

# DEVELOPMENTSTORIES



*A compilation of selected 2008 MRDP stories published on local and national dailies, and news website.*



Department of Agriculture

MINDANAO RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2

## **ABOUT MRDP2**

The Mindanao Rural Development Program - Adaptable Program Loan Phase 2 (MRDP2) continues to implement poverty-reducing interventions in more poor communities across Mindanao as it expands in scope of coverage (225 towns in 26 provinces).

Implemented under the Department of Agriculture, MRDP1 accomplished various projects and provided significant learning experiences on which MRDP2 takes off.

Jointly funded by the World Bank, National Government, and the Local Government Units (LGUs) MRDP2 seeks to further improve rural incomes and achieve food security through agri-fisheries infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects.

Partnership with LGUs and other national agencies are also forged for laudable impact in Mindano rural communities.

Alongside poverty- reducing initiatives, the Program likewise reinforces the implementation of the Local Government Code and the Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Act.

Working interdependently to bring development in the countryside are four MRDP components: Rural Infrastructure, Community Fund for Agricultural Development, Natural Resources Management and Investment for Governance Reforms and Program Administration.

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# **\$6.3 M grant to assist Mindanao's natural wealth**

*by Noel Provideo and Dennis Jay Santos\**

*Published in: Gold Star Daily, March 3, 2008*

*Sun Star Davao, February, 15, 2008*

*Philippine Daily Inquirer,\* March 13, 2008*

*Manila Bulletin, February 17, 2008*

*Tinalak Insider, February 11-17, 2008*

*www.gmanews.tv, February 15, 2008*

*and www.PIA.gov.ph, February 19, 2008*



World Bank (WB) Senior Operations Officer Samuel Wedderburn presents the updates on the Global Environment Facility funding for MRDP2 to during the Natural Resources Management (NRM) workshop held February in Davao City while WB Consultant Gilbert Braganza looks on.

**E**leven sites in Mindanao considered with global environmental significance are now being readied for funding under the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

The GEF is a \$6.3 Million US Dollar grant assistance from the World Bank to complement

the Natural Resources Management (NRM) component of the Department of Agriculture's second phase Mindanao Rural Development Program(DA-MRDP2).

The 11 identified sites are from the three regions in the island namely: Region 9, ARMM, and Caraga.

Of the 11 sites, seven are in Region 9 namely the towns of Olutanga, Mabuhay, and Talusan in Zamboanga Sibugay; Vencinzo Sagun and Margosatubig in Zamboanga del Sur; and Sibutad and Rizal in Zamboanga del Norte.

In Caraga Region, two sites are identified namely: Marihatag and San Agustin both in Surigao del Sur. Two towns were also identified ARMM Region namely Lamitan in Basilan and Datu Blah in Shariff Kabunsuan.

These areas were identified based the global significance criteria which include biodiversity significance, presence of globally significant species (Dugong, marine turtles, mantra rays, giant clams, whale sharks, sea cucumbers, and other unique important organisms), interdependence/ interconnectivity, and social inclusion such as poverty incidence and presence of indigenous peoples.

Gilbert Braganza NRM Consultant said that GEF assistance for MRDP aims to conserve global and marine biodiversity of global significance through co-management of critical marine habitats and better resources management practices.

Braganza added that the GEF project will build on and scale up on the achievements of the Coastal

*Conservation efforts will include the interconnectivity of the upland, the low land, and the coastal areas since the activities in the upland have downstream effects to the lowland harvest and the coastal and seawater produce.*

Marine and Biodiversity Conservation implemented during the Phase 1 of MRDP.

Conservation efforts will also include the interconnectivity of the upland, the low land, and the coastal areas since the activities in the upland have downstream effects to the lowland harvest and the coastal and seawater produce.

“The project will also involve mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns in local and national policies. As we [stakeholders] go forward we want the development plans reflects sustainable environmental management,” says World Bank Senior Operations Officer Samuel Wedderburn.

With this, the project will also look into local policy development and strengthening partnerships in community monitoring and enforcement of natural resources regulations.□

# Local execs urge PGMA to maintain pro-poor agenda in Mindanao

by Sherwin B. Manual

*Published in: Mindanao Times, February 21, 2008*

*Mindanao Daily Mirror, February 21, 2008*

*and Gold Star Daily, March 3, 2008*



Anwar/Abubacar

**MANIFESTO.** Local Chief Executives of Mindanao lead by Davao del Norte Governor Rodolfo del Rosario seated (2nd L) signed the Manifesto urging President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to maintain the innovative cost sharing scheme for the Department of Agriculture-Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP). The said Manifesto was passed during the WRap-up meeting of the MRDP2 World Bank Review Mission held February in Davao City.

**T**he Local Chief Executives of Mindanao sends a strong call to the President to enforce the innovative cost-sharing mix for pro-poor projects in the island.

This was after the

announcement during the recent World Bank Performance Review that the NG-LGU cost-sharing mix for Rural Infrastructure component

of Department of Agriculture-Mindanao Rural Development Program 2 (DA-MRDP2) will vary based on the municipal classes per 2003 NEDA Board Cost-Sharing Policy.

Converse to the NEDA policy, the innovative cost-sharing mix as proposed by MRDP2 is that 50% of the subproject cost for rural infrastructure, such as Farm-to-market roads (FMR) and communal irrigation will be shouldered by the government through the loan and the remaining 50% will be assumed by the municipality as their equity regardless of class if the LGUs introduce a number of reforms and meet specific performance indicator.

“We should not delay the much needed development here in Mindanao,” said Gov. Rodolfo del Rosario who spearheaded the move along with Gov. Corazon Malanyaon of Davao Oriental and Gov. Sadikul Sahali of Tawi-Tawi together with the emissaries of other governors in Mindanao.

The manifesto which was also signed by a number of mayors from across island stated that the loan agreement must be enforced

in toto for it is legal and binding international treaty whose intention is to serve the poorest of the poor in Mindanao.

Ms. Carol F. Geron of the World Bank said that the Program is intended for the poorest of the poor in Mindanao and not just poor towns.

Geron said that a big percentage of the poor is residing in 4th to 1st class municipalities. “MRDP2 will potentially reach only 10% of the total poor population within 5th and 6th class towns, since 60% of the poor are in 3rd and 4th class LGUs and 30% of the poor are in the 1st to 2nd class municipalities,” Geron added. □

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# LGUs seen getting 40% of VAT collection, Palace wants quick delivery of social services

by Amy Remo - Philippine Daily Inquirer

Published in: Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 10, 2008



Davao del Norte Governor Rodolfo del Rosario leads the signing of the Manifesto endorsing the 50:50 cost sharing policy for MRDP2 rural infrastructure component. Also in photo is General Santos City Mayor and MRDP Program Advisory Board Member Pedro Acharon, Jr. going over the same document.

**M**alacañang wants the Bureau of Customs to share 40 percent of its collection of the value-added tax on imports with cities and municipalities to allow local governments to deliver more social

services to their constituents.

The proposal from the Palace followed a recent meeting between some members of the Cabinet



The local government officials wanted to seek more assistance from the national government in the area of boosting their local economies.

Although many cities in the National Capital Region are capable of supporting their own expenditures, many local governments in the countryside are heavily dependent on internal revenue allotment from the national government.

During the meeting, Davao del Norte Gov. Rodolfo del Rosario suggested that the national government and concerned LGUs agree on a 50:50 cost-sharing scheme for the so-called Mindanao Rural Development Program.

Since many of the poorest provinces are

in the South, concerned LGUs wanted the national government to intensify its efforts in helping boost local economies in Mindanao.

Economies managers have said that one way to allow the benefits of a robustly growing economy to trickle down to the masses was to make LGUs more effective in the delivery of social services since they are able to reach out to the needy sectors of their localities more easily. □

*Since many of the poorest provinces are in the South, concerned LGUs wanted the national government to intensify its efforts in helping boost local economies in Mindanao.*

# Rural program to address climate change

by Noel T. Provide

Published in: Sun Star Davao, March 24, 2008



MRDP through its NRM component integrates conservation efforts to caution impact of climate change in coastal and other food production areas.

**C**limate change is real and happening. With this, the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) is taking steps to address not only rural poverty but also the growing concern over climate change.

MRDP is a poverty alleviation program of the

Department of Agriculture (DA) to improve incomes of rural folk through the implementation of infrastructure, livelihood, and capacity building projects.

Through its Natural Resources Management (NRM) component, the program also deals with the conservation of critical resources in the uplands, lowlands,

and coastal and marine areas. Samuel Wedderburn, senior operations officer of the World Bank said that there is a need to include the impact of climate change in the program and find out the vulnerability of the projects to be implemented.

“Poverty reduction is intrinsically linked to environmental and social sustainability. Natural resources should be enhanced or protected rather than damage as part of the development process. Development countries like the Philippines are much more vulnerable to environmental degradation,” Wedderburn said.

He added that problems related to climate change such as loss of biological diversity, desertification and deforestation are threatening rural folks ability to meet the basic human needs such as adequate food, clean water, and safe shelter.

Environment scientists say that Philippines being an archipelago with more than 7,000 islands is vulnerable to climate change such as the rising sea levels, destructive typhoons, flooding, droughts and landslides.

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio said that the program will integrate conservation efforts that will lead to cautioning impact of climate change in coastal and other critical food production areas. It will also facilitate mainstreaming of upland and coastal conservation

*Environment scientists say that Philippines being an archipelago with more than 7,000 islands is vulnerable to climate change.*

mechanisms into municipal policies and development plans.

Considering that a range of socio-economic factors had been link to environmental destruction the program will implement on-the-ground investments that will include infusing funds, effort, time and other resources to ensure appropriate balance between economic development and resource conservation and protection.

“If there is displacement caused by the conservation strategies, the program will provide alternative income generating project,” Chio said.

Chio said MRDP has identified and prepared 11 sites in Mindanao considered with global environment significance for funding under the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The GEF is an organization that is playing a key role in addressing global environmental policies such as climate change.

The 11 sites identified sites are from the three regions in the island namely: Region 9, ARMM, and Caraga. It will also include Coastal Marine Biodiversity Conservation (CMBC) sites covered during the first phase of MRDP. □

# P3.1M project launched to meet needs of rural poor

by Noel T. Provideo

Published in Sun Star Davao, April 11, 2008



Sherwin Manual

Arsenio Mendez (4th L), a tribal leader from Sta. Josefa receives the facsimile check from DA-MRDP Director Roger Chio (2nd L), Gov. Velentina Plaza (besides Chio) and Sta. Josefa Mayor Glenn Plaza 2nd R). The check which amounted to P250,000 will be used to fund the tribal association's vegetable production in the said town.

This year's "Taphagan," a thanksgiving festival in Sta. Josefa, Agusan del Sur, had been doubly significant for a group of farmers.

Farmers associations in the said town had been thankful that they can now start to engage in livelihood

As part of the "Taphagan" celebration, the Department of Agriculture – Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP) has turned over a total P3.1 M livelihood projects. The said amount also covered the equity from the local government of Sta. Josefa and

Through the DA-MRDP Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) component, the projects in the said town include rice and vegetable production, livestock raising, acquisition of draft animal and other livelihood projects.

#### MRDP Program

Director Roger Chio said the implementation of livelihood projects is part of the package of investments designed to spur rural development in Mindanao. Livelihood projects turnover to the beneficiaries are expected to uplift the economic conditions of vulnerable sectors particularly the indigenous people (IPs) and rural women.

Through the assistance of the multi-sectoral committee, the projects being implemented in Sta. Josefa were all identified by the beneficiaries themselves. "With this, we can ensure that the projects will address the actual needs of the rural communities," Chio said.

He also underscored the importance of counterparting scheme as a means to promote sense of ownership among the stakeholders particularly the LGUs and the project beneficiaries.

For instance, one beneficiary from Barangay San Jose in an interview said they opted to have the acquisition of draft animal as this will be a

big help not only in their farming activities but also in bringing their produce from far flung areas to the marketplace.

Another beneficiary from Barangay Awao said they plan to acquire vehicle to expand markets of their vegetable produce. He added that they are now delivering their produce as far as Ormoc in Visayas.

Meanwhile, the Industrious Farmers of Eastern Concepcion Association in Barangay Concepcion are working on sustainable agriculture through organic rice production. They are optimistic that with the assistance they received from MRDP can intensify production of organically produced rice and hopefully tap a niche market.

"MRDP ensures that the beneficiaries will also have their stake in the project they are engaged. For it is only when they have a sense of ownership that they are determined to sustain their livelihood activities," Chio said.

Agusan del Sur Governor Maria Valentina Plaza for her part said that she is thankful to MRDP as it encourages cooperation between the national and local government including the foreign funding institution.

"I thank the people particularly those from MRDP and Sta. Josefa LGU, for putting in place all these necessary interventions that seek to address rural poverty as this makes my job as a governor easier," Plaza said. □

# Mindanao rural program complements government's food security thrust

by Noel T. Provido

Published in: *Sun Star Davao, April 18, 2008*  
and *www.PIA.gov.ph, April 18, 2008*



Mindanao can reduce the country's rice deficit by 80 percent, but first it must have adequate irrigation and post harvest facilities.

**M**indanao's vast potentials if properly tapped could make significant contributions to the current government's food security thrusts.

In the recent National Food Summit, President Arroyo had unveiled the package of intervention dubbed as "FIELDS" to

guarantee the nation's food security in the face of a looming global food crunch.

FIELDS stands for the six areas of support to which Malacanang will funnel a total of P43.7 billion in government support—Fertilizer, Irrigation and Infrastructure, Education and training of farmers and fisherfolk, Loans, Dryers and



With this, the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), a poverty alleviation initiative of the Department of Agriculture (DA) is taking steps to complement and fast track the implementation of “FIELDS” in the island-region. Now on its second phase, MRDP is servicing 27 provinces and 225 towns in Mindanao through its rural infrastructure, livelihood projects, environmental conservation and governance reform components.

MRDP Program Roger Chio said that of the six areas, the program in partnership with its covered local government units will be complementing the establishment of rural infrastructure particularly the irrigation and farm-to-market roads.

“It will also provide training and education to farmers and fisherfolk availing the financial assistance for their livelihood projects,” Chio added.

Although MRDP is focused on improving productivity and profitability of Mindanao’s agriculture and fisheries, Chio said that MRDP strategies are in sync with the President’s national agenda of “Pagkain sa Bawat Mesa, Negosyo sa Sakahan—Laban sa Kahirapan.”

“Considering Mindanao’s distinct climatic and geographical advantage, developing its agriculture areas will not only

help in securing the country’s food supply but will also bring in more economic opportunities,” Chio said.

Meanwhile, Cotabato vice Governor Emmanuel Piñol underscored the need for hard investment in rural development to secure the country’s food supply in the coming years.

“With the impending global food shortage, the more we should strengthen the implementation of rural infrastructure such as irrigation and farm-to-market roads as these are what the local governments need to boost agricultural productivity,” Piñol said. □

*“Considering Mindanao’s distinct climatic and geographical advantage, developing its agriculture areas will not only help in securing the country’s food supply but will also bring in more economic opportunities.”*



# PGMA eyes Surigao Sur as the next food Basket

by Sherwin B. Manual

Published in: *Mindanao Daily Mirror*, June 28, 2008

and [www.PIA.gov.ph](http://www.PIA.gov.ph), June 28, 2008



**Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo** presents to Mayor Alfred Arreza of Carrascal the P500,000 check as initial amount for the P2.5 million livelihood projects of CFAD in his town. The amount is part of the P8.4 million worth of projects of the Department of Agriculture the President turned-over in the Province of Surigao del Sur during the 48th Anniversary of the province.

**P**resident Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sees Surigao del Sur as the next food basket of Mindanao.

In her visit during the 48th Araw ng Surigao del Sur, the President has poured in over P8.4 million worth of projects through the

various program of the Department of Agriculture to boost agricultural production in the province such as fertilizer subsidies, certified seeds and other agricultural facilities.

The projects of DA in the province

include livelihood programs from the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP.)

The towns of Carmen and Carrascal, Surigao del Sur each received an initial amount of P500,000 to start their agri-fishery business ventures. A total of P5 million worth of livelihood projects were given to the towns of Carrascal and Carmen.

MRDP through its Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) is the DA's prime mover in the region islands promoting opportunities for the agriculture and fishery livelihoods across the island-region.

Also, MRDP complements the President's FIELDs Program to ensure sufficient food in the islands region. FIELDs stands for Fertilizer, Irrigation and other rural infrastructure, research and Extension work, Loans, Dryers and other postharvest facilities, and high yielding variety of Seeds. Further, the President said that this projects are in support for the hunger mitigation program of the province.

Aside from livelihood, MRDP also implements irrigation system, farm-to-market roads and environmental conservation mechanisms.

CFAD projects in Carmen and Carrascal which are identified by the people's organization themselves include abaca production, bangus production, draft animal dispersal and goat raising.

In his previous statement, Program Director Roger Chio said that the MRDP earmarked almost P130 million for livelihood projects in 51 towns of Mindanao in the year one implementation of the Program.

MRDP is to be implemented in five years from 2007 to 2012 covering all 27 provinces of southern part of the country. □

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# P2.5 M small infra and livelihood projects launched in Comval

by Noel T. Provideo

Published in: *Sun Star Davao*, June 4, 2008  
and [www.PIA.gov.ph](http://www.PIA.gov.ph), May 31, 2008



**JUMP FOR JOY.** This woman (left photo) jumps in sheer delight as she dramatizes how the MRDP projects particularly the Spring Development Project would help their community in New Bataan, ComVal Province source out potable water supply. Right photo shows an agricultural technician readies the rubber seedlings for distribution to peoples' organizations who will go into rubber production.

**A**ccess to basic necessities and better opportunities are within reach for New Bataan rural folks.

This came after small infrastructure and livelihood projects had been recently launched in the said town. These include improvement of water supply systems and construction of access infrastructure such as hanging and steel deck foot bridges.

Livelihood projects such as vegetable production, rubber production, and abaca production will be also implemented to improve incomes of peoples' organizations.

The 12 small infrastructure and livelihood projects has a total amount of P2.5 million was funded through the Department of Agriculture - Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP). The said

amount also covered the equity from the local government of New Bataan.

Through the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD), the beneficiaries who are mostly consist of indigenous people and rural women were involved in project identification.

“With this, we can ensure projects to be implemented will really address the needs of the beneficiaries,” said MRDP-CFAD head Lorna Lesaca.

For instance, access to potable water supply will not only eliminate water-borne diseases in the rural areas but will also allow residents to engage in other economic activities as they can now save enough time for fetching water in far flung areas. Foot bridges on the other hand will not only protect residents from the dangers of crossing the rivers but will also enable them to easily bring their produce in the nearby market.

Mayor Lorenzo Balbin, Jr. for his part said that the livelihood projects will help boost his town’s bid to be one of the province’s major vegetable and rubber producers. He said these commodities had been proven highly suitable in their area.

“We are glad that the CFAD livelihood projects of MRDP are helping our farmers to engage in these promising crops,” Balbin said.

Meanwhile, MRDP Program Director Roger Chio in a separate interview said that small infrastructure and livelihood projects form part of the DA’s package of investments designed to spur development in Mindanao.

“MRDP will also provide capacity building in order to sustain the Pos agribusiness activities,” Chio said.

Further, he added that MRDP’s strategies are in sync with the President’s “Pagkain sa Bawat Mesa, Negosyong sa Sakahan – Laban sa Kahirapan” program. □

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program.*

# Mindanao's rural program to adopt 50:50 cost-sharing

by Noel T. Provideo, Sherwin B. Manual, Marianne V. Go<sup>1</sup>, and Mark Navales<sup>2</sup>

Published in: *Mindanao Daily Mirror*, July 1, 2008  
*Edge Davao*, July 7-13, 2008  
*The Philippine Star*<sup>1</sup>, July 16, 2008  
*The Mindanao Examiner*<sup>2</sup>, July 1, 2008  
 and [www.PIA.gov.ph](http://www.PIA.gov.ph), July 1, 2008



**50:50 AT HAND.** Program Director Roger C. Chio (left photo) shows the letter of the NEDA approving the 50:50 Cost-Sharing Policy of the Program. While, Deputy program Director Arnel V. De Mesa illustrates how the cost-sharing policy will be implemented.

**M**ore rural infrastructure can now be put up in Mindanao.

Recognizing the need to fast track rural development projects in island-region, the Investment Coordination Committee (ICC), has finally approved the proposed 50:50 cost sharing arrangement for the Phase 2 of the Mindanao

Rural Development Program (MRDP).

The ICC approval concurs with the agreement reached during the inter-agency meeting of the senior officials of the Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Agriculture (DA), and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) held April this year.

During the meeting, officials agreed to adopt the proposed 50:50 cost sharing arrangement for MRDP rural infrastructure (RI) component. These include construction and rehabilitation of communal irrigation projects, farm-to-market roads, potable water supply, and single lane bridges.

With the 50:50 cost sharing scheme, the national government (NG) through MRDP will cover fifty percent of project cost while the local government unit (LGU) particularly the recipient municipality will shoulder the remaining fifty percent as their corresponding cash equity.

In contrast to the 2003 NEDA Board Policy which enforces the cost sharing mix based on LGUs' income class (and only the fifth to sixth class LGUs will enjoy the 50:50 cost sharing), MRDP's will be implemented regardless of LGUs' income class.

"Of all the official development assistance this rare privilege is given only to MRDP and we attribute this to the strong support of the local chief executives in Mindanao," said MRDP Program Director Roger Chio.

"We are glad that finally this issue has been addressed now we can fully implement the multimillion infrastructure projects critical in increasing agriculture production here in Mindanao," said Chio.

Chio said that this

approval of ICC allows the full implementation of the Program since it has slowed for one year due to the unresolved cost sharing policy of the projects.

Meanwhile, MRDP Deputy Program Director Arnel de Mesa in a meeting with the program's regional focal persons clarified that the ICC approved 50:50 cost sharing with a condition that the program must obtain "Very Satisfactory" rating from the World Bank during its two consecutive periodic supervisory mission. If not, the Program will have to follow the 2003 NEDA Board Policy.

He further added that the funds for the performance-based grants will no longer be implemented as the funds which totalled US\$15.752 is already reallocated to rural infrastructure and will be spent mostly for water and irrigation subprojects. Although obtaining a "Very Satisfactory" rating is a tall order, Chio however expressed his confidence that the program with the strong support of its LGU partners can now mobilize resources and start in putting in place rural infrastructure critical in addressing the food security and poverty alleviation in Mindanao. □



# DA's program to focus on irrigation and water supply in Mindanao

by Noel T. Provideo and Mai Guevarra\*

Published in: *Sun Star Davao*, July 4, 2008

*Edge Davao*, July 14-20, 2008

*Mindanao Daily Mirror*\*, July 18, 2008

and [www.PIA.gov.ph](http://www.PIA.gov.ph)\*, July 18, 2008



More irrigation facilities are needed to enhance food production in Mindanao.

## **Water is life!**

This realization has prompted the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) to tap water in boosting agricultural production in the island-region.

MRDP is a program implemented under the Department of Agriculture (DA) geared towards

alleviation of the poor communities in Mindanao through implementation of rural infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects. The funding of the program was provided through a loan portfolio from the World Bank.

As part of the agreement for the 50:50 innovative cost sharing



scheme the Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) has reallocated the Performance-Based Grant System (PBGS) fund of US\$15.752million to the rural infrastructure component of the MRDP. This increased the rural infrastructure's funding to US\$60 million making it the biggest allocation in the five-year poverty alleviation program.

Of the said amount US\$10 million will be reallocated to purely water and irrigation subprojects.

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio said the reallocation of the PBGS fund underscored the need to prioritize implementation of rural infrastructure projects for the Program to respond to challenges of boosting food production.

"Mindanao being typhoon-free should take a lead in food production. But for one of the underlying constraints for the island-region to increase food production is the lack of adequate infrastructure particularly irrigation system," Chio said.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) said that it would require over 4,000 liters of water to produce a kilo of rice. To boost rice production in Mindanao, MRDP on its second phase is set to implement irrigation rehabilitation irrigation systems as well as construction of communal irrigation systems projects.

"The construction of these irrigation projects will be done through a cost-sharing

scheme with LGUs. Now that the 50:50 cost-sharing scheme had been approved, we urged our LGUs officials in partner with us in putting up more irrigation facilities so that we can enhance food production in Mindanao." Aside from meeting food security requirements, MRDP will also address the need for basic necessity particularly water in some areas in Mindanao.

"A Mindanao-wide consultation revealed that access to potable water supply remains a priority. With this, MRDP will be working on the rehabilitation and construction of Level 2 water systems," Chio said.

Providing rural communities access to improved water source is also part of our government commitment to meet the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, potable water supply will not only eliminate water-borne diseases in the rural areas but will also allow residents to engage in other economic activities as they can now save enough time fetching water in far flung areas.

"Now that the funds are available and favorable cost-sharing scheme had been approved, we urged our partners in the LGUs to seize this opportunity so that we can address the pressing needs of our rural folks and help in boosting food production," Chio said. □

# NEDA's softening on cost-sharing rule revs up important rural projects in Mindanao

by Manuel T. Cayon - Business Mirror

Published in: Business Mirror, July 17, 2008



**KEEPING THE FAITH.** Gov. Douglas Cagas hands to Deputy Program Director Arnel V. De Mesa the MOA signed by the Local Chief Executives of Region 11 confirming their support to the 50:50 Cost-Sharing policy of the Rural Infrastructure component of the Program. Flanking them are the Mayors from the Provinces of Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, del Sur and Oriental who signed the MOA.

**A**softening on the stringent policy of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) on accessing foreign assistance has emboldened more local governments to apply for more assistance for their important rural infrastructure and livelihood projects.

At a cost-sharing arrangement raised to 50 percent for foreign-assisted projects,

several projects and indications of interest to apply for loans have been filed by almost all the 425 municipalities in 27 provinces of Mindanao.

The Neda has allowed first- and second-class municipalities to access only 30 percent of the entire loan amount and to put up a 70-percent counterpart. Third- and fourth-class municipalities would only get 40 percent, with 60 percent as counterpart.

Only the fifth- and sixth-class municipalities were allowed 50 percent of the fund, and to put up the 50-percent counterpart. This policy on cost-sharing arrangement has delayed the implementation of many rural infrastructure under the World Bank-funded Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), already in its second phase, said Arnel de Mesa, deputy program director.

Launched in May last year, no projects were implemented so far, with local governments petitioning the Neda to increase their access to 50 percent to the World Bank fund assistance. "There's a lull, actually, for one year," he said. He said the MRDP 2 has already received P550 million worth of proposals to fund several rural infrastructures, from farm-to market roads and communal irrigation, to potable water system and other infrastructure-related projects.

The proposals were filed immediately as soon as the MRDP 2 was launched here, "but these were placed on hold because of the Neda 2003 policy that placed this access restriction on all foreign-assistance funds.

The Neda relaxed its rules last month but only on MRDP 2 funded projects. "We are proud to say that we are the only one which was given that privilege, and we credit that to the work of the mayors, the governors, even the Medco [Mindanao Economic Development Council]

for their repeated petition and representation with the Neda," de Mesa said.

Shortly after the Neda approval, the local chief executives also indicated their interest to revive their proposals submitted last yet that were also placed on hold, he said.

These indications of interest were expressed in the five regional gatherings that MRDP 2 held in the regions in Mindanao. It held its fifth leg at the Grand Men Seng Hotel here Wednesday, where 27 mayors signed a memorandum of agreement with MRDP 2 executives that formalized the mayors' agreement with the new guidelines, including the 50-percent-50-percent cost-sharing arrangement.

The MRDP 2 has a fund outlay of \$83.752 million spread in five years, up from \$27 million of the first phase of the MRDP. The projects are divided into two categories, the rural infrastructure and the community fund for agricultural development, which includes livelihood as its major component.

"Projects should benefit the poorest of the poor," he said.

De Mesa said local governments would be the ones to ascertain and certify that the local organizations were indeed the association of the poor, "with preference also for the women headed households and the indigenous population."

Of the P550 million worth of proposals filed, the MRDP has approved P350 million of these. "These are now into the process of bidding them out to contractors," de Mesa said. □

# Road, water top demands of agri sector: DA exec

*by Carlo P. Mallo - Sun Star Davao*

*Published in: Sun Star Davao, July 19, 2008*



Consultations with target beneficiaries indicated the high priority given to farm-to-market roads by rural communities. This is because an established road network will provide rural folks more access to economic opportunities.

**F**arm-to-market roads and potable water remain to be the top demands of the agricultural sector here in Mindanao, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In an interview, Engr. Arnel de Mesa, Deputy Program Director of the DA's Mindanao

Rural Development Program (MRDP), said that based on their consultation with various stakeholders of the agriculture industry here in Mindanao, farm-to-market roads still top the list, alongside with potable water.

"And this we will provide

through MRDP program,” De Mesa said.

The MRDP program of the DA is eared towards alleviation of poverty here in Mindanao through the implementation of rural infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects.

Based on the plan, at least \$ 10 million will be allocated purely on water and irrigation projects, while another \$50 million is allocated for other infrastructure related projects.

However, 50:50 cost sharing scheme will be implemented in the funding for

the projects of the MRDP.

The national government, through MRDP, will cover the fifty percent of the cost, while the other fifty percent will be covered by the local government units, particularly the recipient municipalities.

MRDP was made possible with a loan from the World Bank.

Moreover, MRDP Program director Roger Chio, said that the MRDP is part of the thrusts of the government to avert the looming food crisis.

“We are working hand in hand with the national and local leaders to combat the food crisis,” Chio said. □



Access to potable water supply will not only eliminate water-borne diseases in the rural areas but will also allow residents to engage in other economic activities as they can now save enough time from fetching water in far flung areas.

# World Bank funding rural development in Mindanao

by Janis Louis H. Esparcia - Edge Davao

Published in: Edge Davao, July 21 – July 27, 2008



World Bank and MRDP Task Team Leader Carol Figueroa-Geron expresses the Bank's commitment to help in uplifting the lives of poor people in Mindanao during the Wrap-up Review Mission held February in Davao City.

A total of US\$15.752 million grant from the World Bank allotted to Performance-Based Grants for the Phase 2 of the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP2) will be used to fund rural infrastructure under the 50:50 innovative cost-sharing scheme with local government units.

The signing of the memorandum of agreement for the rural infrastructure (RI) component for Region XI was held last July q15 at the Grand Men Seng Hotel.

The 50:50 cost-sharing policy means that half will be sourced from the grant. The LGU equity will be in form of cash.



RI projects are the costliest investments in the agricultural production. These include farm-to-market roads, communal irrigation systems, single lane bridges, potable water supply, infrastructures related to fisheries and other infrastructure critical in enhancing farm productivity and access to markets.

“The implementation of MRDP2 lulled for a year because we had to iron out the cost-sharing agreement with the LGUs,” MRDP Program Director Arnel V. De Mesa said. MRDP2 was supposed to commence in September 2007.

De Mesa said that 80% of the LGUs in Region XI have already committed to the cost-sharing scheme.

The RI component targets the rehabilitation of an estimated 8,300 communal irrigation systems, rehabilitation of about 1.950 kilometers and construction of 200 kilometers of farm-to-market roads, construction and replacement of 1,000 linear meters single lane bridges, and rehabilitation and construction of Level 2 (communal faucets) water system.

Another component of the MRDP2 is the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) to implement livelihood projects to increase rural incomes.

CFAD aims to serve

at least thirty percent of the indigenous peoples, rural women and other disadvantaged sectors. Implemented by the Department of Agriculture, the MRDP works to implement poverty-reducing interventions in poor communities in Mindanao. □

*Implemented by the  
Department of Agriculture,  
the MRDP works to  
implement poverty-  
reducing interventions  
in poor communities in  
Mindanao.*



# Rural program to make water more accessible in Bansalan

by Noel T. Provideo

*Published in: Sun Star Davao, August 7, 2008*



A school boy in Barangay Darapuy in Bansalan, Davao del Sur is happy to note that potable drinking water is being set-up in their community so he could have more time either in studying, playing or in doing other chores as he don't need to walk far just to fetch drinking water.

**S**afe drinking water is fundamental to health. However, this basic necessity is still a luxury for some rural communities in Mindanao.

For instance residents of Marber and Darupay in Bansalan, Davao del Sur have to walk for more than four kilometers just to

have access to potable water.

"If only we can fetch safe drinking water near our residence then we could engage in other productive activities," says Leticia Sanico in vernacular, a people's organization member.

Aware of this inadequacy, the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) had made

provision of potable water supply (PWS) a priority not only eliminating water-bourn diseases but also in promoting rural productivity.

MRDP is a program implemented under the Department of Agriculture (DA) geared towards alleviation of the poor communities in Mindanao through implementation of rural infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects. The funding of the program was provided through a loan portfolio from the World Bank.

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio said that the program will be working on the rehabilitation and construction of Level 2 water systems to rural communities across Mindanao including Marber and Darupay in Bansalan.

“Access to potable water is a prerequisite to poverty alleviation as it promotes good health that will in turn increase their potentials to engage in economic activities. We urge our partners in the local government units to partner with us in addressing the need to make safe drinking water accessible in remote areas in Mindanao,” Chio said.

“We are glad that our community is included in the water supply project. Now that safe drinking water will be available near our homes it will not only be convenient for us, we can also have enough time to tend to our

farms and other needs of our households,” Sanico said.

Meanwhile, Bansalan Municipal Agriculturist Julian Albores added that aside from the potable water supply, MRDP will also implement livelihood projects in their town. These include goat and native chicken production, rice farming, and abaca production.

Julian Albores, the town’s agriculturist said the projects will not only provide livelihood to people’s organizations but will later train them in engaging value-adding activities as well as link them to potential markets. □

*“Access to potable water is a prerequisite to poverty alleviation as it promotes good health that will in turn increase their potentials to engage in economic activities. We urge our partners in the local government units to partner with us in addressing the need to make safe drinking water accessible in remote areas in Mindanao.”*

# DA's rural program to focus on Lumads

by Sherwin B. Manual

Published in: *Mindanao Daily Mirror*, August 21, 2008

*Edge Davao*, August 25-31, 2008

and *www.PIA.gov.ph*, August, 21, 2008



LUMADS are among the focus of the Program especially in CFAD (Community Fund for Agricultural Development) which will allocate at least 30% of its project cost to IPs (Indigenous Peoples) and women organizations. In Mindanao, there at least 18 IP tribes spread across the island.

**I**ndigenous Peoples (IPs) are among the primary concerns of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) rural program in Mindanao.

DA's Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP) will focus on the poverty alleviation of the IPs or the "lumads" by providing livelihood and infrastructures as they are

among the country's most vulnerable communities.

In Region 11, the Mandaya tribe in Callawan, New Bataan will be among the beneficiaries of P2.5 million project of the town.

The Byukadan Tribal Organization of Mandaya women, identified as their

project the construction of spring development for source of potable water supply.

The Madaya tribe are among the many lumads in Region 11 who settles in Davao Oriental and in the towns Compostela and New Bataan in the Province of Compostela Valley.

Further, the tribal leader said that once the potable water supply is in place, they will evolve into agri-tourism activities.

Potable water supply is among the DAs priority project as it is helps people become productive.

Also, providing rural folks access to improved water source is part of our government's commitment to meet the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (UNMDG).

In various areas in Mindanao, it is the experience of rural folk to walk at least four kilometers to fetch water yet uncertain of its potability. Program Director Roger C. Chio said that establishment of safe drinking water will not only eliminate water-borne diseases but also provide community folk more productive time wasted in fetching water from far flung areas.

"If we aim to alleviate the poor we have to provide them the infrastructures they need to be productive and safe water facility is one of them," Chio said.

MRDP is a poverty alleviation project of the DA

covering all of Mindanao's 26 provinces and 225 municipalities to be implemented in five years from 2007 until 2012.

Being a poverty alleviation program, it will pour in big investments for infrastructure as support for rural productivity such as farm-to-market roads, irrigation and bridges as well as livelihood and environment conservation projects.

As a package of investments, MRDP complements the President's aim of food sufficiency in the country by 2010. □

*DA-MRDP will focus on the poverty alleviation of the IPs or the "lumads" by providing livelihood and infrastructures as they are among the country's most vulnerable communities.*

# Rural program to invest on flood control system

by Sherwin B. Manual

Published in: *Sun Star Davao, September 4, 2008*  
and *www.PIA.gov.ph, September 8, 2008*



DA Undersecretary and MRDP Program Advisory Board (PAB) Chair Jesus Emmanuel Paras (2nd R) discusses with PAB members the possible inclusion of flood control systems in the Program's rural infrastructure menu during its 3rd meeting held August in Davao City. Also in photo is MEDCO Chair and PAB Vice-Chair Undersecretary Virgilio Leyretana, Jr.

**T**he Department of Agriculture (DA) will invest for preventive infrastructures to secure Mindanao's productivity and people.

DA's Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP) will push for the inclusion in its menu of Rural Infrastructure (RI) flood control systems and river development projects in flood-prone

areas in Mindanao to prevent loss of lives and properties.

This is among the agreements made by the Program's Program Advisory Board (PAB) on its 3rd Bi-Annual meeting held recently in Davao City.

The PAB sets policy directions to guide the planning

and implementation of the activities of MRDP. Its Chairman is DA's Undersecretary for Operation Jesus Emmanuel M. Paras and co-Chaired by Usec. Virgilio L. Leyretana of Mindanao Economic and Development Council (MEDCo).

The agreement was in response to the clamor of the Local Chief Executives in the Province of Sultan Kudarat whose towns were severely hit by typhoon "Frank" damaging hundreds of millions of infrastructures including the farm-to-market road projects of MRDP-phase 1.

In July this year, "Frank" devastated around P1.15 billion in agriculture and infrastructure facilities in Central Mindanao according to the data of the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC).

Central Mindanao consists of the provinces of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato and Sarangani, as well as the cities of General Santos, Koronadal, Tacurong, Kidapawan and Cotabato.

Mayor Ramon M. Abalos of Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat said that the lack flood control system was the main reason for the big damage in their town and in the province which greatly affected their economic activity particularly agricultural production.

"We have been requesting to construct flood control and river development

projects even during the first phase of MRDP, however, it is not part of the infra menu," said Abalos who is also a member of the Board representing the League of Municipalities.

In Lambayong town alone, the toll of "Frank" were P129 M worth of roads and bridges, P121.5M irrigation systems on top of the vast rice field submerged in flood.

Since World Bank sets the infrastructure menu of MRDP, Usec. Paras, committed to communicate such urgent request to for their consideration

"I'm positive these additional items in the menu will be accommodated because these are the projects the LGUs themselves identified as vital," Paras said. □

*Lack flood control system was the main reason for the big damage in their town and in the province which greatly affected their economic activity particularly agricultural production.*



# ComVal to pursue governance reforms

by Noel T. Provideo

*Published in: Mindanao Daily Mirror, September 22, 2008  
and www.PIA.gov.ph, November 22, 2008*



Improving governance and accountability mechanisms will not only enhance LGUs' revenue generation but also help them prioritize much needed services such as basic education.

**B**elieving that better governance is the key for stronger investment climate, the Compostela Valley Province is bent on instituting revenue generation measures.

This assurance from province's local officials came even after they learned that the Performance-Based Grant System (PBGS) from the Mindanao Rural Development

Program (MRDP) will not be implemented just yet.

Supposedly under the MRDP's Investments for Governance Reforms (IGR), the PBGS will be piloted to LGUs that will invest in rural infrastructure. Additional grant of 20 percent of the subproject cost will be granted to LGUs that can attain its revenue targets. However, after the approval of the 50:50



cost sharing for MRDP's rural infrastructure subprojects, the PBGS was put on hold as the funding was reallocated to water infrastructure such as irrigation and potable water supply.

Arceli Timog-timog, assistant provincial assessor said that although the PBGS is temporarily on hold the provincial government will go on with their revenue generation and resource mobilization activities.

"The effect is not that much. (This is because) we have realized that revenue generation even without the PBGS will still be of great help to us particularly in satisfying the need of our constituents," she said.

Timog-timog who is also the provincial IGR focal person said that through the MRDP's capability building on governance reforms their finance team are now prepared to implement innovative scheme in local fiscal reform and management.

"Through the IGR we were able to see the capability of the LGUs in implementing revenue generation activities. It has also helped us in prioritizing development projects that would better serve our people," Timog-timog said.

She added the province through the strong backing of Governor Arturo "Chongkee" Uy has started implementing its Provincial Revenue Generation and Resource Mobilization (PRGRM) which will cover this year up to 2012. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was already

executed between the provincial government and 11 municipal LGUs endorsing the full implementation of the PRGRM.

To achieve efficient tax administration, strategies lined-up include creation of provincial revenue task force, updating of revenue code, and enact measures and policies that will expand the local tax base. It will also synchronize revenue generation planning and budgeting.

Allan Lagumbay, Administrative Officer III of the province in a separate interview said values formation for both local officials and tax payers is part of their strategies.

"LGUs must not only depend on their IRA [Internal Revenue Allotment] they must also engage in economic enterprise to maximize their revenue sources. Tax payers on the other hand must realize that taxes must be collected to address their needs," he said.

Lagumbay said that the province share the same belief with MRDP on the need to prioritize rural infrastructure particularly irrigation and potable water supply as these are needed to boost food security and rural productivity.

He also cited the importance of enhancing capabilities of LGUs in revenue generation. He said there were attempts from other agencies to implement capability building on fiscal management but only MRDP was able to push through. ▢

# More MRDP funds ready for LGUs

by Jeanevive D. Abangan - Philippine Information Agency

Published in: *Sun Star Davao, September 12, 2008*  
and *www.PIA.gov.ph, September 12, 2008*



**TANDEM ADVOCATES.** Engr. Arniel Sosa (L), RPCO 11 Rural Infra Focal person and Noel Provide (center), InfoACE Unit Head respond to queries from media during the Kapihan sa Kapitolyo in Davao del Norte regarding the recent developments of MRDP. Also in photo is Jeanevive Abangan of PIA.

**S**o much have remained untapped of the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) funding for rural infrastructure that local government units (LGUs) can make use of to boost economic activities.

Guesting in the Kapihan sa Kapitolyo, Arniel Sosa, MRDP Rural Infrastructure Focal Person for Region XI said MRDP rural infrastructure sub-

project for Southern Mindanao has P251 million funding good until June 2009 and yet only P74 million or 29.5 percent has been taken.

Without quoting how much have so far been given to each province, he said Compostela Valley has the huge stake followed by Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte and Davao del Sur.

During the forum, Sosa urged LGUs to take advantage of the rare opportunity offered them to improve their rural infrastructure without so much money going out of their local coffers.

"MRDP is into 50-50 cost sharing scheme for rural infrastructure," he said. MRDP Information, Advocacy, Communication and Education (Info ACE) Unit head Noel Provide in the same forum explained the advantage of the 50-50 cost sharing saying LGUs will only have to put up a 50 percent equity while the rest of the funding requirement to construct an infra project will be shouldered by MRDP.

"It is only with MRDP that LGUs can enjoy a 50-50 cost sharing scheme," Provide said.

He said National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Board Policy pegs cost-sharing scheme at 70/30 for Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects, meaning LGUs will have to put up 70 percent equity while the foreign institution provides only 30 percent.

"So why don't we get the most of what is available?" he said in encouraging LGUs to avail of MRDP's rural infrastructure sub-project funding. "Other ODAs don't have such scheme," he added.

Provide said rural infra project might be the "costliest" investment LGUs can go into but it could spell development

especially in the agriculture sector on which food security is built on.

Projects under MRDP rural infrastructure (RI) component includes rehabilitation and construction of communal irrigation and construction of communal irrigation systems, farm-to-market roads, single-lane bridges, potable water supplies and other agricultural infrastructure critical in enhancing farm productivity and access to markets.

Provide bared MRDP RI targets to cover the rehabilitation of an estimated 8,300 hectares irrigation systems; construction of 800 hectares of communal irrigation projects; rehabilitation of about 1,950-kilometer and construction of 200-km farm-to-market roads; construction and replacement of 1,000 linear meter single lane bridges; and the rehabilitation and construction of Level 2 (communal faucets) water system.

Other than the rural infrastructure, MRDP also offers Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) which implements livelihood projects to increase rural incomes of disadvantaged sectors especially the women, indigenous peoples, among others.

Other MRDP sub-project components are the Natural Resources Management and the Investment for Governance Reform and Program Administration. □

# Potable water, livelihood a boost to economic activities in Bansalan

by Noel T. Provide

Published in: Sun Star Davao, October 9, 2008  
www.positivenewsmedia.com, October 17, 2008



**LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT.** Bansalan Mayor Edwin Reyes (2nd L) awards the check amounting to P250,000.00 to Mr. Perfecto Barra (3rd L) the President of Sibayan Famers Cooperative, an indigenous peoples cooperative that produces abaca. The amount is in support to abaca production which is among the thriving crops of Mindanao seen to generate better income for farmers. Also in photo are (L-R) Jane Abadilla CFAD Microenterprise Specialist, MAO Jullian Albores and members of the municipal council.

**S**afe drinking water and livelihood projects are expected to boost economic activities in Bansalan, Davao del Sur.

As one of the covered towns of the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), the local government of Bansalan has forged

partnership with the program to provide their constituents small infrastructure and livelihood projects.

In October, Bansalan Mayor Edwin Reyes together with MRDP personnel awarded P1 million worth of checks for beneficiaries to construct potable water systems and

as start up capital for livelihood enterprise. The said amount is an initial release of the total P2.5 million from MRDP-Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) which include cash equity from LGU Bansalan.

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio in his message delivered by CFAD Specialist Jane Abadilla said the program is prioritizing provisions of potable water supply not only in eliminating water-borne diseases but also in promoting rural productivity.

“Access to safe drinking water is a prerequisite to poverty alleviation as it promotes good health that will in turn increase their potentials to engage in economic activities,” Chio said.

Bansalan Agriculturist Julian Albores added that aside from potable water, MRDP projects to be implemented in the town will include abaca production and native chicken production.

Beneficiaries of abaca production are cooperative members with indigenous tribe in Barangay Sibayan. Abaca is endemic in the area where warm and wet climate makes it suited for the crop's cultivation. Meanwhile, a cooperative in Barangay Poblacion Dos opted to go into native production as there is a growing demand for egg and poultry meat in the locality.

Albores said the livelihood projects implemented

in the town were identified by the POs themselves during the crafting of their Barangay Development Plan (BDP) last year. BDP is one of the requirements for POs to qualify for MRDP funding. Davao del Sur Governor Douglas Cagas for his part allocated at least P15, 000 for every barangay to develop their BDPs.

MRDP is a program implemented under the Department of Agriculture (DA) geared towards alleviation of the poor communities in Mindanao through implementation of rural infrastructure, livelihood enterprise, and biodiversity conservation projects. The funding of the program was provided through a loan portfolio from the World Bank. □

*As one of the covered towns of the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), the local government of Bansalan has forged partnership with the program to provide their constituents small infrastructure and livelihood projects.*

# MRDP to lift Davao Norte's cacao industry

by Noel T. Provideo

Published in: *Edge Davao*, November 3-9, 2008  
*Southern Philippines Chronicle*, November 8, 2008  
and *www.PIA.gov.ph.*, November 3, 2008



**SUPPORT TO CACAO INDUSTRY.** San Isidro Mayor Tomas Abelita (3rd L) awards the check to officers of the Dacudao and Mabuhay Cooperatives as part of their cacao expansion program. The amount is part of the Mindanao Rural Development Program-Community Fund for Agricultural Development (MRDP-CFAD). Also in photo is CFAD Head Lorna Lesaca (3rd R).

Cacao is an important source of income for small farmers in the countryside.

In Southern Mindanao, the town of San Isidro in Davao del Norte had been dubbed as the cacao capital of the country where numerous farmers are earning from cacao production.

"Out of the 15,000 hectares agricultural lands,

3,600 hectares are devoted to cacao production," says Rene Pintor, San Isidro's municipal agriculturist.

Pintor is optimistic that bright prospects await the local cacao industry as it has a recognized reputation as major producer of cacao not only in the region but the entire country.

"Lately, we have foreign



visitors from US and Europe exploring the possibilities for San Isidro to supply materials for cocoa and chocolate production,” Pintor said.

Although there is huge potential for their local cacao industry, Pintor noted that much needs to be done to meet the required volume and improve its quality.

With this, the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) has poured in investments to empower farmers to improve cacao production in the community.

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio said cacao production can be an effective poverty alleviation tool for numerous farmers in the region and could be a viable source of income without disrupting the existing crop or tree crop activities.

During the recent awarding of checks held recently in Barangay Dacudao, San Isidro, at least three farmer cooperatives received a check of P250, 000 pesos each as an initial release from the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD), a component under MRDP.

“The assistance will be used to provide quality planting materials for expansion of cacao production including training assistance on crop management and postharvest techniques to ensure quality standards required by the market,” Pintor said.

Pintor said that for farmers to increase volume of cacao production, they must be trained

*Foreign visitors from US and Europe exploring the possibilities for San Isidro to supply materials for cocoa and chocolate production.*

on appropriate technologies including use of high-yielding varieties.

Meanwhile, San Isidro Mayor Tomas Abelita said that the MRDP’s support will greatly boost the town’s bid as the country’s cacao capital.

Abelita said they are presently working on organic certification of cacao plantations considering that organically produced cacao commands a premium price.

He added that his office is constantly collaborating with donor agencies like MRDP to improve cacao production and postharvest practices.

Since crucial to the improvement of postharvest practice is the road network, Abelita said the construction of additional farm-to-market road in San Isidro is already on the pipeline. He added that this will be funded through MRDP with equity both from the provincial and municipal government. ▢

# Rural development program pushes peace agenda

by Sherwin B. Manual

Published in : Sun Star Davao, November 26, 2008

Edge Davao Nov 30-December 6, 2008

[www.sunstar.com.ph](http://www.sunstar.com.ph), November 26, 2008



**ICONIC GONG.** The banging of the gong is a symbolic opening of the Program. Here officials bang the gong signals the entry of the Program to the island town of Simunul, Tawi-Tawi. The Program will support the POs seaweed farming and cattle production.

**D**evelopment espouses peace. With such tenet, the Department of Agriculture - Mindanao Rural Development Program (DA-MRDP) continues to wage development efforts across the island-region as a means of attaining lasting peace.

“By investing in development projects for the

people in Mindanao, we are sowing the seeds for peace,” said MRDP Program Director Roger C. Chio.

MRDP, a five-year program launched in 2007 jointly funded by the national government, Local Government Units and World Bank, implements infrastructure projects, agribusiness

opportunities, environmental protection and governance reform all geared to intensify its campaign for peace through development, the Program joins the Mindanao Peace and Development Convergence (MPDC). The group consists of peace and development programs like Act for Peace, LGSPA, Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM), among others, convened by the Mindanao Economic and Development Council (MEDCo).

MPDC's efforts aspire to respond to the call of creating lasting peace and more impressive development impacts.

Among the initiatives staged recently to advocate peace and development is "Ziarah Simunul", a campaign for peace and good governance which draws inspiration from the first masjid in the Philippines, the Masjid Sheik Makhdum.

Simunul, an island municipality in the province of Tawi-Tawi where majority of the residents are of the Sama tribe, was the birth of Islam in the Philippines dating back in 1830 A.D.

The town is among the target municipality of the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD), the livelihood component of MRDP. CFAD

will support cattle production and seaweed farming, the most lucrative business in the area.

Mayor Benzar N. Tambut said that the Simunul is a peaceful town and a healthy agri-fishery enterprise will encourage the community to embrace peace and order further.

"We are a peaceful community. Livelihood projects like from MRDP will empower our people's economic activity and will ascertain that peace here is sustained," the Mayor said. □

*"By investing in development projects for the people in Mindanao, we are sowing the seeds for peace,"*

# MRDP charts action to protect sources of food, livelihood

by Sherwin B. Manual

*Published in:*

*Sun Star Davao, November 28, 2008*

*Edge Davao, November 24-30, 2008*



Renjim Salido

**LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT.** Protection of natural resources implies sustaining the food and livelihood. MRDP through its Natural Resources Management component supports protection of the environment while establishing sustainable income generating activities for the community.

A well planned course of action is needed to address climate change and arrest the degradation of the environment, thus, sustain sources of food.

This was the aim of the Planning and Project Development Management Workshop conducted recently by the Mindanao Rural

Development Program (MRDP) under its Natural Resources Management (NRM) component at Don Marcelino, Davao del Sur. The town of Don Marcelino is among the six municipalities across Mindanao to benefit conservation technologies and sustainable

income generating activities from the Program.

The workshop gives primary consideration on watershed management approach eyed to guide the effective conservation management and pick up the dismal condition of Mindanao's natural resources.

The sustainable protection and conservation of the environment will safeguard the source of food and majority of livelihoods now and for the future.

MRDP Program Director Roger C. Chio in an interview said that the holistic process of development includes the preservation of the natural resources which supplies food and livelihood.

"We cannot strongly wage to uplift lives in rural Mindanao, should we fail to preserve our natural resources, the primary source of food and agricultural livelihoods," Chio added.

Don Marcelino Mayor John Johnson for his part expressed full support to the conservation and livelihood subprojects lined up to be implemented in the town.

"We are ready to support MRDP, in fact we have already set aside our counterpart equity for the Program," Johnson said. The training-workshop included the members of the Technical Working Group from the regional, provincial and municipal level along with representatives from the sectors of women, indigenous

*"We are ready to support MRDP, in fact we have already set aside our counterpart equity for the Program."*

peoples, farmers and fisherfolks.

After the week long training, the group was able to produce NRM action plan and the list of possible on-the-ground investments for environmental preservation and livelihoods.

NRM Officer-in-Charge Dennis Paul Mijares said that participatory action planning is part of the framework of the Program to advance environmental awareness among the members of the community.

"Climate change is real and happening and it affects all of us. We should aptly take actions while we are still able to," said Mijares.

While the NRM component is geared towards environmental preservation, MRDP, a five-year program launched in 2007 jointly funded by the national government, Local Government Units and World Bank, also implements infrastructure projects, agribusiness opportunities and governance reform all geared to alleviate poverty in rural Mindanao. □

# DA to focus on infrastructure in 2009

by Noel T. Provideo

*Published in: Mindanao Daily Mirror, December 24, 2008  
and www.PIA.gov.ph, December 24, 2008*



File photo shows DA Secretary Arthur Yap stresses the need to invest in rural infrastructure to improve agricultural productivity in a press conference held during the launching of MRDP2 in 2007. Flanking him are (L-R): MRDP2 Program Director Roger Chio, World Bank Task Team Leader Carol Figueroa-Geron, and DA Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras.

**T**he Department of Agriculture (DA) will focus on infrastructure projects to boost farm productivity in 2009.

DA Secretary Arthur Yap in his yearend report said that starting next year, the his office will shifting its funding on hard or "big-ticket" projects covering irrigation maintenance, postharvest facilities, farm-to-market roads (FMRs) and rural extension work, in lieu of "soft"

projects like fertilizer support to farmers.

"For instance, instead of the fertilizer discount coupons that we had given out this year to farmer-beneficiaries, DA will provide organic fertilizer manufacturing support to farmers in 2,600 clusters or sites where we will channel a bulk of its funds for intervention measures in 2009," Yap said.



He added that the DA is also considering phasing out seed subsidies to farmers in favor of infrastructure projects like water and processing facilities for cooperatives and private companies producing high-yield and certified seeds, to help pull down the costs of this farm input.

Yap said DA will give priority to areas where the local government units (LGUs) are willing to provide counterpart funding for farm-friendly programs, as a way to funnel more funds into the countryside, stimulate rapid growth and create more jobs.

To complement with the DA's new directions, the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP) has recently approved during its 4th Program Advisory Board Meeting (PAB) a resolution requiring covered LGUs to implement at least one rural infrastructure subprojects.

The resolution further requires that no livelihood projects will be implemented if there is no proposal for rural infrastructure.

MRDP, a five-year program launched in 2007 jointly funded by the national government, LGUs and World Bank, implements infrastructure projects such as irrigation, farm-to-market roads, and potable water supply. It also provides livelihood projects including environmental protection and governance reform all geared

to alleviate poverty in rural Mindanao.

DA Undersecretary for Operations Jesus Emmanuel Paras said the approved resolution will enable its LGU partners to embrace the MRDP as a package of investments to pump prime rural economy. Paras who also chairs the MRDP-PAB said "rural infrastructure is a costly investment but without which, food production has no foundation to grow."

MRDP Program Director Roger Chio for his part said livelihood projects can only optimize its impact if implemented with adequate infrastructure.

"Farm-to-market roads, bridges, and postharvest facilities provide farmers access to market and preserve quality of farm produce to command premium prices for it," Chio said. □



