



USAID | PHILIPPINES

SUCCESS STORY

Port facility boosts economy in conflict-affected island



Our transport costs were cut by half because of RORO.

—Domingo Narciso
Plantation Manager

Sta. Clara Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative



It used to take days or even weeks to move our products. Now, with the help of USAID infrastructure, it takes just a few hours.

—Rima Hassan
President, Autonomous Basilan Islamic Chamber of Commerce



The ease of RORO has encouraged more Lamitan residents to engage in business.

—Jann Jakilan
Businessman and former chief of the MNLF 2nd Mobile Army

Domingo Narciso, the manager of a farming cooperative in Lamitan, a town in the island-province of Basilan, in the Sulu Archipelago, recalls the former process of getting his co-op's rubber, coffee and copra harvests to buyers in Zamboanga City.

"It was time-consuming, due to the 'double handling' of cargo," Narciso said. The produce had to be trucked into Lamitan, unloaded at the port, then stacked aboard the ferry. After the two-hour sea voyage to Zamboanga City, the produce would again have to be unloaded, and packed into a hired vehicle.

This was before USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program upgraded Lamitan port and outfitted it with a "roll-on, roll-off" (RORO) ramp.

The RORO facility allows cargo trucks and other land vehicles to simply roll off or onto a ferry. In addition to the faster movement, this also helps minimize handling damage to goods in transit and reduces handling charges.

After the Lamitan facility was completed in May 2005, RORO traffic in Basilan quickly grew—from 200 vehicles per month in January 2006 to 900 vehicles per month by the end of the year. Vessels calling at the port experienced faster turn-around times, and shipping costs were reduced.

This has meant higher earnings for Domingo Narciso's co-op, which is comprised of both Christian and Muslim members, including former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The success of the co-op has resulted not just in higher incomes for its members, but has also encouraged other growers to expand their own agricultural production.

Through the GEM Program, USAID is helping to bring about and consolidate peace in Mindanao and the islands of the Sulu Archipelago, and to accelerate its economic growth while ensuring that as many people as possible benefit from that growth.

In Basilan, as in other conflict-affected areas of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, GEM works with many partners: growers' associations (including cooperatives comprised of former combatants); chambers of commerce; parent-teacher associations; and local governments and national line agencies.

The Lamitan RORO facility is one of six port improvements projects undertaken by GEM in western Mindanao.

As of August 2009, USAID's GEM Program had completed almost 1,100 infrastructure projects in Mindanao, including port, airport and road upgrades, bridges, boat landings, and water supply systems.