



SUCCESS STORY

Anti-Corruption Effort Gains Ground

Building better public servants through practical training

Prosecutor Louella Pesquero had tears in her eyes when describing her reaction to the five-day USAID-funded training program for anti-corruption prosecutors that came to a close on January 30, 2004. The workshop changed the way that she viewed her job at the Philippines Office of the Ombudsman.



Photo: USAID

Three justices hear a case at the *Sandiganbayan* anti-corruption court in Manila, where USAID-trained prosecutors bring graft and corruption cases to trial.

“One word is enough: teamwork. We are all part of a whole, we therefore have a common objective,” explained Louella Pesquero, an anti-corruption prosecutor who participated in a USAID-sponsored workshop.

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According to Pesquero, the training program for Ombudsman prosecutors, “not only had a constructive, but also a meaningful effect on all of us. One word is enough: teamwork. We are all part of a whole, we therefore have a common objective.”

The program aims to help Pesquera and her colleagues reach that common objective: to identify and successfully prosecute those engaged in official corruption in the Philippines. And it is already making a difference. Before its launch, cases related to official corruption rarely led to conviction. But since 2002, when the Ombudsman and Special Prosecutor Offices began participating in the USAID program, conviction rates have risen — from about 7 percent that year to 33 percent in 2005. Since they joined the program, both offices expanded their budgets and reinvigorated their prosecution staff through training. With US-funded assistance, they also implemented an aggressive policy of addressing all defense motions filed in the *Sandiganbayan*, the anti-corruption court.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Pesquera was asked to share her thoughts on the program. She focused on the positive impact the training had on morale and teamwork among the trainees. “At the Office of the Special Prosecutor, we shouldn’t work because we’re graded, or observed, or rewarded later. It should transcend that. We work because we love what we do and we believe in what we do. When we are able to internalize that ... then we can be true public servants.”