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Title: \$ 1-M Project for Women Sellers Readied

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In line with President Gloria Macapagal Arroya's anti-poverty program, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will implement a \$1-million (Php.55 million) Japan-assisted project to benefit thousands of women vendors and their families in Mindanao.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina Jr. said the project, Social Protection for Poor Women Vendors in Mindanao, is part of the Mindanao Basic Urban Services Sector Project (MBUSSP) of the Arroyo administration.

Lina said the innovative poverty reduction project targets the poor women traders at the public markets of the cities of Pagadian, Ozamis, Panabo, Kidapawan and Butuan and the town of Parang and Buluan in Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and Trento in Agusan de Sur.

The project, slated to be implemented by December this year, calls for the construction of resource training centers in participating local government units (LGUs).

The centers will train women vendors on business planning, micro enterprise and micro financing, maternal and reproductive health care, gender sensitivity, women empowerment, pre-natal and post-natal care, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive rights, among others.

The centers will be furnished with audio-visual aids, facilities, and reference materials by the Japanese government through the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction with the ADB as conduit, Lina said.

Under the project, the recipient LGUs will provide the site for the center and human resources such as doctors, nurses and other medical staff. They will also operate and maintain facilities.

Aside from the resource training center, a day care center for children of women vendors will be established to ensure that the children are taken care of while their mothers work.

Lina said the project was conceived after the government noted that while the number of women workers in the country increased, most of them suffer from lack of economic opportunities and social protection to enable them to fulfill their multiple roles in society efficiently.

He said that through this project, it is hoped that gender-related poverty among the poor women vendors in the public markets in Mindanao will be reduced by providing them with social protection program.