Creek, the new bridge replaces a dilapidated bailey bridge and will provide six thousand residents, farmers, and traders of Barangay Sinawingan safe passage, even during rainy seasons when the creek’s water level rises. The Sinawingan bridge is one of more than 1,100 infrastructure projects that USAID has constructed in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao to help accelerate economic growth. The U.S. government plans to construct about 600 additional infrastructure projects in the region over the next few years.

During the two-day visit to Mindanao, Chargé Bassett also visited a resettlement area near Talayn for internally displaced persons in central Mindanao. She also met with Bai Sandra Basar, a participant in President Obama’s upcoming Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, and she visited World Food Program and USAID book warehouses.

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