

# USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program

Makati Office: Unit 3, 12/F, Export Bank Plaza Sen. Gil Puyat cor. Pasong Tamo Makati City 1200 Philippines Tel: (63-02) 812-1647 Fax: (63-02) 818-8990 E-mail: gemakati@mozcom.com  
Project Management Office: 2/F Damosa Business Center Damosa Complex, Angliongto Road, Lanang, Davao City 8000 Tel.: (082) 234-7720 Fax: (082) 234-3060 E-mail: gem@mindanao.org

## USAID Helps Ex-Fighters Raise Livelihood Incomes through Sustainable Fish Farming

Many former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) combatants are now leading peaceful, productive lives as aqua-entrepreneurs with the help of USAID, through its Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program. More than 1,900 of these ex-MNLF fighters—most of whom are members of combat units that transformed themselves into cooperatives following the MNLF peace agreement with the Government—have, with USAID's assistance, improved their incomes by producing and selling higher-value aquaculture products. One group, the 35-member Illana Bay Fishermen Multi-purpose Cooperative in Parang, Maguindanao, was trained in sustainable grouper farming and more recently, in milkfish farming. Cooperative members harvested about 1,300 kilograms of milkfish in their first harvest, which sold for approximately \$2,200.



**Left photo:** Members of the Illana Bay Fishermen MPC stock their fish cages with milkfish young, which they purchased from another cooperative of MNLF former combatants trained by USAID in aquaculture operations. Among those present is Mayor Ibrahim Ibay and other officials of Parang, Maguindanao. “These milkfish cages are the first to be established in Parang,” said Mayor Ibay, “They serve as a demonstration farm which can be replicated by other local growers who want to diversify into sustainable fish farming.” **Center and right photos:** Four months after stocking, the cooperative reaps 1,300 kilograms of milkfish, for sale to local traders. Later this year, the cooperative expects another harvest, of about 800 kilograms of grouper (estimated value: \$8,000), also grown in fish cages. The USAID-GEM Program provided the co-op with technical training and marketing information for both grouper and milkfish production.