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## Cluster for development

Thursday, October 15, 2009

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By Debra Magallon-Estero

**TAGBILARAN** - The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in the Visayas, together with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), will push for more "clustered" approaches in implementing its Local and Regional Economic Development (LRED) program.

"The cluster approach will not just enhance but also optimize the benefits of one common resource to (the clustered local government units)," said DTI-Central Visayas Director Asteria Caberte in a press conference yesterday at the Metro Center Hotel in Tagbilaran City, Bohol.

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The cluster approach also involves the community in the development plans of its municipality.

"When people are involved, the success factor of the program is very high," said a civil society representative for the South Maqueda Bay cluster that is composed of six municipalities in Samar.

South Maqueda Bay and the Abatan River Development Management Council (ARDMC) of Bohol were showcased as success stories in adopting the cluster approach of the LRED during yesterday's forum entitled "Accelerating Economic Development through Cluster Approach."

### Ideal

The LRED cluster approach is usually ideal for municipalities that share a common interest.

A case study of the ARDMC, which is composed of Antequera, Ballihan, Catigbian, Cortes and Maribojoc, showed that the five municipalities share a common interest—the Abatan River, along which they lie.

Represented by each of the municipalities' mayors, the group formally entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to signify its commitment to a community-based and sustainable tourism project.

### River code

The local government units (LGU) of the municipalities agreed to adopt a river code to serve as their guide in developing the river.

Aside from this, the code also mandates that investment groups present to the cluster their proposals for development before any LGU can provide a permit for a particular investment.

Caberte said the cluster approach should become the next program to be rolled out in other provinces, but there is also a need to identify the common interests of the municipalities that wish to adopt the initiative.

GTZ program manager for the Private Sector Promotion (Smedsep) program Dr. Volker Steigerwald said the LRED and its cluster approach are also being used in Germany.

In Baybay, Leyte, where LRED was first implemented in 2004, Steigerwald said the town was able to see a number of developments after adopting the program.

According to a reference document furnished by GTZ, two years since its implementation, the province has been able to improve the business and investment climate, generating jobs in selected LGUs and enhancing service delivery through good local governance.

This includes the rollout of a streamlined business permit licensing system and the setting up of investment promotion centers in some towns in Leyte.

Last year, a number of provinces in the Visayas signified interest in adopting the LRED program.

Published in the Sun.Star Cebu newspaper on October 16, 2009.

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