



NEA, ECs vow completion of rural electrification projects by 2022

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) and its partner electric cooperatives (ECs) have pledged their full commitment to complete all pending state-funded rural electrification projects by 2022.



Administrator Edgardo Masongsong, together with the NEA Team, works hard with the Electric Cooperatives to fulfill the shared mandate of total electrification

The commitment was made during the ECs General Managers' Session held on February 21, 2018 at the NEA H.E.S Auditorium in Diliman, Quezon City that gathered 134 delegates, consisting of general managers, board members and representatives from 112 ECs.

Addressing the EC participants, Administrator Edgardo Masongsong reminded them of their mandate to ensure that the benefit of electricity reaches every Filipino household. He also urged the ECs to come up with strategies to fast-track efforts in achieving energy access for all by 2022.

"The ways of the past were already proven inadequate to the demands of the country's growing rural economy. We have to catch up, double our efforts and ensure that our services are more than enough to drive the Duterte administration's economic legacy after 2022," the NEA chief said.

NEA Deputy Administrator for Technical Services Engr. Artis Nikki Tortola, meanwhile, said there is still much work to be done but assured the ECs of the agency's commitment to providing necessary assistance to help them in carrying out the electrification projects.

"The end goal is [to ensure] that all potential consumers are energized. NEA

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Sitio Electrification Summit for ECs conducted

Completing the National Rural Electrification Program is first of the 7-Point Electrification Agenda of the NEA; hence, the Agency continues to pursue the implementation of its Sitio Electrification Program (SEP). In this regard, a two-day Sitio Electrification Summit for Electric Cooperatives (ECs) was conducted on January 24-25, 2018 at the H.E.S. Auditorium, NEA Bldg., Diliman, Quezon City.

The Summit drew 52 participants consisting of General Managers, Technical Department Managers and Sitio Focal Persons from 16 ECs under Regions I, II and CAR. It aimed to validate/sanitize the list of unenergized sitios; decide with final doable solutions for sitios/puroks having problems/issues on right-of-way, road network and peace and order; extract profile information for each sitio/purok; among others, so that the final list for the implementation of Sitio Electrification Program (SEP) – Phase 2 Masterplan is established as basis for consequent subsidy budget allocation from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and for the Philippine Household Electrification Plan for Off-grid and on-Grid Areas as required by the Department of Energy (DOE).

NEA extends over Php2-B loans to 52 ECs; exceeds 2017 target

NEA has released Php2.096-billion worth of loans, including calamity loans, to 52 electric cooperatives (ECs) through various loan windows in 2017, surpassing the Agency's target of Php1.7 billion for the year.

The bulk of loans, amounting to P1.298-billion, bankrolled the capital expenditure projects of different ECs, while Php304-million were borrowed by 14 ECs for the rehabilitation of their distribution systems wrought by typhoons Ferdie, Karen, Lawin, and Nina.

Among the ECs which topped the list that availed calamity loans were Camarines Sur IV Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Casureco IV), First Catanduanes Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Ficelco), and Oriental Mindoro Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Ormeco) with a total loan of Php153-million.

The Don Orestes Romualdez Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Dorelco), which was among the power utilities devastated by super typhoon 'Yolanda' in 2013, borrowed Php9-million for the construction of its headquarters.

Meanwhile, the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (Lasureco) secured a loan amounting to Pph12-million to cover the cost of its operational expenditures due to the armed conflict in Marawi City last year.

Calamity loans have a 10-year repayment term with a maximum grace period of one year. It carries an interest rate of 3.25% per annum. The loan's average processing time is five days.

NEA, KIAT approve project for distribution voltage upgrade in Ilocos Norte



Photo credit: INEC

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong and Korea Institute for Advancement of Technology (KIAT) vice president Sang Yi Park signed a Record of Discussions approving the "Project for Distribution Voltage Upgrade in Ilocos Norte." during a simple ceremony on January 22, 2018 at the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (INEC) Office.

Present to witness the signing were Mr. Jae Hwang Lim,

NEA also granted a total of Php55-million worth of loans to three other ECs, which were used to finance their monthly shortfalls in settling their power accounts with generation companies and the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP).

Meanwhile, two ECs namely Camarines Sur I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Casureco I) and Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Zamcelco) availed of the stand-by credit loan facility for power accounts totaling Php137-million to strengthen their creditworthiness with generation companies.

The Misamis Oriental I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Moresco I), on the other hand, borrowed Php39-million for the procurement of three units of 2-megawatt capacity modular generator sets.

"We hope that through these we are able to show that NEA is fully committed to assisting our partner ECs in bringing electricity to rural areas and helping uplift the lives of Filipinos in the countryside," Administrator Edgardo Masongsong said.

"Moving forward, we will continue our unrelenting efforts to implement the national government's rural electrification program until the last remaining household is energized," he added.

president of Bosung Powertec Co., Ltd.; Mr. Jae Han Go, president of Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO); and Mr. Reynaldo Lazo, Board president of INEC.

In a statement, Administrator Masongsong expressed the Agency's full commitment for the successful implementation of the project.

"This project will help meet increasing demand for electricity in the northern part of Ilocos Norte, as well as improve electric service reliability for the MCOs of INEC," Masongsong said.

The two-year-long project aims to support engineering, procurement and construction of a voltage upgrade distribution line in the country.

It also seeks to contribute to the industrial cooperation and exchange of industrial technology and experts in the electrification sector between the Philippines and Korea.

To ensure its successful implementation, KIAT enlisted the help of KEPCO and Bosung Powertec, Co., Ltd. to work with INEC for the construction of distribution voltage upgrade in Ilocos Norte.

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NEA hails appointment of new Philreca GM

NEA has welcomed the appointment of Atty. Janeene Depay-Colingan as the new Executive Director and General Manager of the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, Inc. (Philreca).



Philreca announced the appointment of Colingan on March 19, making her the first woman to take on the role. She replaced former Philreca general manager Wendell Ballesteros.

Philreca president Presley De Jesus said Colingan's extensive experience and impeccable track record made her the right fit to lead the association into its next phase.

"With her extensive knowledge and exposure in the operations and management of the electric cooperatives and our aspirations in the Rural Electrification Movement, we are confident that she would bring fresh ideas, innovations and strategic initiatives to our advocacy in support of rural electrification and consumer-driven reforms in the power industry," De Jesus said.

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong welcomed Philreca's decision to designate Colingan as its general manager and executive director. He likewise expressed satisfaction with the changes being made by Philreca to make the organization more effective.

"Atty. Janeene Depay-Colingan is equipped with knowledge, skills and attitude required of the position and to take the cudgels in the execution of the policies, programs and projects set forth by the Board of Directors led by its dynamic and responsive president in the person of Presley De Jesus," the NEA chief said.

Colingan is currently the Consultant Coordinator of the Regulatory Affairs Office (RAO) Team of the NEA. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Commerce major in Banking and Finance, and a Bachelor of Laws from Saint Louis University, Baguio City.

Effect of coal tax hike on EC power rates 'Minimal'—NEA

Increasing the Excise Tax of Petroleum Products is one of the salient features in the newly-enacted TRAIN Law or Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law.

The TRAIN Law was passed on December 19, 2017 with the end of creating a just, simpler, and more effective system of tax collection, as per the constitution, where the rich will have a bigger contribution and the poor will benefit more from the government's programs and services.

But there had been growing concerns on the effect of this Law on the prices of electricity particularly in the rural areas. To dispel the fears of the consuming public, NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong stated in an interview, *"electricity consumers in the provinces who are subscribed to different ECs need not worry about the increased excise tax imposed on coal as its impact on their power rates will be "minimal"*.

"EC consumers may expect price adjustments in their power bills, but these will be nominal because not all distribution utilities derive their energy sources purely from coal," he added.

"On the average, 'yung mga kumokonsumo ng kuryente sa electric cooperatives, 136 kilowatt hour ang consumption. Ang presyo 'non siguro mga between 680 to 700 pesos. Ang epekto doon ng excise tax mga 70 centavos lang per bill," Masongsong said.

"So, ibig sabihin, mas mahal pa 'yung (magiging presyo ng) text or ng candy. Very minimal lang talaga ang epekto ng excise tax 'pag ang supply ng kuryente ay galing sa coal," the Administrator emphasized.

Masongsong explained that out of the 121 ECs operating in the country, 74 are purchasing energy out of coal-fired power plants, of which only 47 are using more than 50 percent for their electricity requirement.

He attributed this to the fact that a lot of ECs are gradually making their transition into renewable energy such as solar, hydro, wind or even biomass, in line with the thrust of the government.

Nevertheless, Masongsong said they will remain on the watch for ECs that might take advantage of the higher coal excise tax to jack up electricity rates, considering that 30 to 35 percent of their baseload comes from this fossil fuel source.

He said the NEA through its Regulatory Affairs Office will be scrutinizing the terms of reference of every power supply agreement entered into by the ECs under its charge to steer them clear of contracts that may be found disadvantageous to their member-consumer-owners.

NEA, KIAT approve ... [from previous page](#)

NEA Deputy Administrator for Technical Services Engr. Artis Nikki Tortola said the Korean government through KIAT will be spending \$3 million for the project.

Tortola said the project involves upgrading the Burgos Substation's two distribution feeders voltage from 13.2kV to 22.9kV, including the installation of 10MVA 69kV/22.9kV, its necessary protection and metering.

In addition, the existing line hardware and special equipment, such as automatic circuit reclosers, lightning arresters, isolation switches and transformers will be replaced to conform to the 22.9kV voltage level.

NEA holds 1st NEA-EC Communicators' Summit

Recognizing the indispensable role communication plays in advancing the Rural Electrification (RE) Program, NEA hosted its first-ever NEA-Electric Cooperative (EC) Communicators' Summit with the theme “*Member-Consumer-Owner (MCO) Empowerment through Strong, Reliable and Effective Communication System*” from January 18 to 19 at its Headquarters in Quezon City. The summit brought together a total of 255 Information Officers (IOs) and Institutional Services Department (ISD) managers from 117 ECs nationwide.

It aimed to set a consumer empowerment direction for the ECs through the introduction of a new NEA communications policy, which underscores the aggressive promotion of rural electrification program, and maximizes the utilization of traditional and new media to achieve sectoral objectives and respective corporate goals.

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong, in his message, stressed the importance of maximizing the utilization of the media, including social media, to advance the rural electrification program of the national government.

Gender and Development Annual Planning and Evaluation held



A whole day Gender and Development (GAD) Annual Planning and Evaluation was held on January 23, 2018 at the Vinz Café, Penthouse, NEA Bldg., Diliman, Quezon City.

NETI Dir. Nora I. Rivera, the Head of the Technical Working Group, presented the Annual GAD Accomplishment Report for Fiscal Year 2017 to the members of GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) Committee who attended the meeting.

The group also discussed the plans and the corresponding budget requirement for 2018 as well as the formulation of its plans for 2019 including parallel activities to the forthcoming 50th Anniversary of NEA.

The GFPS Committee takes the lead in gender mainstreaming of the Agency to effectively implement the guidelines indicated in the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) Memorandum Circular No. 2011-01, Pursuant to Section 36 of Republic Act



“If we are able to do that, the minds of the Filipino people will be convinced that the only way for us to advance is for the rural folks and communities to maximize electrification to pursue medium and large scale economic undertakings, not just small initiatives, and not wait for the investors to come but for them to mobilize their own resources,” the NEA chief said.

The gathering also provided an opportunity for ISD Managers and Information Officers to discuss the challenges they face in communicating with the public and the possible solutions to address them.

Another highlight of the summit was the election of the officers of the newly established League of Electric Cooperatives Information and Communications Officers Nationwide (LEXICON).

Newly elected national officers of Lexicon were the following: Roel Venus of Ceneco (president), Jonathan Leysa of Sukelco (vice president), Morena Bautista of Ormeco (secretary), Rizalinda Reyes of Cenpelco (treasurer), and Clarence Ducusin of Iseco (auditor).

The organization is expected to play an integral role in disseminating all industry related news and information for the welfare and empowerment of the ECs and MCOs.

Summit declaration

At the end of the summit, ISD managers and information officers collectively issued a declaration, in which they recognized the crucial role they play in empowering the MCOs through strong, reliable and effective communication system.

No. 9710, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), that all government departments, including their attached agencies, offices, bureaus, state universities and colleges, government –owned and –controlled corporations, local government units and all other government instrumentalities shall adopt gender mainstreaming as a strategy to promote women’s human rights and eliminate gender discrimination in their systems, structures, policies, programs , processes, and procedures.

NEA Backs Up NPC in Enforcing Data Privacy Act, Data Privacy Summit held

Emphasizing the need to protect the personal information of their stakeholders against digital threats, NEA urged anew all ECs to strictly comply with the requirements of Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act.

NEA, in cooperation with the National Privacy Commission (NPC), held the Data Privacy Summit on February 6, 2018 at the NEA H.E.S Auditorium in Diliman, Quezon City.

The one-day seminar-workshop was attended by 154 participants consisting of General Managers and Data Protection Officers from 94 EC nationwide. It was aimed at educating the participants and providing them with deeper understanding and of the Data Privacy Act (DPA) of 2012 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). Likewise, it aimed to give wider perspective about the roles the DPOs in the compliance framework.

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong, in his welcome remarks, emphasized the obligation and responsibility of the Agency and the ECs in protecting and safeguarding its stakeholders' data and information from unauthorized parties.

“As primary players in the implementation of the Data Privacy Act – due mainly of the posts we hold in our offices, we are held accountable for what we do with customer data and to protect that data as well from third parties. This entails the use of data only for legitimate purposes, retained only within the reasonable need, and discarded where appropriate. It is, thus, my hope that participating in today’s Data Privacy Act Summit, we will all be guided with the greater understanding of the law we are mandated to comply,” the NEA chief said.

He also added, *“because of advanced technology where storage of electronic data became possible, we have customer data and related information under our custody which, owing to it being sensitive or personal, must be protected against security breaches, system errors, and ethical scandals.*

Keynoting the summit was Privacy Commissioner Raymund ‘Mon’ Liboro himself, who gave an insightful briefing on the salient points of the law, and how its proper implementation can help prevent technological risks from turning into full-blown business disasters.

“Data privacy protection is a combination of—if you’re going to ask me—a little of IT (information technology), a little of legal, a little risk management and a whole lot of common sense,” he explained.

Fibeco boosts ... from previous page 7

NEA Chief Edgardo Masongsong lauded Fibeco's initiative to open the call center.

“Providing a proper, accessible venue for the MCOs to vent out their complaints to the electric cooperative is a value-added service to the customers we serve,” said Masongsong.

“It is also an opportunity for the EC Management to address the issues and concerns properly and appropriately, obtaining for the distribution utility enlightenment to and support from the members themselves,” the NEA chief added.



The former assistant secretary of the Department of Science and Technology said the impact of large scale data breaches is similar to that of natural calamities, which can be mitigated proactively through stringent privacy policies and stronger database management systems.

“Our philosophy is simple and I suggest you also embrace this philosophy. It’s a risk management approach. You identify your risk as an individual and your risk as a company... Kailangan i-manage po natin ito dahil mahal mag-respond to a disaster,” Liboro said.

In view of this, NEA Chief Masongsong issued Memo No. 2018-008, enjoining ECs which are yet to designate their respective DPOs to follow suit, as per NPC advisory.

Also present to address other questions and concerns of the ECs with respect to RA 10173 were NPC division chiefs Dr. Rolando Lansigan (Compliance and Monitoring) and Atty. Francis Acero (Complaints and Investigation).

The gathering was ended with a closing remarks from Atty. Rossan Rosero-Lee, NEA Deputy Administrator for Legal Services.



IN FOCUS: NEA takes over ailing electric coop in Abra; rehabilitation underway

In an effort to rehabilitate the ailing Abra Electric Cooperative (Abreco), NEA officially took over the management and operations of the power distribution utility and deactivated its current Board of Directors on February 9, 2018.

This developed days after the Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC) issued the Notice of Default and Notice of Suspension against Abreco due to its failure to pay over Php200 million in power supply bills.

"With the recent development relative to the Notice of Default and Notice of Suspension issued by the PEMC, NEA is under obligation to take over the management and operations of Abreco to protect the welfare and interest of the EC and its MCOs," Administrator Edgardo Masongsong said.

Earlier, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi directed NEA to address the financial and management problems of Abreco decisively, citing increasing complaints of poor and unreliable service from its MCOs. Abra Rep. Joseph Santo Niño Bernos also issued a statement urging the Department of Energy to intervene and stop the order of PEMC to suspend Abreco from the wholesale electricity spot market.

To recall, Masongsong issued Office Order No. 2017-168 in September last year creating the Task Force to take charge of the rehabilitation of Abreco. The order was pursuant to Section 5 (a) Chapter II and Sections 4-A and B of Presidential Decree No. 269, as amended by Republic Act No. 10531.

The Task Force was formed after the NEA Board of Administrators, in its Resolution No. 113 dated September 5, 2017, ordered the deactivation of the Abreco's Board of Directors due to its failure to lead the EC to meet the operational and financial standards and parameters prescribed by NEA and considering the material and significant adverse audit findings on its operations as contained in the Comprehensive Audit Report.



Chaired by NEA Deputy Administrator for Electric Cooperative Management Services Atty. Goldelio Rivera, the Task Force serves as an EC Board of Directors prescribed under NEA Bulletin No. 35.

To supervise the management and operations of Abreco, NEA has designated Atty. Xerxes Adzuara as Project Supervisor. Charito Mabitazan, meanwhile, has been assigned as Acting General Manager to manage the day-to-day operations and ensure the efficient delivery of service to MCOs.

Other members of the Task Force are Board Presidents and General Managers from Triple-A electric cooperatives in Northern Luzon namely Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Inec), Ilocos Sur Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Iseco), and Benguet Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Beneco).

The Task Force is expected to meet specific deliverables, which include conduct of election for ABRECO Board; selection and appointment of a regular General Manager; establishment of a lean and mean organizational structure with competent workforce; come up with well-informed and participative MCOs and stakeholders; plan and implement capital expenditures projects towards power reliability, system efficiency, and reduction of system losses; prevent power curtailment due to power shortages and outages; and achieve operational performance within the NEA parameters and standards.

NEA clears Php18-M working capital loan of Abreco

In order to help in the immediate rehabilitation of cash-strapped Abreco, NEA approved its Php18.456 million loan to settle some of its power accounts.

The money served as working capital to defray Abreco's unpaid bills with PEMC and NGCP for the month of January 2018 amounting to Php11.561 million and Php6.893 million, respectively which would help ensure continuous delivery of service to thousands of its MCOs in Abra.

Barely a month after it took over Abreco, the Task Force Duterte Abra Power already reported some progress towards fixing the EC and saving it from further collapse.

The Task Force prevented NGCP's scheduled disconnection of power services on February 22 after settling Abreco's power bill for December 2017 worth Php6.767 million and interest of Php12,222 from the collection of receivables.

On February 27, the Task Force submitted its 100-day Strategic Development Plan (SDP) covering the period February to May 2018,

Likewise, Abreco AGM Mabitazan, in his report on March 1, cited their accomplishments since NEA intervention on February 9 that included total collection of Php24 million covering the period February 9 to 28 with total disbursement of Php11.576 million; and Abreco's total cash on hand and in bank worth Php9.445-million as of February 28 among their accomplishments.

"We will not stop at merely rehabilitating ailing ECs like Abreco and helping it get back on its feet. The Task Force is mandated to restore Abreco back to economic viability so that the gains of development through rural electrification are felt and realized up to the very last household in the province of Abra," NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong said.

"We will endeavor to generate and raise the necessary funds to cover at least the current power payables with PEMC and to seek for a restructuring of the outstanding power accounts," NEA Deputy Administrator Atty. Goldelio Rivera, chairman of the Task Force, said.

CDA-registered EC backs NEA decision to take over Abreco

A member of a national federation of

#SavingBoracay: Akelco says waste-to-energy facility might be the key

There might be another way around cleaning up Boracay without the mandatory closure of businesses that drive its economy. How? By putting up waste-to-energy facilities in the island.

AKELCO general manager Alexis Regalado brought this up during the First EC Board of Directors held at the La Carmela de Boracay convention center amid reports that a number of establishments in the area will be forced to temporarily shutdown after repeated violations of state environmental laws and regulations on proper waste disposal.

He said a company has expressed interest to build a biomass-fired power plant in one of the three barangays comprising the island.

"We have already been approached about plans to establish a biomass [plant to convert] wastes [into at least] one megawatt [of power]. They said they already acquired a lot in Manoc-Manoc, where they want to put

it up." he said.

Biomass facilities are among the many renewable energy development projects NEA advocates.

Regalado considers Boracay as the "bread and butter" of Akelco because although it covers only 8,000 out of the total 151,000 consumer connections in their franchise area, it generates 55 percent of their overall average monthly income.

"Definitely, Akelco will be affected if a lot of businesses will be closed, especially if they are big establishments," he said.



Investing in a biomass facility may not only prevent this scenario but it can also help address the growing demand of the island for electricity.

During peak seasons, the top tourist destination in Aklan averages a total of 28 megawatts (MW) in daily power consumption and around 20 MW on quiet months. Accordingly, Akelco has also been pouring its resources to improve power supply and reliability in Boracay.

IN FOCUS: Abreco ... from previous page



stock ECs registered with Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) has expressed his full support to NEA in taking over the management control of Abreco.

Mr. David Solomon M. Siquian, a Director of the Philippine Federation of Electric Cooperatives (Philfeco) and general manager of Isabela II Electric Cooperative (Iselco II), described the recent action by NEA as a "positive approach" to save the ailing Abreco from total collapse.

Mr. Siquian, who represented Philfeco during the 1st EC Board of Directors' Summit held in Malay, Aklan on February 16 and 17, believed the NEA takeover will redound to the benefit of the MCOs of Abreco.

"Nakita naman ng buong EC community na sinuportahan din (ito) ng local government officials like the governor and the congressman. Ang kanilang intention doon is to save Abreco. It is not taking away Abreco from the member-consumers but saving

Abreco from another failure," he said.

Some of the Philfeco members also shared the same view, according to Siquian. *"And it would be much better if NEA and CDA will work hand in hand in helping Abreco with its present crisis,"* he added.

Mr. Siquian, together with Atty. Julius Cesar Peralta, Board President of Pangasinan III Electric Cooperative (Panelco III) were designated as additional members of the Task Force "in order to have a wider representation and participation in the setting of policy directions for Abreco towards attaining operational efficiency and financial viability," the NEA Office Order 2018-037 stated.

Iselco II and Panelco III are both registered as Stock ECs under the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) like Abreco. They are among the 12 ECs who are members of Philfeco.

NEA has the supervisory powers over ECs across the country, including those registered with the CDA, as mandated under Republic Act 10531, otherwise known as the "National Electrification Administration Reform Act of 2013."

FIBECO boosts efficiency with 24/7 Tawag Center customer service

With the goal of putting up a reputation of a fast, efficient and responsive service to its clients, First Bukidnon Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Fibeco) has established a Tawag Center, a 24-hour call center, to enable itself to quickly act on immediate customer concerns.

The call center operates seven days a week to serve MCOs from Valencia City and the municipalities of Damulog, Dangcagan, Don Carlos, Kadingilan, Kibawe, Kitaotao, Maramag, Pangantucan, Quezon, San Fernando, and Wao.

"If there is a problem, we directly communicate with our consumers through our newly established Tawag Center," explains Fibeco General Manager Reynaldo Balaba.

Launched in 2017, the Tawag Center has six consumer welfare assistants working in three shifts to handle inquiries and complaints on power interruptions, broken utility poles, and loose or dangling electrical wires. Since its launch, the number of complaints Fibeco receive has declined significantly.



Power coop execs pledge to help ailing distribution utilities

Over 600 participants from 99 ECs attended the First EC Board of Directors Summit organized by the Philippine Association of Board of Directors of Rural Electric Cooperatives (PABREC) to help save some ailing coops from the brink of economic unviability.



Other resource persons who also spoke in the two-day summit were ERC Commissioner Josefina Patricia Asirit for ERC Chair Agnes Devanadera, Rivera, NEA IDD Department Manager Nollie Alamillo, and MCO Specialist Edmundo Pacamalan, Jr.

PABREC is composed of Rural Electric Cooperative Board of Directors Association, Inc. (RECOBODA), Association of Board of Directors of Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (ABDEC), Directors 8, and

which was proposed by Felix Vergara, Jr., President of the Association of Mindanao Rural Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AMRECO).

"We should have a program helping those ailing cooperatives. We should have a concerted effort in terms of helping our ailing ECs in resolving their problems," said Vergara, who is also the Board President of the First Bukidnon Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Fibeco).

Other resolutions endorsed during the assembly include urging the 17th Congress to pass a bill expanding the supervisory powers of NEA and another in support of the establishment of an EC-MCO Center near New Clark Green City in Tarlac.

Western Visayas Board of Directors Association (WEVBODA).

NEA Chief Edgardo Masongsong, meanwhile, reiterated the need to strengthen their movement to protect the gains of rural electrification.

The Summit with the theme "A United Board of Directors for Stronger Electric Cooperatives," held from February 16 to 17 at the La Carmela de Boracay convention center aimed to consolidate the various organizations of EC Board of Directors nationwide to effectively resolve and address pressing issues affecting power coop directors in the rural electrification sector.

"You are in the EC to promote and protect the rights and interest of your electricity consumers. But you cannot do that individually. To be relevant, you have to bond yourselves into one strong movement," Masongsong said.

Among a handful proposals introduced in the said meeting was the adoption of a resolution creating a comprehensive program that will provide all kinds of immediate assistance to underperforming ECs

The NEA chief urged them to solidify their ranks to help the Duterte administration realize its economic roadmap, particularly in terms of sustaining development in the rural areas, as envisioned in the AmBisyon Natin 2040.

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will adjust accordingly to the strategies that the electric cooperatives will be taking in order to [keep the projects within] the proposed timeline," Tortola said.

They also committed to "complete and energize the REP projects for BLEP, SEP, HHEP for the year 2018-2022 and adhere to the rules and regulations of the NEA concerning the efficient utilization and timely liquidation of subsidy funds".

Latest data from the rural electrification agency showed that there are still 23,464 sitios in the entire country that do not have access to electricity. Of the total number of unenergized sitios, 19,740 sitios were identified as "implementable" to date, most of which are in Mindanao with 8,535 sitios, followed by Luzon with 6,541 sitios, and Visayas with 4,664 sitios.

The figures were based on updates submitted by the ECs to NEA in a series of Sitio Electrification Program (SEP)-Phase 2 summits conducted nationwide by its Corporate Planning Department (CPO), in coordination with the Accelerated Total Electrification Office, on November 23-24, 2017 followed by sessions on January 10-11, 24-25, and February 7-8, 2018.

For this year, the NEA and its partner ECs target to bring electricity to 1,817 sitios--560 in Luzon, 552 in Visayas, and 705 in Mindanao.

Further, the agency is requesting P5-billion from the national government to finance the 3,626 electrification projects under SEP for 2019.

Last February 21, the NEA gathered the general managers of different ECs under its supervision to discuss, among others, the progress of rural electrification projects in their respective coverage areas.

Before the assembly ended, the EC participants pledged their commitment to strongly support the government's Rural Electrification Program by fast-tracking the implementation of SEP, Barangay Line Enhancement (BLEP) and Household Electrification Programs (HHEP).

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