U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney

Visit to USAID Projects in Tupi Municipality and Koronadal City South Cotabato Province

September 17, 2009

Bololmala Barangay Bridge Turn-over

Brgy. Bololmala, Tupi, South Cotabato

U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney is welcomed by *barangay* (village) residents upon her arrival at the site of the Bololmala Barangay Bridge, constructed by USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program in the municipality of Tupi, South Cotabato.

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Above: Engr. Ronaldo Ypil, Barangay Infrastructure Project (BIP) Team Leader of USAID's GEM Program, briefs Ambassador Kenney and South Cotabato Governor Daisy Avance-Fuentes on GEM infrastructure projects in the province.

Upper right: Ambassador Kenney in a light moment with Gov. Fuentes.

Lower right: Gov. Avance-Fuentes thanks the U.S. Government and the American people for their assistance to South Cotabato. Seated at the presidential table with Ambassador Kenney is Robert Barnes, USAID Economic Growth Advisor.

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Above: In her remarks, Ambassador Kenney underscores the key role of infrastructure in economic development.

The Bololmala Barangay Bridge project is the 14th infrastructure project completed by GEM in the municipality of Tupi and the 37th completed in South Cotabato Province.

Built under GEM's BIP component, the 7.5-meter reinforced concrete bridge spanning the Cebuano River is a boon to local growers and other residents, who can now transport their farm products efficiently and access services in the town center more easily.

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Above: The Ambassador cuts the ribbon with Gov. Avance-Fuentes; Engr. Charlita Escaño, Project Monitoring Chief of the Mindanao Economic Development Council; and Mr. Barnes. With them are Engr. Ypil of GEM; Mayor Valentin Mariano of Tupi; and Rodolfo Ocas, Barangay Captain of Bololmala.

Upper right: The Ambassador distributes souvenirs to young residents.

Lower right: Ambassador Kenney with barangay officials.

18th Mindanao Business Conference

Fit Mart Mall, Koronadal City, South Cotabato

Upper left: Ambassador Kenney and Edgardo Lacson, President of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), led the opening of the 18th Mindanao Business Conference.

Upper right: The Ambassador greets members of various Mindanao chambers of commerce upon her arrival at the "MinBizCon."

The Conference was organized by PCCI and host local governments, with support from USAID's GEM Program. This annual event serves as a forum of the Mindanao business community for consolidating private sector issues and concerns, and for bringing key policy matters to the attention of the national government.

Left: Ambassador Kenney sounds a Mindanao tribal gong at the opening ceremonies.

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***Above*:** In her keynote address, Ambassador Kenney stressed that a peaceful, developed Mindanao, grounded in the rule of law, would attract investment to the region and the rest of the Philippines. Next to the podium are Sarangani Province Governor Miguel Dominguez and Koronadal City Mayor Fernando Miguel. More than 500 participants attended the conference.

***Right*:** Mayor Miguel presents the Ambassador with the symbolic key to the city.

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***Above*:** Ambassador Kenney watches a tribal weaver work her loom at the MinBizCon trade fair.

***Upper left*:** Elena Haw, PCCI Vice President for Mindanao, escorts Ambassador Kenney on a tour of the various exhibits of Mindanao products, accompanied by Mr. Barnes and Embassy Control Officer Scott Cameron**.**

Lower left: Ambassador Kenney with students.

Meeting with "Tricycle Drivers for Health"

FitMart Mall, Koronadal City, South Cotabato

***Above*:** Ambassador Kenney greets members of "Driver Advocates for Health" in Koronadal City.

USAID, through its HealthPro project, and in collaboration with the Integrated Provincial Health Office in South Cotabato and the Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association (TODA), mobilized thirty tricycle drivers in the city to serve as health advocates. Their tricycles carry promotional posters to reinforce the health messages imparted by the drivers to passengers.

***Upper right*:** Ambassador Kenney and Gov. Avance-Fuentes share a ride.