



# Dev Buzz



## More transparency, accountability for public funds to reduce poverty

Improved congressional oversight over the execution of the national government's annual budget can tighten accountability for public funds and improve enforcement of pro-poor programs in the country, a panel of experts said at a forum on sustained poverty reduction at the House of Representatives.

The forum, held after the launching of the Knowledge for Development Center at the House of Representatives (HRep), was attended by committee secretaries, department heads and HRep staff who, according to House Secretary General Marilyn Barua-Yap in her opening remarks, make up Congress' quiet army of workers who ensure that the country's policies are shaped well.

One concern raised by some committee secretaries is that Philippine policies and framework are models used in other countries-- but enforcement of these policies is weak. One of the ways to strengthen implementation of programs and policies that create inclusive growth is for the government to have periodic public expenditure reviews, said Ulrich Lachler, lead economist for the poverty reduction and economic management sector in the World Bank, East Asia and the Pacific Region.

Rosa Alonso I-Terme, World Bank senior economist, said two critical sources of data are necessary for Congress to follow up on the budget: an executive budget that shows the

national government's actual expenditures released by the end of the year and the audited accounts by the Commission on Audit classified by sector. "*Line agencies do them, but nobody aggregates them. This is a critical area for progress,*" she said.

Periodic expenditure reviews are difficult to do at present because half of appropriations is in special purpose funds, which are difficult for the public to see, said Matthew Stephens, World Bank governance specialist. "*The budget that you pass is not the budget that is executed,*" he said.

Mr. Lachler explained that growth in recent years has not been inclusive. The Philippines, which was once richer than Thailand, is now poorer than other East Asian countries and will continue to lag behind if long-term reforms are not done, he said.

Some 80 participants including Congressman Rufus Rodriguez, Acting Director General Romulo Miral, deputy secretaries general, and development partners attended. World Bank officials discussed poverty, competitiveness, governance, public financial management, and an overview of the Country Assistance Strategy. The discussion that followed the presentations of Mr. Lachler and Jesse Ang was rich and lively with questions about legislative practices and oversight, budget execution monitoring, poverty reduction, fiscal policies and taxation, CCT, education, statistics, and disaster risk management.



# KDC launched at the House of Representatives

The Knowledge for Development Center (KDC) was launched last week at the House of Representatives, the 12th such facility in the country.

KDCs are information centers and hubs for dialogue and partnership for development set up in partnership between the World Bank and knowledge institutions. The KDC at the House of Representatives is the only one in a non-academic setting, but unique and important because it is located within one of the country's most important knowledge centers—the House of Representatives.

The KDC is supported by global organizations, namely The Asia Foundation, the United Nations Information Center, WHO Western Pacific Regional Office, and the Asian Development Bank.

House Speaker Prospero Nograles and Cagayan de Oro Representative Rufus Rodriguez attended the event, as well as officials from other KDC partners. *"It is very fitting that we have a knowledge center within the House of Representatives, where understanding of development issues is very much encouraged,"* said Mr. Nograles in his remarks.

Secretary General Atty. Marilyn B. Barua-Yap said the KDC represents a "renaissance" for the House's information service. The center includes a video-conferencing facility, some 2,000 printed publications about development, and four computers that can be used to access even more development materials online.

The launching was followed by a knowledge-sharing event between the House and the Bank.

