

By LEI MADELINE MOHAMMAD

In preparation for the implementation of Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Process or what was known before as the Bottom-Up Budgeting, the Local Government Unit and Municipal Coordinating Team (MCT) of Pitogo, Zamboanga del Sur gathered together for the Financial Management System and Project Procurement Process Training.

The 2-day training, which was held on July 24 and 25, 2014, aimed to orient the MLGU officials and MCT about the GPB processes, particularly on Community Financial Management System and the procurement guidelines (adapted from the Philippine Procurement Law RA 9184 and the World Bank procurement guiding principles) which shall be integrated in the program implementation strategies of the program.

The implementation of GPBP in Pitogo will be led by DSWD's Kalahi CIDSS-NCDDP whose role is to provide technical assistance to the community volunteers and project implementers in the municipal level.

Danabel Batiller, Kalahi CIDSS Financial Analyst said that the training sought to prepare and equip the LGU and Municipal Coordinating Team with relevant knowledge on GPB project management, especially on the aspect of finances and procurement, as these two are the most crucial parts in project implementation.

Subsequently, the LGU and MCT are also scheduled to conduct their Pre-Procurement conference with the community volunteers who will be part of the sub-project implementation as part of the activities designed to promote community empowerment which is the primary mandate of the program. In this manner, the project provides villagers with structured opportunities for accessing information, expressing their opinions, and influencing local governance.

The municipality of Pitogo had identified 6 community sub-projects, all day-care centers with a total cost amounting to 4.8 million pesos for fiscal year 2014. Together with Pitogo, 27 other municipalities across will also be covered by the GPBP in the same year.

“We are extremely happy that we are one of the recipients of the GPBP because this will enable our citizens and grassroots organizations to increase their demand for improved access to basic social services and a more transparent and accountable government.” Pitogo’s Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer Mary Ann Malinao said.

Moreover, Pitogo and some 47 municipalities across the region will also be covered by DSWD’s new scaled up anti-poverty program Kalahi-CIDSS NCDDP (National Community Driven Development Program), which is scheduled to start this year.

Grassroots Participatory Budgeting is a planning and budgeting approach of formulating budget proposals of government agencies which addresses the needs of the poor municipalities through soft and hard projects. These projects are pre-identified in the Local Poverty Reduction Action Plan as endorsed by the basic sectors and civil society organizations. — Lei Madeline Mohammad