

## Philippines: World Bank Groups New Strategy to Benefit Bicol's Rural Poor

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Rural infrastructure projects worth one billion pesos (P1.12 billion) are slated for implementation in the Bicol Region under the new Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) to be launched this week by President Benigno S. Aquino III. Implemented by the Department of Agriculture nationwide, PRDP is currently the biggest government project supported by the World Bank Group under its new Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) endorsed by the Bank Groups Board of Executive Directors this year. The US\$508.25 million project aims to improve the productivity of small farmers and fisherfolk and expand their access to markets. In the Bicol Region, the PRDP will provide farm-to-market roads as well as livelihood projects for farmers and fisherfolk. The municipalities that will directly benefit these farm-to-market roads include Basud, Elena, Jose Panganiban, Libmanan, Mercedes, Oas, Pasacao, Sipocot, and Sta. Elena. Other parts of the country will also benefit from infrastructure projects including farm-to-market roads, bridges, tire tracks, communal irrigation, potable water systems, post-harvest facilities, production facilities, fish landings, fish sanctuaries, storage facilities, trading posts, green houses, solar driers, and slope stabilization works. "With our support of PRDP we want to demonstrate our commitment to support government efforts that directly help the rural poor, including those in the Bicol Region," said World Bank Country Director Motoo Konishi during a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the CPS via videoconference today. "The project will encourage farmers and fisherfolk to increase and diversify production and to engage in value-adding activities that can increase their income. Investments in rural infrastructure will benefit Bicolano producers, traders, and the rural population through better transport infrastructure, reduced travel time, and improved access to markets," Mr. Konishi added. In addition to PRDP, elementary education in Bicol Region is also a priority under the Bank Groups new CPS. "Currently under implementation here in Bicol Region is the Learning, Equity, and Accountability Program Support (LEAPS) Project, a new US\$300 million nationwide project designed to improve the basic skills of students in reading and mathematics," said Ms. Maribelle S. Zonaga, World Bank Senior Country Operations Officer. "This complements existing programs on education and health here in the region - the Pantawid Pamilya that provides incentives for families to keep their children in school and have regular health checks," she added. Ms. Zonaga said that the World Bank Group is a long-term partner of the Philippines and the Bicol Region. She said that the Bank Group, under its new CPS, will support government projects in the following areas: Transparent and accountable governance: strengthening public financial management, improving fiscal transparency and financial accountability, and supporting greater demand from citizens for government accountability. Empowerment of the poor and vulnerable: improving health and education outcomes, strengthening social protection and ensuring the availability of more timely and improved measurements of poverty. Rapid, inclusive and sustained economic growth: promoting economic policy reform for inclusive growth, boosting private sector development by improving the investment climate for firms of all sizes, including greater access to finance, and increasing productivity and job creation, especially in rural areas. Climate change, environment, and disaster risk management: increasing physical, financial and institutional resilience to natural disasters and climate change impacts, and improving natural resource management and sustainable development. Peace, institution building, and social and economic opportunity: supporting social and economic development in conflict-affected regions in Mindanao, including the Bangsamoro. Background The CPS is the WBGs "business plan" in support of the Philippines development strategy. It aims to identify key areas where the Bank Group can support development and help reduce poverty. The CPS is a joint strategy of the three members of the World Bank Group (WBG): the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), also known as the "World Bank"; the International Finance Corporation (IFC) focused on the private sector in developing countries; and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) which provides political risk insurance to private sector investors and lenders. The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW DC 20433 Washington USA  
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