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USAID Grant to Help Improve Disability Rights in the Philippines

ROCHESTER, N.Y., Monday, March 17, 2014 — Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW), a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the rights of deaf communities through local capacity building, announced a P12.6-million (\$300,000) grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement a program in the Philippines that will include a series of workshops on strategic planning for various Disability People's Organizations in the country.

DDW's strategic planning workshop topics will include Organizational Assessments, Identifying Stakeholders and Their Needs, Environmental Assessment, Developing Accountability Systems, Ensuring Effectiveness and Efficiency, and Strategic Plan Development.

Starting this month, DDW will conduct trainings on data-collection methodologies and strategic planning. The workshop series will be conducted in partnership with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf (PFD).

“PFD has made great strides in advocating for deaf people, and we look forward to assisting them identify long-term goals and objectives for the organization,” DDW Executive Director Davin Searls said. “Its advocacy efforts contributed to the filing of two proposed measures at the Philippine Senate that have significant impact on the deaf community,” Searls remarked.

Now approved into a law, Senate Bill No. 2117 requires the use of Filipino sign language insets for local news programs, amending the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities. In addition, Senate Bill No. 2118 declares Filipino sign language as the national language of the Filipino deaf community and that it is to be the official language used in all governmental transactions involving the deaf. It also mandates its use in schools, broadcast media and the workplace.

“USAID's grant, alongside the recent policy changes in the Philippine Government, underscores the importance of our work to provide broad-based and inclusive opportunities for all,” says USAID Mission Director Gloria Steele. “By supporting programs like this, we are investing in the nation's greatest asset - its people.”

DDW works with local leaders and deaf advocacy organizations in developing countries to assess community needs and resources. DDW also advances deaf education, advocacy, policy, organizational development, and community outreach. As a result they are improving education, employment opportunities and human-rights circumstances for Deaf people in the Philippines.

For more information about the DDW program, please contact DDW International Programs Director David Justice (U.S.-based) at djustice@discoveringdeafworlds.org or 585-690-6737, or PFD EXPAND Program Logistics Coordinator Patrick Ablaza (Philippines-based) at pb.ablaza@gmail.com, or visit www.discoveringdeafworlds.org.

About the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

The American people, through the United States Agency for International Development, have provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for more than 50 years. In the Philippines, USAID works in partnership with the national government in creating a more stable, prosperous and well-governed country through programs that foster sustainable and inclusive growth; strengthen governance and combat corruption; improve access to water, energy, health and education services; and increase environmental resilience and natural resource management capabilities. For more information, visit www.usaid.gov/philippines or email infoph@usaid.gov.

About Discovering Deaf Worlds

Discovering Deaf Worlds is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the self-determination of signing deaf communities through local capacity building in developing countries. In the past six years, DDW staff members have volunteered more than 30,000 hours to connect with more than 250 deaf schools and organizations from 50 countries, creating one of the largest international deaf-advocacy networks in the world. DDW's work is now focused on capacity building partnerships with deaf leadership teams in the U.S., Philippines and Costa Rica, which are working to improve education, employment opportunities, and human-rights circumstances for deaf people in those countries.

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