

Caucus of Development NGO Networks E-News September 2008

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CODE-NGO primes up for Social Development Week on Dec 8-11, 2008

CODE-NGO prepares for this year's Social Development Week (SDW), an annual event co-organized with the Peace and Equity Foundation and the Association of Foundations to promote to a larger public who NGOs are and what they do. SDW2008 festivities will be held on December 8 to 11, 2008 and will feature a trade fair at the Glorietta Activity Center, Makati City that will promote the unique products and services of enterprising NGOs from all over the country; a forum series on current national issues and the role of civil society in ushering reforms and the gathering of CODE-NGO member networks from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao for its 12th National Assembly on December 11-12. A special focus for SDW2008 is to encourage more youth to get involved in social development, either as volunteers or to form a new generation of development workers.

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CODE-NGO Engages in Budget Monitoring Project as Government Proposes a 55% Budget Increase for DA

The executive department proposes a 39.7 Billion pesos budget for the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the proposed 2009 budget submitted to Congress. However, members of the academe and NGO leaders expressed great concern over the possible misuse of these funds given the nearing presidential election and experiences such as the fertilizer scam. The proposed 55 percent increase in the DA budget from 2008 makes CODE-NGO's DA Budget Monitoring Project timely and more important.

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CSI: Investigating the Civil Society Sector in the Philippines

Yes, there is now a CSI – Philippines. Though in this case, CSI means Civil Society Index. CSI is an action-research project that aims to assess the state of civil society

in countries around the world. It has been developed by Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Between 2003 and 2006, CSI was implemented in over 50 countries worldwide, and during 2007-2008, an intermediary phase, focusing in particular on African countries was implemented. Unfortunately, the Philippines was not included in the first round of the CSI. Civicus has now started a new round of CSI implementation and has approved CODE-NGO's application to be the national coordinating organization for CSI in the Philippines.

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Partnership Fund Pushed by 2nd Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium

Representatives of 30 Japanese and Philippine NGOs at the 2nd Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium agreed to work together for the establishment of a Partnership Fund, with funds to be raised initially from individuals, civil society organizations and businesses in the two countries. The fund will support projects aimed at addressing poverty in the Philippines as well as related work in Japan. The symposium was held last July 17-19, 2008 in Tokyo, Japan.

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CODE-NGO Opposes Philippine NGO Certification Office

Cong. Luis Villafuerte, a key supporter of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, pleasantly surprised the participants at a recent congressional hearing when he agreed with the position of the Department of Finance (DoF) and of NGOs that Revenue Regulations No. 13-98 of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) does not constitute "undue delegation". The said regulation authorizes the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) to first certify NGOs before these are granted donee institution status by the BIR. Some government officials had earlier argued that RR No. 13-98 involved undue delegation and should be revoked.

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NGO Participation in Budget Deliberations Supported

Three bills have been filed in the House of Representatives seeking to institutionalize the participation of people's organizations (POs) and NGOs in the congressional deliberations on the annual national budget. These are House Bill No. 4735 by Cong Guillermo P. Cua (Party List: Coop-NATCCO), HB No. 4959 (Cong. Teofisto Guingona) and HB No. 4977 (Cong. Lorenzo Tanada III).

In a hearing on these bills last August 27, 2008, CODE-NGO suggested that Congress utilize the internet to make the proposed budget easily accessible to all citizens for study and comment.

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CSO Consultation on the Millennium Challenge Corporation

In March 2008, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the United States announced the Philippines' eligibility to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in grant money as part of its Compact Country Program. According to MCC, the

Philippines became eligible for this large-scale grant funding because of positive performance on three broad indicator categories on Ruling Justly, Investing in People and Economic Freedom.

Concerned with this development and the Philippine government's ability to handle such a huge grant, the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) together with CODE-NGO, International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance (INCITEGov), Lawyers' League for Liberty (Libertas), Makati Business Club (MBC), Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA) and Transparency International-Philippines (TI-Phils) convened civil society organizations for a consultation-workshop last August 8, 2008 to establish a civil society group that will monitor the implementation of the MCC grant.

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Networking for Social Development in Asia

CODE-NGO held the "Seminar on Good Governance and Networking for Social Development: the Indian and Philippine Experiences" last August 20 to 21, 2008 at the Regalia Tower Suites, Quezon City. The seminar was sponsored by the Voluntary Action Network India (VANI). The event served as a venue for exchange and sharing between VANI and CODE-NGO representatives on experiences and challenges concerning political and legal space for civil society, NGO Board governance, maximizing media support for voluntary initiatives and official development aid effectiveness in India and the Philippines.

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Civil Society, Religious, and Youth Groups Continue to Call for Truth, Accountability and Reform

Advocates for peace, truth, accountability and reform gathered on 21st, August 2008 in Ateneo de Manila University not only to commemorate a befallen hero, but also to assess Philippine democracy 25 years hence.

BUSINA, a broad coalition of church-based, academic, non-government, and people's organizations/institutions once again encouraged motorists along Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City to blow their horns for peace, truth, accountability and reform, in the late afternoon of August 21st. The network, which was formed at the height of the outcry against the ZTE-NBN deal, observed Ninoy Aquino's 25th death anniversary by conducting a forum, celebrating a mass, and staging the noise barrage.

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