

Fulfilling the promise of the land

THE Southern Philippines is at once the richest although the least developed area in our archipelago. Populated by only ten million people, a quarter of which are national cultural communities, it covers 30 percent of our land area and 40 percent of the national territory. Stretching on a crescent from the Pacific Ocean coast of Mindanao to the Sulu Archipelago then to Palawan, the area covers 22 provinces and 7 chartered cities.

The national government is investing an unprecedented number of projects to develop the region. It views the secessionist threat in the product of the Southern Philippines as the result of many decades of indifference of past administrations to the potentials and unique problems of the region.

To speed up the development of the area, President Ferdinand E. Marcos created through Presidential Decree No. 690 (April 22, 1976) the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA). The new agency absorbed the functions of the four defunct agencies; the Commission on National Integration, the Mindanao Development Authority, the Presidential Task Force for the Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao and the Special Program of Assistance for the Rehabilitation of Evacuees. The new agency not only integrates government development programs for the area, but reinforces the objective of accelerating the "socio-economic development of its population by helping preserve, promote and enhance their cultural traditions."

Operational Concept. The SPDA has embarked on the novel idea of tying up profit-oriented activities with social and economic reforms. It sets up profit-oriented corporations and ventures to provide income to its social-oriented, noncorporate projects. This innovative system assures the long-term viability of the Authority, and at the same time, it helps in the economic development of the region through the creation of employment opportunities.

The SPDA sees itself fulfilling the following development roles:

□ Resource development — which involves the utilization of the area's natural resources to provide a basis for the profit-oriented enterprises of the Authority. These ventures are being pursued in partnership with public and private entities. However, the SPDA emphasizes that it does not seek to compete with private companies, but rather its purpose is to complement them.

□ Social-oriented activities — these are projects in education, health, land reform, human settlements and the like in cooperation with the various specialized agencies of the government involved in the development program of the area.

□ Financial and technical assistance — becomes operable when the SPDA enters into pioneering ventures, equity positions and joint ventures with either public or private institutions.

Organization. The policy-making body of the SPDA is a board of directors. Management is entrusted to an administrator assisted by two deputy administrators—one heading the development management department and the other supervising the financial management department. The board of directors and the administrator are appointed by the President.

The Board of Directors is headed by Brig. Gen. Antonio N. Venadas as chairman with the following as members: Farouk A. Carpio, Michael O. Mastura, Sergio O. Morales and Nonbraman P. Pangcoaga. Abdul Karim Sidri is administrator, assisted by Romeo D. Reyes, deputy administrator for development management, and Ali M. AR-Raschid, deputy administrator for financial management.

Projects. The diverse activities of the agencies SPDA has absorbed have

involved the Authority in a wide range of projects, spanning such fields as industry, agri-business, marine resources, human settlements, relief and rehabilitation, tourism and community services. To check up on the relevance and progress of the projects it has "inherited," the SPDA has set up project evaluation teams. Their reports on the major projects of the SPDA are as follows:

□ SPARE. This stands for the special program of assistance for the rehabilitation of evacuees. To help those affected by the damage inflicted by the Muslim rebels, the program provides food, clothing, shelter, agricultural loans and resettlement opportunities to help the victims start life anew. From July 1975 to March 1976, SPARE had extended a total of P2.6 million to the evacuees. During the same period, SPARE built a total of 42 bunkhouses and 1,147 individual shelters. Evacuee farmers are also being provided with loans amounting to P1,200 per hectare of riceland. So far, P5.1 million worth of credit has been extended to the evacuee farmers. SPARE has also set up several income-generating projects, including a pilot fishing project in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, a vegetable gardening project in Lanao del Norte and Zamboanga City, and a smoked-fish project in three evacuation centers in Zamboanga City. It has also undertaken the survey of alienable and disposable public lands to serve as resettlement projects for landless evacuees. This is being done in coordination with the Bureau of Lands. Resettlement projects have been set up in the following places: Kidam Labay, General Santos City; Datu Paglas, Maguindanao; Upper Sepaka, Surallah, South Cotabato; and Saboy, Davao del Sur.

□ FMEP. Farm Machinery Equipment Pools were established to modernize the farming technology of several areas in Mindanao through the renting out of tractors and farm implements to the farmers. Pools have been established in Don Carlos, Bukidnon; Lala, Lanao del Norte; Sinauwan, Davao del Sur; Litubangan, North Cotabato; and Maganoy, Maguindanao.

□ REAP. The Rural Economic Advancement Program was designed to increase agricultural productivity levels of small farmers through cooperative irrigation projects. Pilot areas have been established in Tanglay, Panabo and Tubo-Tubo, Monkayo in Davao del Norte.

□ MCCI. The Mindeva Coco-Coir Industry Project was a pioneer effort in supplying the world demand for coir. Its factory was set up in Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental at a cost of P3.152 million. The project is expected to help obtain maximum utilization of coconut production in the region.

□ CHRDP. Taking over from the Mindanao Development Authority, the SPDA is completing the facilities of the Cotabato Human Resettlement and Development Program in Dinags, Maguindanao. The 575-hectare project area is being developed for communal farming, an industrial estate, low-cost housing, an evacuee relocation center and a resettlement project.

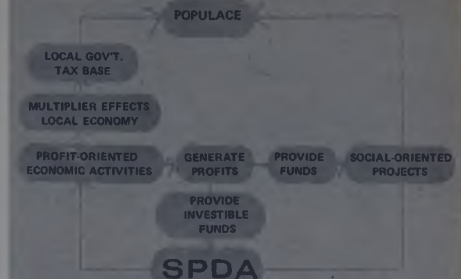
The SPDA is again inheriting from the MDA, the SPDA administering three subsidiary corporations. One is the Mindeva Agro-Industrial (MAID) which used to operate a feedmill plant in General Santos but had to sell it later after several years of unprofitable operations. The SPDA is reviving the MAID to integrate other agro-industrial projects it has absorbed from the defunct MDA. Another subsidiary is the Mindeva Refrigeration Industries, Inc. (MRII) which sold its ice storage facilities for marine products in Zamboanga, Basian and Sulu to private parties after a public bidding. The SPDA is negotiating for the requisition of the plant. The Palawan Cannery and Fishing Development Corporation, another SPDA subsidiary, is working toward the harnessing of the



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rich marine resources of the Southern Philippines.

Equity Investments. The SPDA has assumed MDA's equity subscription of P2 million to the Marawi Resort, Incorporated. The Resort will provide hotel facilities to the increasing number of tourists visiting Marawi, Lanao del Sur. The SPDA also has equity holdings in Pacific Cement Co., Inc. and the Davao Sugar Center Co., Incorporated.

Initiated Projects. The SPDA is not content to manage the considerable resources and projects it has absorbed from other agencies. Thus, it has launched several projects on its own. One of them is its human settlements project in Dinags, Maguindanao and Zamboanga City. SPDA's human settlement programs are addressed to the following priorities: rationalizing complex social interrelationships, meeting the expanding population pressure, identifying and optimizing land-use patterns, meeting cost standards

for mass housing projects and maintaining the quality of human life.

The final criteria in any development effort is whether the goods and services produced are effective and corresponding to the needs of the greatest number of people. This can only be the result of an integrated approach which is dependent on cooperation among public and private agencies. This cooperation is being achieved in the Southern Philippines through the catalyzing force of the SPDA.

The SPDA's role is to ensure that its development plans are useful to the area's population. Moreover, the SPDA cannot afford to go forward merely in tune with the other development programs in the archipelago, for the special situation in the Southern Philippines requires growth and social reform in the quickest time possible. As such, its record, in just a little over a year of operations, shows SPDA can do the job. □