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GTZ to shift focus to Mindanao

AFTER pouring in assistance to the Visayas through its private sector promotion program, GTZ, an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development, said it will shift its focus to Mindanao to promote more civil peace service projects starting next year.

Ralph Timmermann, counselor and deputy head of mission of the German Embassy, told reporters that the shift is meant to help neighboring regions that needed a lot of assistance. He said the project will focus on conflict transformation in Mindanao, particularly in the Caraga region.

Timmermann said the German government has allotted 13 million euros as technical

assistance for new projects from 2009-2012.

He said about half of the technical assistance might be directed to Mindanao.

Priorities

“The Philippine Government has identified priorities such as conflict transformation and peace building,” said German Technical Cooperation country director Jochem Lange.

Lange said the shift of focus area was also in accordance with the agreement made by the German and the Philippine Governments.

Timmermann said that while Visayas, particularly Cebu, has taken advantage of the assistance, the move to expand to other areas is also meant to

improve other regions.

“We wanted to replicate the success of Cebu to other regions as well,” he said.

The German development cooperation in the Philippines focuses on the Visayas and Caraga regions. Its priority programs focus on economic reform, environment and conflict transformation and crisis prevention.

Its priority program in the Visayas is improving the economic climate for micro, small and medium enterprises through the private sector promotion program.

Aside from conflict transformation in Caraga, the council will also strengthen its environmental projects in Panay, Negros, Leyte and Samar.

Lange said the Philippines is considered a hot spot in terms of natural resources degradation, an area which also needed high support.

Organizations

The German development cooperation in the country, which began in 1961, has already generated 876 million euros (P54 billion) in total assistance. In 2008, Germany was the fourth largest donor of Official Development Assistance with \$53 million or P2.3 billion.

Among the German organizations that work in cooperation in the country are KfW (financial cooperation), GTZ (technical cooperation) and DED, CIM, ZFD (human resource cooperation). **KOC**