



Justice Reform Initiatives Support (JURIS) Project PRESS RELEASE

Supreme Court promotes mediation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

As the Philippine judiciary continues to battle with hundreds of thousands of cases pending before it, the Supreme Court of the Philippines through the Justice Reform Initiatives Support (JURIS) Project promotes the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to help de-clog the court dockets.

Latest figures show that while there are 702,147 pending cases in the country, excluding those at the Supreme Court level, there are only 1,453 judges who can review and act on them. A Philippine judge therefore handles an average of almost 500 cases, the number of which continues to increase with about 50,000 new cases filed each year.

“These challenges only further strengthen the need to look for alternative resolutions in handling disputes”, Atty. Hector Soliman, JURIS Project Director told reporters during a recent press briefing. Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and Chaired by the Honorable Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, Reynato Puno, the JURIS Project revolutionized court case settlement across the country through ADR mechanisms such as Court-Annexed Mediation (CAM) and Judicial Dispute Resolution (JDR).

CAM is an enhanced pre-trial procedure that involves settling cases with the assistance of mediator, an authorized officer of the court who helps parties identify issues and develop a proposal to resolve disputes. If a settlement cannot be reached through CAM, the case is brought back to the court for JDR process which requires a judge to become a mediator.

Atty. Soliman shared that since the inception of the JURIS Project in 2003, it has helped eased the burden of 5 pilot trial courts by resolving almost 7,000 cases using ADR mechanisms. This meant affording the judges more time to hear other complicated cases.

The success of the mechanism employed by JURIS in its pilot sites has created a demand for ADR services in adjacent areas. Late last year, Judicial Dispute Resolution has also been introduced in the trial courts in Makati City.

“What’s also interesting is that the project has contributed to efforts to change the mindset of the poor and marginalized groups, who often avoid legal matters due to sky-high cost of litigation and their perception that the law favors the rich and educated. Seeing the success rate of ADR, marginalized sectors have gained hope that they too can have access to justice,” shared Atty. Soliman.

Based on a study, 76% affirmed that ADR contributed to the ordinary citizens’ and the marginalized sectors’ access to justice. Sixty-nine percent (69%) thinks that there is fairness and justice in the mediation process, while 59% says there is fairness and justice in the mediation outcome.

Aside from the ADR mechanisms, the JURIS Project has two other components, namely: (1) Judicial Education and (2) Reform Advocacy Support which seeks to empower the poor to make use of judicial and quasi-judicial services.

The implementing agencies of the JURIS Project are the Supreme Court of the Philippines – Program Management Office (SC-PMO); Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA); Office of the Court Administrator (OCA); and Alternative Law Groups, Inc. (ALG). #

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