

Empowerment of the Poor

The Empowerment of the Poor portfolio is characterized by a strong focus on specific target groups among the poor: landless farmers-agrarian reform beneficiaries, indigenous peoples, informal sector especially women-and vulnerable groups, that is, those without assets, victims of disaster or violence, as well as casual and temporary workers. At the same time, it strengthens the capacities of key institutions especially the National Anti-poverty Commission (NAPC) to effectively coordinate and manage anti-poverty programmes at all levels.

This programme portfolio supports the Government's policy to protect the poor and vulnerable groups in society by expanding opportunities, building capacities for empowerment, and enhancing security. We work on these two key outcomes:

- **Improved access of the poor to basic services and productive resources, and decision-making mechanisms for socio-economic empowerment.** We support capacity building in key institutions to design more cost-effective social protection programmes, to facilitate access to land and secure tenure for agrarian reform beneficiaries and indigenous peoples, and to adopt best practice in rapid expansion of microfinance services. Likewise, research and advocacy efforts to ensure pro-poor policies and to improve the access of women to social security.
- **Strengthened capacity of national and local governments in planning, formulating, implementing and monitoring anti-poverty programmes and projects, particularly in meeting the minimum basic needs of poor communities/families.** We support capacity building, both at the national and local levels, in the analyses and monitoring of poverty, and participatory processes of planning and design and implementation of local anti-poverty programmes. This includes integrating the monitoring of commitments to the Millennium Development Goals into the national statistics system.

Projects Under the Empowerment of the Poor Portfolio

1. *Support to Asset Reform Through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and Development of Indigenous Communities (SARDIC)*

Partner: Dept. of Agrarian Reform (DAR)

This project supports the agrarian Reform Programme of the Philippines. It works through the Agrarian Reform Communities in the country through various interventions that would enable these communities to become viable and sustainable. Interventions include organizing, training, livelihood, market matching.

2. Programme for the Advancement of Filipino Women through Strategic Support Mechanisms for Economic Empowerment (Funded by Japan WID)

Partner: TESDA

The development objective of the project is the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in micro, cottage, and small-scale industries through gender-responsive policies and programs supported by an integrated system of entrepreneurship development activities.

The expected outcomes are increased technical skills, economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for women, evidenced by a critical mass of women entrepreneurs with access to various support services.

Specifically, the project has the following objectives:

- To build the capacity of the TESDA (Technical Skills Development Authority) Women's Center.
- To build on existing programs of agencies serving the sector, particularly on increasing access to credit and markets, through targeted advocacy activities.
- To strengthen pilot support service facilities for women entrepreneurs in convergence areas at the provincial level.

3. Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples for Governance and Sustainable Development of Ancestral Domains

Partner: National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)

The project is in line with UNDP's Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) 2001-2004 and the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan (MTPDP). It supports Outcome 1 of the Empowerment of the Poor Portfolio, which refers to, "Increased access of the poor and vulnerable groups to services and productive resources for social and economic empowerment through more effective, participatory and gender-responsive policy and programme environment".

The project aims to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples to development as recognized by both national and international laws. It has three components, namely:

- Sustainable Development and Management of Ancestral Domains
- Strengthening of Indigenous Peoples Governance
- Strengthening the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

4. *Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Convergence of Poverty Alleviation Efforts*

Partner: National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC)

The programme under the GOP-UNDP Portfolio on Empowerment of the Poor supports the country's Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan in addressing poverty and in meeting the Millenium Development Goals.

Specifically, the programme contributes to two development outcomes:

- Increased access of the poor and vulnerable groups to services and productive resources for social and economic empowerment through more effective, participatory, and gender-responsive policy and programme development; and
- Strengthened capacity of government, both at national and local levels, in planning, formulating, implementing and monitoring anti-poverty programmes and projects.

The programme addresses the need for concerted efforts at all levels in response to poverty.

Thus it aims to deepen the institutional mechanisms and strengthen coordination in support of for poverty-focused planning, poverty monitoring, and assessment, and to enhance the capacities of the national government agencies, local government units and basic sectors in effectively undertaking and participating in anti-poverty programmes and policy development.

The programme will also engage the active partnership of the private sector in poverty reduction efforts.

5. *Creation of an Enabling Environment and Building Capacities for the Growth and Protection of the Informal Sector*

Partner: Dept. of Labor and Employment –Bureau of Rural Workers (DOLE-BRW)

This project, a component of the GOP-UNDP Empowerment of the Poor portfolio, supports the promotion and protection of the informal sector. It contributes to the development outcome of: "Increased access of the poor and the vulnerable groups to services, resource and decision-making processes for social and economic empowerment." The areas of support have been identified as part of a Comprehensive Action Agenda for the Development of Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework and Programs for the Promotion and Protection of the Informal Sector. It provides capacity building assistance aimed at increasing access of informal sector workers to productive resources, expanding coverage of social protection to the sector, improving their working conditions, and strengthening the sector's participation in decision-making.

6. ***Microfinance Sector Strengthening Project (MSSP)***

Partner: National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC)

This is a capacity building intervention project that seeks to assist selected Microfinance Institutions in the Philippines adopt the ASA model of Bangla Desh.

MSSP is strengthening the capacities of microfinance institutions (MFIs) and practitioners to provide greater access to microfinance services to the poor, especially women, consistent with the high priority given to this sector by the Government.

In the project's central component, three breakthrough MFIs (CARD, LifeBank and CCT) are extending their outreach and enhancing their performance with the technical assistance of ASA Bangladesh, which is transferring its unique and highly successful low-cost, rapid expansion microfinance technology.

The anticipated new outreach of the three MFIs for 2003 will fulfill more than one quarter of the national target of 300,000 new clients per year.

The replication components of the program include assessing and documenting successful practices in Philippine microfinance to produce instructional manuals for the sector as a whole, as well as training a core of national practitioner-trainers in the ASA methodology.

Over the long term, this will lead to a sustained increase in the proportion of the poor with access to productive resources to improve the quality of their lives.

7. ***Empowering the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries through Tenurial Security***

Partner: Dept. of Agrarian Reform (DAR)

The project, a component of the Empowerment of the Poor portfolio, will provide capacity building support to expedite the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). It contributes to the development outcome of "Increased access of the poor and vulnerable groups to services and resources for social and economic empowerment through more effective, participatory and gender-responsive policy and programme environment."

It specifically aims to accelerate land tenure improvement and delivery of agrarian justice through capacity building in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) within DAR and among agrarian reform beneficiaries and local institutions.

The project will enhance DAR's in-house and grassroots capacities in alternative dispute resolution to facilitate the settlement of agrarian conflicts outside of the courts of law. This intervention is expected to expedite the resolution of land disputes, de-clog pending agrarian cases, and promote acceptance and better understanding of substantive and procedural lawson agrarian reform by those involved

in the litigation processes. This undertaking will specifically train a group of mediators and trainers for mediation and paralegal skills within DAR and paralegals at the grassroots.

Target beneficiaries of capacity building interventions under the program include the DAR legal and information and education personnel, staffs of the Beneficiaries Development Coordination Division of the DAR Provincial Offices, staffs of selected CARP implementing agencies, agrarian reform beneficiaries and selected NGOs and POs.

The program will be implemented within a period of two (2) years.

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