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Next five years deemed crucial

Beneco to seek franchise renewal, new supply contract

BY DELMAR CARIÑO

Already saddled with the adverse impact of the pandemic on its operations, the Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) is also gearing up to hurdle its biggest challenges in the next five years topped by the need for a new franchise and a new power supply agreement.

The electric cooperative's 50 year franchise is valid until 2028 while its 25 year supply contract with Team Energy is set to expire in 2024.

This early, Beneco has already created a technical working group to prepare the documents for franchise renewal and coordinate with

the Philippine Association of Phil. Rural Electric Cooperatives Assn. (PHILRECA) on how to go about the application for renewal.

PHILRECA, the umbrella organization of the country's 121 electric cooperatives (ECs), has issued a memorandum early

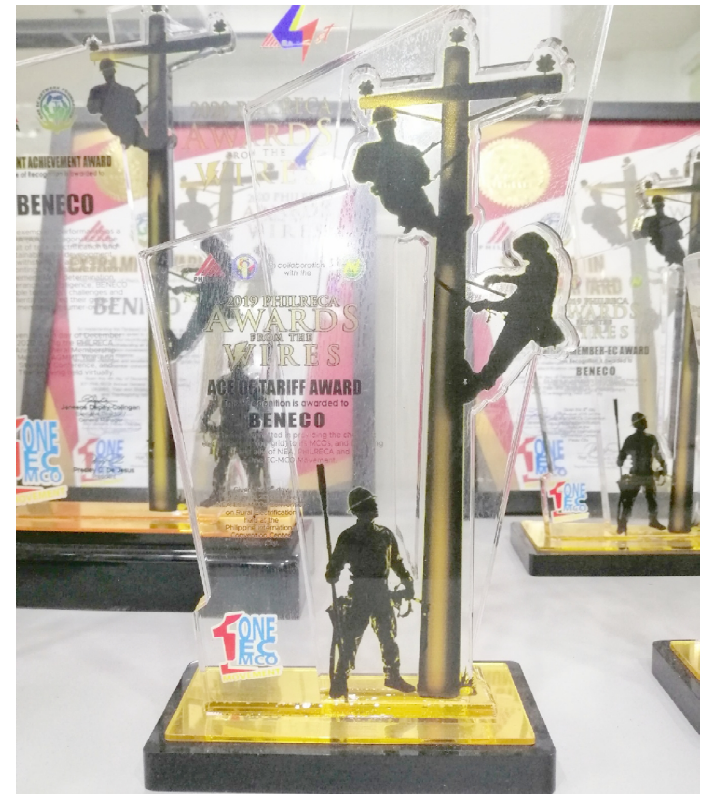
this year advising ECs to start buckling down to work on the requirements for franchise renewal and particularly addressing those ECs whose franchises are about to end in the next five years.

The power bloc in Congress — namely

TO PAGE 2



EMPLOYEES AT WORK. Despite the pandemic, employees of the electric cooperative continue to render service to the member consumer owners (MCOs). (Jeremy Shagol and Chris Gonzales)



Beneco's awards for good performance.

Ace of Tariff marks Beneco's lowest tariff

BY CHRISTOPHER GONZALES

The Benguet Electric Cooperative (BENECO) took home anew the recognition as the electric cooperative in the country with the lowest rate per kilowatt hour (kWh).

The management, headed by Melchor Licoben, OIC general manager, and the board-of-directors (BOD), headed by lawyer Esteban Somngi, received the award in December last year during the annual membership assembly of the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (PHILRECA) which was done virtually.

The recognition, known as Ace of Tariff Award, is

the fourth in a row for the EC that started in 2016. The award was given following Beneco's having the cheapest electricity rate among the 102 on-grid ECs in the country.

"We are very happy and proud to tell that compared to other electric cooperatives in the country, our member-consumer-owners (MCOs) have paid less in terms of cost of electricity," said Licoben in an interview with the PTV4 national network.

Last year's records showed that non-lifeline (consumption from 46 kilowatt-hour and above)

residential consumers (non-

TO PAGE 2

EC now CDA registered

The good news is that Beneco is now registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA).

The not so good news is that there's still a lot of leg work to do to realize what member consumer owners had been clamoring for years — interest on share capital and patronage refund — two of the most thorny issues the electric cooperative (EC) has exerted effort to explain exhaustively in the past why they are not available in a non-stock and non-profit EC.

Beneco's Certificate of Registration was issued on Nov. 11, 2020 under Registration No. 9520-10150000049802. It bears the CDA seal and was signed by Orlando Ravanera, CDA chairman.

But registration is not

TO PAGE 9

EC partylists make noise in Congress

BY DELMAR CARIÑO

It's not their looks but their advocacy that has captured their colleagues' attention in the august halls of Congress.

Tyros they may be compared to the more experienced lawmakers, representatives Presley De Jesus (PHILRECA), Sergio Dagooc (APEC), Godofredo Guya (RECOBODA) and Adriano Ebcas (Ako Padayon

Pilipino) have slowly carved with devastating presence a niche for themselves as abled representatives of the country's 121 electric cooperatives (ECs).

Christened as the "power bloc boys," the four EC grown gentlemen have proven they are a force to reckon with and no less than Rep. Michael Odylon "Mikee" Romero, the deputy speaker

of the House of Representatives, leading them to a tour of Congress and meeting house bigwigs on their first few days in office.

And their genre is not the ordinary type of measures traditional politicians are known for — naming a street in behalf of a hero, seeking funds for the construction of a basketball court or haggling for additional budget for a ten kilometer road.

Their advocacy is electric — figuratively and literally. Now, the country's ECs suddenly found themselves at the forefront of issues and concerns affecting the power industry even up to the point of shaking the boots of major industry players such as big generation companies, Department of Energy (DOE), National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) and the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

To think that three of

TO PAGE 9



Licoben's vision: Beneco CARES

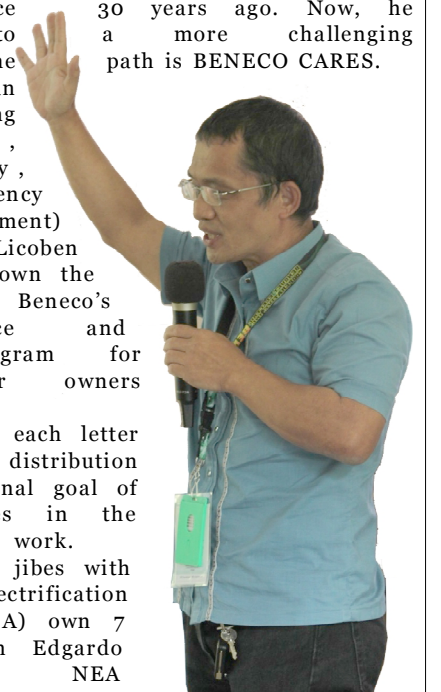
BY CHRISTOPHER GONZALES

New leader. New vision. New normal. New thrust. Engr. Melchor Licoben, OIC general manager, has in his palms the way to go for Beneco having risen from the ranks of the ECs since 30 years ago. Now, he wants to take the EC to a more challenging path is BENECO CARES.

CARES is an acronym representing Capacity, Affordability, Reliability, Efficiency (as well as Empowerment) and Sustainability. Licoben said this will lay down the template for Beneco's operation, service and empowerment program for member consumer owners (MCOs).

The meaning of each letter transcends from the distribution system to the personal goal of individual employees in the performance of their work.

BENECO CARES jibes with the National Electrification Administration's (NEA) own 7 Point Agenda which Edgardo Masongsong, NEA administrator, has overly



LICOBEN

TO PAGE 6

Listen to us: 7am - 8:30 am (Saturdays)

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Beneco hurdles ISO surveillance audit

BY AILENE ALAFAG

Beneco took the quality of its services to a higher league when it was recognized as ISO certified on Oct. 29, 2019 and maintained such course when it hurdled the first ISO surveillance audit in Aug., 2020.

The Germany based Deutscher Akkreditierungsstelle (DAKs), a globally known certifying body accredited with the International Certification Network (IQNet), issued the ISO Certification which will be effective until Oct. 28, 2022.

The certification meant that the electric cooperative has institutionalized a quality management system (QMS) in rendering its various core businesses and support services a duly registered distribution utility with a franchise to give light and power to Baguio City and the 13 towns of Benguet.

Beneco's QMS was certified under ISO 9001:2015. The Certificate was signed by Alex Stoichitoui, IQNet president, and Michael Drechsel, Managing Director of DQS Holding GmbH. BENECO employed the services of Quality Plus Management Consulting Co. as consultant in its preparation for ISO certification.

The certification will be followed by a surveillance audit in the next two years to determine if the EC was

able to maintain its QMS. The EC passed with flying colors the first surveillance in August, 2020 and is now priming up for the second and last surveillance this coming August, 2021.

The ISO is defined as a set of international standards on quality management and quality assurance developed to help companies effectively document the quality system elements needed to maintain an efficient quality system.

The ISO audit, meanwhile, refers to "a systematic and independent examination to determine whether quality activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve objectives."

BENECO is one of the few pioneering ECs in the country to go for ISO in its continuous desire to provide excellent customer service to its member-consumers. Having an ISO certification meant the ISO certified organization pursues a well sought seal of business excellence to further enhance its customer satisfaction through the effective application of systems and procedures in conformance to customer and regulatory requirements.

According to one ISO website, "all the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 are generic

and are intended to be applicable to any organization, regardless of its type or size, or the products and services it provides."

"Our certification must not end when we receive the ISO certificate. This means that we have to work more and continue to be efficient for the benefit of our member consumers," said Melchor Licoben, general manager.

The ISO certification covered BENECO's core business of electric distribution that included service connection, operations and maintenance, meter reading, billing, disconnection and collection, inspection and analysis, and distribution planning implementation. It also covered the support services in terms of community relations, consumer welfare, warehouse and material quality assurance, human resources, management information and communication services, general services and document control.

The QMS is anchored on a Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA) cycle that starts from understanding the impact of the EC's economic, political, technological and environmental climate including the understanding of the role of the so-called interested parties.

The ISO certification,



which follows ten clauses under ISO 9001:2015, also requires a risk based analysis of the business of the electric cooperative and how to treat them, and opportunities and how to maximize them. The standard also requires the EC to provide for a system for corrective action in order to improve on its activities.

BENECO's ISO certification highlighted BENECO's conformity to the standards particularly on the following: (1)The commitment of the top management for continuous improvement; (2)Motivation and desire towards ISO 9001:2015 certification in relation to the ECs' vision of becoming a world class organization; and (3) its active participation as a member of the Philippines Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (PHILRECA).

The certifying body also took note of the following:

(1)The corporate social responsibility (CSR) program of the organization especially the collaboration with TESDA in providing technical and vocational education to the dependents of the member consumer owners; (3)The innovation of its internal system application (excel) for efficient and effective cost estimation; (4)The competency of the meter shop of the Network Services Department (NSD) which was granted an authorization certificate by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to conduct kilowatt hour meter (kWh) meter calibration; (5)The erection of an office building and the presence of facilities that truly serve the needs of its customers; (6)The possession of state of the art technology and resources deployed at the System Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) control Room manned by very

competent engineers; (7)The accurate and real time recording of line interruption events; and (8)The systematic recording and adherence to technical performance standards such as System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI).

The DQS auditors also gave a salute to how the internal quality audit team handled its tasks for exerting effort to establish an audit checklist for every business process in the various departments of the EC.

The certificate was officially awarded to the management and employees' monthly assembly at the Gen. Pedro Dumol Hall of the BENECO headquarters in South Drive, Baguio City on January 6, 2020. The DQS team, led by Romeo Zamora, DQS managing director, gave the certificate.

Beneco...

FROM PAGE 1

partylists Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (PHILRECA), Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (APEC), Rural Electric Consumer and Beneficiaries of Development and Advancement (RECOBODA) and Ako Padayon Pilipino — will take the cudgels of filing the bills for franchise renewal of the ECs before Congress.

The advice for ECs with expiring franchises to work this early is because once the bill for franchise renewal gets the nod of the lower house, the same must still be forwarded to the Senate for its own review and approval.

"We cannot take the risk of the panicking for a new franchise close to 2028 since

that would mean the closing the shop for Beneco's business," Melchor Licoben, OIC general manager, said.

The bill for franchise renewal alone requires the attachment of around 11 documents which could not be produced like an ordinary file. It includes the submission of a market feasibility study, a three to five year business development plan and an undertaking or plan for public participation.

PHILRECA has prepared some sort of a template for the bill for franchise renewal to be filed before the House of Representatives but the preparation of the voluminous records that are required to be submitted are expected to eat the bulk of the EC's preparation for the filing of the application.

Ditto with the urgency of seeking a new energy power supply contract.

Licoben told the board of directors in a recent meeting that part of the RC's short and long term plans is the procurement of the agreement that will ensure power source for Beneco's member consumers after 2024.

He said Beneco could not afford to relax or remain inactive due to the pandemic since the charts showed that its monthly demand of 80 MW is expected to surge to 92 MW by 2025 and 104 MW by 2030.

Beneco has already expressed its interest to join the Region 1 — Cordillera Administrative Region — Sorsogon I Electric Cooperative (R1+CAR+S1) power aggregation group to be able to secure its power supply requirements from 2024 onwards.

The aggregation group is composed of the six ECs in region 1 — Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (INEC), Ilocos Sur Electric Cooperative (ISECO), La Union Electric Cooperative (LUELCO), Pangasinan I Electric Cooperative (PANELCO I), Pangasinan III Electric Cooperative (PANELCO III), and Central Pangasinan Electric Cooperative (CENPELCO).

Aside from Beneco, the other ECs in the Cordillera who have committed their purchase requirements in the aggregation are the Mt. Province Electric Cooperative (MOPRECO), Kalinga Apayao Electric Cooperative (KAELCO) and Ifugao Electric Cooperative (IFLECO).

Olive Bete, Beneco's regulatory compliance officer who sits in the aggregation group's meetings, said as of this

writing that the ECs are now finalizing their power requirements to be committed as part of the aggregated power supply needs of all the ECs in the group.

"Once the commitments are secured, the group can set up the competitive bidding process," she said.

BENECO, which is willing to commit 70 megawatt (MW) in the aggregation, is barred from renewing its energy power supply agreement (EPPA) with Team Energy due to the Competitive Selection Process (CSP) the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has directed all ECs to undergo.

CSP now prohibits bilateral power contracts between ECs and power generators and now mandates all ECs to secure their power supply through competitive bidding.

Beneco is also pinning its hopes on its renewable energy projects that could help ease up on the ECs' base load requirements.

The EC is currently constructing a three MW mini hydro power plant in Buguias. The project is expected to be completed this year.

Beneco has also recently competed the paper works for a one MW solar energy facility project in Tuba, courtesy of a grant of one million euros from the European Union and the World Bank.

The project is now undergoing filed based investigations to comply with the requirements of social acceptability pursuant to the provisions of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA).

Ace...

FROM PAGE 1

lifeline consumers) paid an average of P7.60 pesos per kilowatt-hour including all pass through charges such as taxes and universal charges. Industrial and commercial consumers, meanwhile, paid an average of P6.80 and P5.39 per kWh for low voltage and high voltage, users, respectively.

In his speech during a monthly employees meeting, Licoben said: "Of all the 14 awards BENECO received, the Ace of Tariff award is the best award given to BENECO."

PHILRECA gave BENECO 14 awards in various fields that indicated the EC's exemplary performance in 2020.

Aside from the Ace of Tariff Award, the EC also garnered the following — Prompt Payor Award, Years of Powerhouse Excellence Award, Model Member-EC Award, Paramount Achievement Award, Constant Contributor Award, Strength in Numbers Award, Extra Mile Award, The Iron Pillar Award, Legends of the Movement Award (Rex Molot), Paramount Achievement Award, Quality Innovator Award, Strong Commitment to Brotherhood Award and Leaving a Legacy Award (Gerardo P. Verzosa).

"It is not for us to say that our services are the best but it would be for our consumers to judge us whether we are giving the service they deserve," said Licoben.

The awards came as a rebuke to one of the charges being raised by the local chapter of the National Association of Electricity

Consumers for Reforms (NASECORE). The group has consistently assailed BENECO for having high electricity rates without coming up with proofs to back up such claim.

Cooperative officials hope that the Ace of Tariff Award would silence the consumer group even as it continues to attack the EC.

The award was a fitting follow up to the declaration made by the Energy Intel Ph on the Philippine Residential Effective Electricity Rates that in 2019, the EC had the lowest residential rate among all distribution utilities in the country.

Using data from the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), the Energy Intel Ph on the Philippine Residential Effective Electricity Rates, a non-profit organization that monitors electricity rates, took note of Beneco's P6.77 per kWh for residential consumers.

Cooperative officials said the low or lowest rates could be attributed to the fact that the EC was able to enter into a power supply agreement the terms and conditions of which were very favorable to Beneco in terms of power rates. Beneco's power supplier is Team Energy Phil. Its 20 year Electricity Power Purchase Agreement (EPPA) will expire in 2024.

Another reason cited for Beneco's affordable and cheap rates is the fact that it has not applied for any rate increase as far as its charges for distribution, supply and metering (DSM) and Reinvestment Fund for Sustainable Capital Expenditure (RFSC) are concerned.

BENECO charges an average of P0.99 per kWh for DSM and P.2178 for RFSC, rates that have not changed since January, 2010.



BENECO BLDG. The EC headquarters at South Drive, Baguio City (Edison de Guzman)



Sinipsip and Lamut substations commissioned

BY JAMES PALICDON AND RONA DESCHEREE AGALDANG SORIANO

There is no stopping the Benguet Electric Cooperative, Inc (BENECO) from pursuing its mandate to provide sufficient supply of electricity to its franchise area.

On August 28, 2020 and September 4, 2020, two new 10 MVA transformers were commissioned in Lamut, Beckel, La Trinidad and Sinipsip, Buguias, respectively.

Now guided by its refurbished advocacy CARES – Capacity, Affordability, Reliability, Efficiency and Safety – Beneco aimed to address the increasing power demand of its member consumers with the commissioning of the two new substations.

Engr. Joaquin Calawen,

system control and protection officer of Beneco's network services department, said the two new transformers readily address the need to switch to other power sources in cases of emergency power interruptions.

"Part of our system design is also to readily source out load or supply from any substation in case of major fault or power cut in one of the feeders. We need to fulfill a load balance in our substations to accommodate the demand requirement of other feeders especially when it is necessary to divert load from one substation to the other," Calawen said.

The addition of the new transformers would allow the electric cooperative to

supply any increase in power demand in the next few years brought about by the increase in the number of consumers.

Parallel to the erection of the new transformer in Sinipsip was the upgrade of the voltage from 13.2/7.62 kV to 23/13.2kV, ensuring increase in the reliability of voltage, Calawen said, meaning that the power voltage will not do down beyond the allowable voltage 24/7.

The 10MVA of the Sinipsip substation will supply power from the substation until the junction going to the Bakun and Amgalegyuey viewdeck.

The switch on ceremony of the Sinipsip substation was held on December 11,

2020 while that of Lamut was on Dec. 28, 2020.

"Now I understand the purpose of this substation," said Dione Baucas, Buguias vice mayor. "By the time the Man-asok mini-hydropower will be operational, this substation will continuously provide power in Buguias and nearby areas even if there will be no power available in Baguio City," he said.

Engr Melchor Licoben, OIC general Manager, said the 10MVA substation in Lamut was actually used in the mid 90's and is one of the original power transformers of BENECO.

"Around 2014, this was upgraded due to increasing power demand. Instead of

TO PAGE 9

Beneco receives foreign grant for solar power plants

BY OLIVE BETE

The Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) was among seven electric cooperatives in the country that was endorsed by the Department of Energy (DOE) to be the recipient of a one (1) MW solar project from the European Union – Access to Sustainability Energy Programme (EU-ASEP) for Rural Network Solar (RNS).

The grant is one million euros for Beneco and each of the other chosen ECs.

The European Union (EU) and the Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid (GPOBA), through the Access to Sustainable Energy Project (ASEP), a World Bank-assisted Project, provided the grant to help

the country make electricity more accessible to consumers through the put up of a renewable energy facility by the use of solar energy.

The project has three components— Rural Network Solar (RNS), Photovoltaic Mainstreaming (PVM) and Pre-Paid Metering (PPM) Pilot.

For the RNS, the grant for the construction of the plant is one (1) million euros. The ECs though are required to provide their own equity or counterpart in the form of a lot where the power plant will be erected and the provision of interconnection facilities.

The EC shall likewise

shoulder the cost of providing the fence to secure the site area and to do the clearing activities.

Beneco has already purchased a lot in Taba-an Sur. The EC is now currently busy complying with the requirements of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) such as the conduct of a file based investigation and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Beneco hopes to be able to secure a Certification Pre-Condition from the NCIP once it is able to hurdle the social acceptability of the project from the indigenous communities in the affected

Areas.

The National Power Corporation (NPC), the implementing arm of the World Bank project, plans to have the project construction be bid out by the first quarter of this year.

All the ECs that have completed the submission of permits and requirements required by the government agencies and local government units shall be included in the bidding.

For BENECO, it has already completed all the requirements except for the land use conversion or the exemption from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) under the Department of Agrarian Reform.

Power sales plunge

BY CHRISTOPHERE GONZALES

Based on its sales data, the Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) billed its consumers a total of P2.54 billion for their electricity consumption in 2020, down by P0.30 billion compared to P2.84 billion in sales in 2019.

In terms of kilowatt hour (kWh) sold to the different customer classes, the 2019 sales of 434 million kWh sales plunged to 403.60 million kWh sales in 2020 or a decrease of P30.4 million kWh.

In Baguio City alone, the decrease in sales was also greatly felt. The 307 million kWh sold in 2018 went up by 9 million in 2019 as sales urged to 316 kWh. But in 2020, the sales plummeted to 281 million kWh, a glaring decrease of 35 million kWh. To note, the consumption of Baguio City

comprises about 73 to 75 percent of Beneco's kWh sales.

"The conservative historical forecast for growth rate is around 3 to 3.2 percent in kWh sales," said Engr. Leonard Atam, system planning and design officer. This forecast is used in the planning for the electric cooperative's capital expenditure, finance, sales and system. "It is sad that sales went down by roughly 11 percent in 2020," Atam added.

"We were doing okay in the first quarter of 2020 before the full implementation of general community quarantine (GCQ) and the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ)," said Engr. Ricardo Pallogan, Non-Network Services Department manager.

"But a sudden drop was felt when all key industrial players in the local economy—schools, hotels, restaurants, malls, shopping arcades and transient homes—were forced to close down due to the pandemic. Power utilization went down. The closure of establishments directly affected our sales and forcibly pulled down the ability of our consumers to pay their utility bills," he said.

"SM, for instance, has been consistent as the first in our top ten paying consumers due to its high consumption - amounting to P8 to P10 million on the average per month. But the amount of its total consumption dived to P2 million pesos in April, P3 million in May and slowly

TO PAGE 9

Two laws give reprieve to member consumers

BY CHRISTOPHERE GONZALES

Some electric cooperative consumers may not be aware of but Congress passed two laws last year that are considered beneficial to them on one hand while warning them to do their part on the other.

The "Murang Kuryente Act" (Republic Act 11371) gave consumers something to cheer about as the measure deleted two items from the electric bill to be paid by consumers monthly – Universal Charge for Stranded Debts (UCSD) and Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs (UCSCC).

The "Anti-Obstruction of Power Lines Act" (Republic Act 11361), meanwhile, sought to ensure the free access of generation, transmission and distribution facilities over areas they are meant to operate or to be installed.

Sen. Win Gatchalian, chair of the Senate Energy Committee and co-author of the RA 11371, said that the removal meant saving each Filipino household the average amount of ± 0.09 per kilowatt hour (kWh) for both universal charges.

The law, which was passed in August, 2019, has directed the national government to use P208 billion from its share of the proceeds from the Malampaya Natural Gas Project to pay two items. – Universal Charge for Stranded Debts (UCSD) and Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs (UCSCC) – included in electricity rates paid by consumers.

On the average, those consuming 200 kWh per month can save P172 per month or P 2,064.00 a year.

Under the Electric Power Reform Act (EPIRA) of 2001 (Republic Act 9136), all the assets, debts and contracts of the state owned National Power Corporation (NPC) will be assumed by Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM). The law granted PSALM the right to recover the costs of NPC's debts and stranded contract cost through the collection of universal charges.

The charges are passed on to consumers and being non-bypassable charges, all electric cooperatives are required to include them as items in the monthly electric bill.

The stranded contract costs of NPC refers to the excess of the contracted cost of electricity under eligible contracts over the actual selling price of the contracted energy output of such contracts in the market, which contracts shall have been approved by the then Energy Regulatory Board as of December, 2000.

The stranded debts, meanwhile, of the NPC refer to the financial obligations of NPC which have not been liquidated by the proceeds from the sales and privatization of NPC assets.

Aside from directing the use of the government's share from the Malampaya fund to pay off the UCSD and UCSCC, the 'Murang Kuryente Act also ordered PSALM not to file before the ERC any new petition for universal charges until the said allocation of P208 billion has all been used up.

RA 11361, on the other hand, speaks of a power corridor where the flow of electricity from the generator until the consumer must not be disturbed or obstructed. The law said that there must be uninterrupted conveyance of electricity on all the land beneath and air spaces.

The law enumerated certain acts considered as obstruction and which can be the basis of criminal charges. Any party is thus barred to: (a)Plant or to plant tall growing plants including plants of whatever kind, variety or height within the power line corridor; (b)Construct or erect any hazardous improvements within the power line corridor; (c)Conduct or perform any hazardous activities within the power line corridor; and (d)Prevent or refuse duly authorized agents of the owner or operator of power lines, entry to the property in the performance of prevention and/or removal of any power line obstruction.

The law allows the trimming, pruning, cutting, or clearing activities for tall growing plants within the power line corridor even without securing prior clearance or permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Philippine Coconut Authority

TO PAGE 9



A consumer checks her power bill as she waits for her turn in paying at Beneco collection center in South Drive. Gradual growth in sales is expected and would recover soon due to increase in people's mobility due to relaxing of entry requirements. (Christophere Gonzales)

Editorial

Continuous electric supply during the pandemic

Beneco as a public utility just can't be caught napping during the pandemic. It must ensure the continuous supply of electricity and it cannot afford an unjustified power interruption or be at the mercy of a feast of backlash in social media.

Indeed, the task of the electric cooperative (EC) has become daunting these times but the EC knows too well its responsibilities. No one needs to over emphasize the adverse impact of having no electricity. All the more when power is cut in quarantine facilities, hospitals and Covid 19 centers. Not this time, please, as we won't to add more burden to the suffering of our member consumers.

The recent letters sent by Melchor Licoben, OIC general manager, to Gov. Melchor Diclás, Mayor Benjamin Magalong and the 13 mayors of Benguet underscored Beneco's commitment to perform its role during the pandemic. The GM asked for the possible locations of the LGUs' vaccination centers once the local roll out of vaccines would begin. Once the information is available, Beneco will tag the sites as areas of priority. The EC's linemen will immediately conduct an onsite inspection, find out what repairs are needed and determine the feeder that supplies power to the facility to ensure that measures are in place in case any contingency in the future.

For Beneco, the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Electrification Administration (NEA) need not worry. Beneco will not slack on its responsibilities, knowing too well that any lapse on its part can cause or contribute to the untimely death of any affected party.

NEA's Memorandum No. 2020-009, issued on March 17, 2020, called on all ECS to ensure the continuous delivery of electricity service within their franchise areas particularly to critical loads such as hospitals and medical/health institutions, government offices, basic utility providers, disaster risk reduction offices, PNP and AFP office.

The memorandum was followed by an April 13, 2020 technical advisory of NEA urging ECs to conduct power plant preventive maintenance and consider resorting to load shedding and rotational power interruption. The advisory also instructed the ECs' system operator to coordinate with their power suppliers particularly when the latter would issue a notice of repair and maintenance work of their power plants. The notice would heads up the EC to get ready.

The DOE had its own advisory. On Feb. 16, 2021, DOE Secretary Alfonso Cusi signed an Advisory directed to all distribution utilities to undertake the following measures: ensure the continuous reliable and stable electric power supply to Covid 19 vaccine cold storage facilities and health care facilities through the provision of back-up generating sets and/or distribution system reconfiguration; ensure that emergency response protocols and business continuity plans are updated to be responsive to the prioritization of Covid 19 vaccines cold storage facilities and healthcare facilities in cases of power outages; ensure enough contracted capacity to address possible increases in demand requirements; intensify vegetation management programs to eliminate or at least minimize power interruptions; and provide necessary support for Covid 19 vaccine cold storage facilities and healthcare facilities by installing back up supply.

Beneco is taking these directives by heart. It has its own checklist encapsulating the DOE and NEA commandments. The marching order is to see to it that any failure to inject the vaccine must not be traced to the EC's inefficiency. The EC's reputation is at stake and its presence as a vital stakeholder in the community must be felt in these hard times.

Beneco has seven substations that are strategically located in Baguio City and Benguet. In the city, there's the 20 MVA substation in Irisan and two 50 MVA substation in North Sanitary Camp. La Trinidad hosts the two 20 MVA substation in barangay Beckel while Atok has a 5 MVA substation. There's another 10 MVA substation in Sinipsip, Buguias and a smaller 3.75 MVA substation in Bulalacao, Mankayan.

Engr. Ramel Rifani, department manager of Beneco's network services department, said the substations have a combined capacity of 168.75 MVA, enough to sustain the power requirements of the city and the province. He said that the peak demand of the EC's franchise area is 73 MV but there were times that this increased to 82 MV during the pre-pandemic period.

The assurance is two fold – our electric cooperative has enough power supply to address increases in power demand and that all systems are in place to address concerns for power supply for vaccination centers, quarantine facilities, and health and medical institutions.

Beneco cannot blink.



VIEW FROM THE BOARD

BY ATTY. ESTEBAN SOMNGI



Our EC must step up

The BOD knows too well that it must also do its share to help Beneco cope with the adverse impact of the pandemic.

As president of the board, I am proud to say that the directors have responded well to the roles they have to perform.

Please take note that our electricity sales drastically plummeted after the onset of the pandemic last year when almost all business establishments were forced to shut down and brought the economy on its knees.

In April, the management reported a 28.8% foregone sales or nearly 17 million kWh which is equivalent to a foregone revenue of not less than P20 million in just a span of 43 days or from MARCH 15, 2020 TO April 26, 2020 to be exact.

The drop in collection was aggravated by the inability of the consumers to go out and pay their bills due to travel restrictions brought about by the lockdown. Two of Beneco's major collection centers – one at the Maharlika Livelihood Center and the other at Porta Vaga – did not also open due to the lockdown.

But let me assure our consumers that we did exert our best to stem the tide. The EC quickly came up with a business continuity or sustainability plan that included the deployment of mobile collection teams to the various barangays for consumers to approach and make payments easy. A grace period was also extended to as much as a month while the disconnection of delinquent accounts was suspended.

Amid these struggles, I and the other directors of the board wish to assure our MCOs that there will be no increase in power rates despite the expected and long lasting impact of the pandemic. I assure our consumers that the Beneco board shall continue working hand in hand with the management and the entire workforce of the EC to pursue the ideals of the electrification program.

We shall not and cannot falter, even slightly, more so during these darkest hours. As always, you, our MCOs, deserve nothing but the finest and continued service that we

TO PAGE 8

UPRATE

BY CHRISTOPHERE GONZALES



Kuryente.Org and Energy Advocate Act

Curious of the soft virtual launching of an advocacy group called Kuryente.Org, I listened to its cause initially presented by its National Coordinator Nic Satur Jr who I guess is also a Baguio boy.

As I listened to him, I instinctively know where he was coming at: a dissatisfied consumer who just like most of us wants a better quality service.

While doing an online job, he said he experienced a 6 hour power cut last year due to a transformer in his barangay which "blew-up" because of a bamboo tree. And it happened again while he was doing a training.

"It did not happen once, twice, thrice but four times, for what reason? Same reason: bamboo trees, the first one because of mother nature," he said. Linking the incident and news headlines to the organization's advocacy and its role as a bridge between players and end-users.

At this point in time, I opened another tab on my desktop, searched for Kuryente.Org page while writing the next paragraph

on my article on "Anti-Obstruction of Power Lines Act" on one hand, and reading Satur's Opinion in the Advocates.

Then, I accidentally opened Kuryente.Org.Ph run by DOE whose statistics about BENECO was already outdated. Believing that it was their page, I commented on Kuryente.Org recorded launching, "Please update your data on rates, BENECO was one among the cheapest. And never in the history of MERALCO having cheaper rate."

My bad. Maybe, I guess, that is why, their spokesperson emphasized "Kuryente.Org only" due to the possibility of opening a different page due to almost the same name. (I hope they will go again to the drawing board and revise their name.)

But still I need a deeper thought on their advocates and present their cause as systematic as possible. So I waited.

First speaker was Senator Win Gatchalian. Topic: Energy Advocates Act.

In his opening statement, he said, "We

TO PAGE 8

THE BENECO
Journal

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THE RECLOSER

BY DELMAR CARIÑO



MCO empowerment

The passion for a strong consumer movement is just too overwhelming. With the need for electricity as the tie that binds, the horizon looks promising for member consumers of electric cooperatives, economically and politically speaking.

AERM makes sense. His repeated emphasis on consumer empowerment could be tiring at times but anyone who is an advocate for rural development can simply see through the backdrop that we have a set of stakeholders who can alter the course of history in the communities.

Not that we missed to acknowledge the sheer number of people who use electricity in the countryside. But admittedly, what we electric cooperatives failed to realize is the potent force in them to become a power bloc, from being mere consumers of electricity to becoming lobbyists and activists for the cause of the rural

electrification movement. In short, they can, indeed, become power brokers.

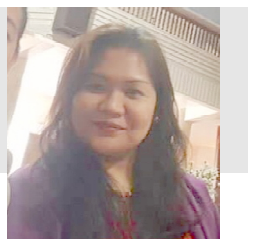
And the challenge for ECs is not to lag in this respect. Or else, we will lose by default. No thanks to the past leaders of NEA and PHILRECA. They were of the KPS types. I could be wrongly misjudging them. But I haven't heard them speak about rallying the MCOs to campaign for this and that advocacy. The determination then was to energize the country. Me too thought that was the end of all.

But what gives is the fact that all of us got blurred. We have been staring at our consumers for years and we simply got stuck being contented with providing them with electricity so that they can watch their favorite Koreanovela on the boob tube to their hearts' content. We failed to see the

TO PAGE 8

THE TELLERS' WINDOW

BY LAARNI ILAGAN



Coins matter

Have you ever had your head blown off just because of a centavo? Money thrown at your face? Gone thru a dressing down and publicly humiliated? Accused of stealing mere couple of centavos by a total neurotic stranger? Or got reported for inadvertently using the word "utang" for lack of a better word to translate the word "arrears" to its equivalent in the region's Ilocano lengua franca? How about being accused of being angry and disrespectful for speaking loud in an effort to overcome the acrylic plastic barrier and be understood better?

Despite and inspite explanations of it being an advance deposit included in the official receipt due to its unavailability

Most of the time tellers, like us in Beneco, are in a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation. And those situations I mentioned are just some of the Beneco tellers' horror stories — pitfalls that we try very hard to avoid to be able to serve our member consumer owners (MCOs) with a smile. As the saying goes "customers are always right."

Or are they really? I'll leave that to everyone's better judgment and common sense that sometimes is not so really common after all. Just like other employees in any organization, we go to work hopeful to accomplish our usual goals and have an uneventful day armed with loads of patience being the frontliners of our own electric cooperative (EC). Still, the customers deserve the utmost respect and we will not renege on that.

Funny, but amid all of these, the test comes in terms of the change we as tellers give or will not be able to give.

Let me walk you through. During peak collection, the lines are long and the patience of paying consumers are short. Here, the paying customer's expectation will play up to the kind of service the tellers would provide. For years, tellering has shown me the best and worst in humanity when faced with money matters. There are those who run off with glee when tellers give more change by mistake. They won't mind that the tellers pay any short in their daily collection whether they come in thousands pesos or matters of centavos. Then there are those who trick us — much like the "budol-budol" modus operandi where the payor distracts the teller while processing his or her payment with a lot of inquiries and

complaints. Then at the end of the transaction, they would say they have given their payment and the poor teller ended up even giving change when in fact no payment was given. Poor teller. It's another short she has to pay from her own wallet. CCTV cameras have caught various modus of unscrupulous individuals who were unaware of the cameras but the crime can only be established if the line of sight or angle of the camera was good.

On the other hand, these experiences have helped tellers correct their inadvertent mistakes because tellers are human too and we commit mistakes. And yes, we too get distracted and sometimes forget to hand over the proper change. Either the change that we gave was "sobra" or "kulang." The former can lead to a shortage while the latter can result to an overage. Sometimes, it's in the punching of the keys that could cause the error. For shortages, it is on us. Shortages are considered the lesser evil to face since we will only have to deal with a lesser take home pay to pay off the shortage. For overage, it could cause us fear since an irate consumer can come back anytime to reclaim or get his change.

Sometimes, there are instances when we lack coins to give as change. We do explain, however, that the change that was not given will be officially recorded and receipted as advance payment or deposit of the payor.

My faith in humanity as a teller is always renewed whenever I encounter consumers who take time to return money that I have given twice as change by mistake. Though rare, we the tellers deeply appreciate such breed of customers. Consumers who take time to say "thank you" and read and understand their bills are rare gems. Every now and then. I also saw total strangers who share their own coins. In one instance at the Maharlika Collection center, I witnessed a payor pay for an old lady's remaining amount when her payment fell short and she was visibly embarrassed. Faith in humanity restored. These little things make the day worthwhile. It also inspires tellers to soldier on and face our daily challenges especially in times of crisis brought by this pandemic. Knowing that our supervisors are listening and exerting effort to support us is even more inspiring to tellers.

Power On!

DIALOGUE

BY JEFFERD MONANG



Beneco union speaks up on the pandemic

How we wish we could be normal as before. This Covid-19 has affected all of us in terms of financial and mental health. Our economy went down, a lot of businesses closed and people went begging for help from government since they could no longer sustain themselves.

The BENECO Employees Labor Union, or BELU for short, is just one lucky organization of rank and file employees of the electric cooperative. Why? We were lucky since we were employed in an industry that is considered as essential. Had we been employed in a restaurant, boutique or massage parlor, we would have been long gone.

We mean not to diminish our brother employees who found themselves as the forced victims of a lockdown. We commiserate with them. It's just that being employed in the electric distribution business gave us much of a hope. This despite the

fact that aside from plummeting sales, our collection efficiency also went down and that our member consumer owners (MCO's) already found it difficult to pay their bills. The impact is felt more by our "lifeliners" or our consumers who use 50 kWh and below a month.

Indeed, work has become abnormal. Not all were able to receive their paychecks anymore. We were also worried that management would announce anytime a cut in our pay or a cut in our working days. But thanks to our OIC GM, he managed the ropes well and while we are scrambling for a sustained collection to be able to pay our own obligations as an EC, the giving of salary was never meant to be compromised.

Helping the company sustain its income and operation is really a big challenge to both management and rank and file. Yes, the BELU is conscious of its role to help ease

TO PAGE 8

APRICUS

BY AILENE ALAFAG



The pandemic's impact on HR development

The novel Corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly changed the way we do things in a variety of ways. For organizations striving to continuously pursue human resources development, the impact is most felt in the training methods for employees.

Traditionally, trainings for employees were conducted on a face-to-face basis. Training facilitators employ various techniques and strategies such as group dynamics and workshops to ensure that the objectives of the training are achieved. With the onset of the pandemic and the directive of the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) that prohibited face-to-face interactions and maintain social distancing, organizations had to adapt to the "new normal" in conducting their daily business operations. This "new normal" has brought to the fore the importance of technology, making access to training at the mercy of the technology to be used. What app must be used? What's the link and key to be used to be in the loop for the training? These are

just some of the challenges organizations must face. Of course, the bottom line is the reliability of internet connection. Intermittent connections and slow internet services are just a no no to these times.

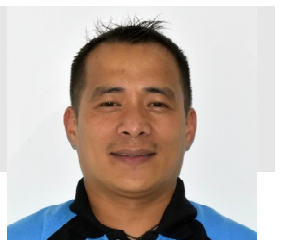
For the 1st quarter of 2020, employees of BENECO were still able to implement its in-house trainings based on its annual training plan. Pandemic or not, BENECO management recognized the value of continuously developing the competencies and skills of its most important asset, the human resource. When the pandemic hit, employees had to adjust and familiarize themselves in using various platforms used in webinars like zoom and Microsoft teams. Trainings resumed when the pandemic lingered the rest of the year but this time, it's practically new for most as these activities were dictated by lockdown measures caused by quarantine orders, be it GCQ, ECGQ, MGCQ or ECQ.

Thus, in the course of the pandemic, these webinars became the call for the day.

TO PAGE 8

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

BY CHRISTOPHER GEORGE TAIT



Electrical terms for consumers

We often encounter a lot of terms in electricity that we do not understand. Some of them are simplified as follows:

Transformer. A transformer is a motionless appliance used for transforming the voltage of electricity to get the desired voltage required for transmission or distribution of power. The voltage can either go up or down. For example from 23,000 volts to 220 volts or from 230 volts to 69,000 volts. The adjustments are made by the transformers.

Reclosers. They are a class of switchgear designed for use on overhead electricity distribution networks to detect and interrupt momentary faults such as lightning strike, surges or foreign objects coming into contact with the exposed distribution lines.

Insulator. Any material where an electric current does not flow freely. Insulating materials, such as glass, rubber, air, and many plastics, have relatively high resistance. Insulators protect equipment and

life from electric shock.

Switch. It is a tool for stopping or starting the flow of electricity.

Voltage. An electromotive force or "pressure" that causes electrons to flow. It can be compared to water pressure which causes water to flow in a pipe. This is measured in volts.

Fuse. A fuse is a tool that shuts off the power to an electrical circuit when too much electric current flows through it.

Conductor. Any material that allow electricity to flow through them easily. Conductive materials, such as metals, have a relatively low resistance. Copper and aluminum wires are the most common conductors.

Circuit Breaker. It is an automatically-operated electrical switch designed to protect an electrical circuit from damage caused by overload or short circuit.

Current. The flow of an electric charge through a conductor. An electric current can be compared to the flow of water in a

TO PAGE 8

Beneco joins PRRD Task Force Kapatid at ground zero

BY MARK ANTHONY AMISOLA

A 16 man team from the Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) shipped their gears and muscles to the First Catanduanes Electric Cooperative (FICELCO) in

Virac, Catanduanes from Nov. 5, 2020 to Jan. 23, 2021 as part of the Power Restoration Rapid Deployment (PRRD) Task Force Kapatid. The task force, initiated

by the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Assn. (PHILRECA), brought in 52 teams from various electric cooperatives (ECs) to help restore power in FICELCO, one of the ECs that were

heavily damaged by typhoons Ulysses and Rolly.

Engrs. Percival Aspilan and Mark Amisola led the Beneco team who shuffled for the construction and repair of backbone lines of FICELCO in Virac, Bato and Codon towns. The team played a big role in the rapid restoration of power in the province as they worked overtime to help the distressed EC.

To ensure compliance with health and safety protocols to hamper the transmission of Covid19, the team underwent a swab test for Covid19 and obtained the necessary documents before traveling. The team also took another swab test and was required to a mandatory 14-day quarantine before they were allowed to report back to work.

There were 294 linemen from 52 ECs that were deployed to ground zero. "The task was challenging. The people kept on cheering

us whenever we climb the poles to reconnect their electricity," said Aspilan during the monthly employee assembly in January at the Gen. Pedro Dumol Hall.

OIC GM Melchor Licoben lauded the industry and unconditional effort shown by the Beneco linemen who had to travel close to three days in going to and coming from Catanduanes to extend help.

"It is always an honor to help other ECs," the GM said.

Catanduanes praised the efforts shown by the Beneco team. A "Sertipiko ng Pasasalamat" was given by the province and signed by Rep. Hector Sanchez and Gov. Joseph "Boboy" Cua.

The Sangguniang Bayan of Virac town led by Vice Mayor Dr. Arlynn Arcilla passed Resolution No. 2020-11-345 "Expressing Heartfelt Gratitude to the Benguet Electric Cooperative (Beneco) for

Extending Assistance to the Municipality of Virac during its State of Calamity." The resolution bore the approving signature of Mayor Sinfros Sarmiento Jr.

FICELCO handed its own Certificate of Appreciation signed by GM Raul Zafe and Rodolfo Vargas, president of the board of directors.

A plaque bearing the words "Dios Mabalos!" glued to a round hard wood was also given to the Beneco team.

Aside from Aspilan and Amisola, the other team members were linemen Jimmy Bangonan, Joshua Bangonan, Christopher Bullan, Aries Carino, Leonard Dongla, Charlie Dumsang, Marlo Duy-ac, Casimer Manalo, Murphy Morca, James Oplas Jr., Larry Pacci, Monroe Kheven Tuazon, Limbert Walang and Charles Guitabao.



AT GROUND ZERO. Sixteen linemen brought with them three vehicles in Virac, Catanduanes to join the PRRD task force.

Licoben's vision...

FROM PAGE 1

emphasized to all 121 electric cooperatives in the country NEA's 7 point agenda: 1. Complete the national electrification program; 2. Intensify capacity building program for the electric cooperatives; 3. Prioritize the empowerment program for the electric consumers; 4. Carry out rural development program thru the rural electrification program; 5. Carry on the current corporate governance program of the NEA; 6. Strengthen networking and linkaging with the policy makers to ensure that legislative agenda beneficial to the NEA, EC and national consumers are given attention; and 7. Introduce the paradigm shift from central NEA to federal state electrification administration or carry out a transition period towards the creation of the national center of ECs to self govern the rural electrification movement.

NEA's targets emanated from its vision which says "a dynamic and responsive NEA that is a vanguard of sustainable rural development in partnership with globally-competitive Electric Cooperatives and empowered Electricity Consumers."

Beneco's vision, meanwhile, is "a world class and globally competitive Beneco that is self sufficient in renewable energy and provider of quality service to empowered member consumer owners."

But what exactly does Beneco care about? What is BENECO CARES?

(1) Capacity and Availability of Power Supply

BENECO's power supply contract with Team Energy Philippines will end by 2024. The cooperative needs to secure another agreement to ensure the availability of power supply after the end of its contract. This is a must since the EC will be at the mercy of the risk of totally being dependent on the open market. Right now, the EC has joined the R1-CAR-S1 power aggregation group which hopefully could secure a 70 MW deal for the EC.

An additional option for available power is the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM). But good practice would dictate that being totally dependent on the WESM is not conducive to power prices. More often, most of the power requirement of an EC is contracted and the uncontracted portion can be sourced from the trading market. Of course, the EC wants to ensure the availability of power supply through its renewable energy projects — the 3 MW Manasok Mini Hydro Power Plant, the 1 MW solar power facility in Tuba, Benguet and the Kabayan project in Kabayan, Benguet at 20 MW.

To ensure capacity, the EC has just inaugurated two new 10 MVA substations. Beneco now has seven substations that are strategically located in Baguio City and Benguet. In the city, there's the 20 MVA substation in Irisan and two 50 MVA substation in North Sanitary Camp. La Trinidad hosts the two 20 MVA substation in barangay Beckel while Atok has a 5 MVA substation. There's another 10 MVA substation in Sinipsip, Buguias and a smaller 3.75 MVA substation in Bulalacao, Mankayan.

The substations have a combined capacity of 168.75 MVA, enough to sustain the power requirements of the city and the province. The peak demand of the EC's franchise area is 73 MV but there were times that this increased to 82 MV during the pre-pandemic period.

(2) Affordability

The question is "can we sustain the cheap rate?" asked GM Licoben. There is no doubt that the EC ash the cheapest tariff among all ECs in the country today. Licoben wants the said affordability remain. Good that the EC had a power supply agreement with Team that was crafted in its favor. The generation cost of more than P3.00 per kWh is a mouth watering deal despite the fact that generation costs are affected by international market prices of fuel, coal, natural gas and the exchange rate of the peso vis-à-vis the dollar.

Beneco's contract with Team provides thresholds (lower or upper) in the computation of power purchased based on the coal market price. The thresholds define three scenarios

that dictates what particular price of coal per metric ton can be absorbed by Team and that which it would increase at Beneco' expense. Nonetheless, Beneco had a wonderful power supply agreement. Since the EC is now barred from renewing the bilateral pact due to the Competitive Selection Process imposed by ERC, the EC hopes to still land a deal that would echo the prices transacted with Team.

BENECO could stretch the price down further by including own renewable energy projects into its power mix. Though the pandemic now challenges every green power construction and delays/suspends planned work schedules, the electric cooperatives are not restrained from but actually are encouraged to look into other business models that will ensure lower rates and reliable supply.

The Man-asok Hydro project entertains the idea for the creation of a subsidiary company. And on the other hand, just like other cooperatives like Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (INEC), a joint venture with other renewable energy companies (like Zac Energy or AtDinum) could be added venues for price cuts

(3) Reliability of Distribution System

The EC hopes to cash in on a more reliable system to ensure quality service to its MCOs.

For one, BENECO will need to spend more in CAPEX projects. The proposed underground distribution system is ideal but the fiscal challenge is heavy. It would be an inter-agency task both private and public and the lead agency would be the DPWH. An underground utility highway for cables (communication and power) is needed and it requires design by urban planning experts. There were power dialogues held with the city on the matter but nothing came about. Hopefully, the project would be in the pipeline soon.

Now BENECO is concentrating on the installation of insulated 23 kV wires/tree wires. The cost of these wires are three times the cost of bare aluminum steel reinforced wires usually used in distribution system. The cable system will arrest the interruption problems brought about by trees, tree branches, vegetation and other things shorting power lines. Gladly, the passing of RA 11361 or Anti Obstruction of Power Lines Act will help in the removal of obstructions considered as threats to power cables. Electric cooperatives are now given the right to access properties, with the coordination of its owner, in clearing power lines right-of-way.

The smart grid technology in distribution system requires latest technology in communications, electrical equipment, including transformers, relay and switches. The N-1/N-2 design for substations and feeders is a power redundancy concept in electrical systems wherein we can get power supply from two sources. So that in case one will not work, the other can supply power continuously. In other systems, two or more power substations are designed to have a balanced or equal load so that when one power substation collapses or reaches its maximum safe capacity, the other will step-in and provide power. The EC is pinning its hope on its supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems that has proven to be dependable for many years.

(4) Efficiency of Distribution System

"We will continue the rehabilitation and upgrading of our distribution system aligned to our plan for a Smarter Grid," declared Licoben.

The plan is to maintain and maximize its information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. No distribution utility could fully plan and strategically implement an advance distribution management system (ADMS) and outage management system (OMS) without proper technology and highly equipped IT people.

The installation of advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) technology highly relies on technology. Simultaneously, Beneco would need an aggressive research and development in other support infrastructures like battery storage, transmitter, communication relays and fiber cabling systems.

"In the long run, Baguio City might become a Smart City, but are we ready?" he added. In such case, Beneco needs to provide enough power for charging stations for electric cars and connectivity.

Not to be ignored is the fact that Beneco for years was able to maintain a single digit system loss, an indication of the efficiency of its system. But still this might not be the most optimized level considering the hard-to-quantify character of system loss due to pilferage and other non-technical losses. Certainly, a single digit system loss remains a priority of the EC.

(5) Sustainability

"Now, how are we going to sustain these?" said Licoben. No one would argue about the reputation of Beneco as an A1 EC. But how cant this be maintained? The GM sees the possibilities.

First is green energy. This will be one of Beneco's top priorities. Self-reliance in power generation is a must to forge the success towards this endeavor. Much of Beneco's electricity supply is still dependent on fossil based power supply. But the Man-asok mini hydro will be a big step for the EC to gradually shift to renewable energy.

Second is security and protection. The distribution system must adjust to emerging technology including communication. The systems must be protected.

Third is continuous manpower competencies. The legwork in the distribution utility is still performed by its workforce not machines. If power lines must be upgraded, so must be human competencies. BENECO will heavily invest on personnel training and exposure that will provide learning and motivation.

Fourth is research and development. Logistical support equipment are needed from radio to boom trucks, motorcycles to 4x4 vehicles, infra red thermal scanner to hot sticks, wires to poles. All these need research. Each are considered essential for a distribution utility to function. And everyday, newly developed equipment are on the market that are highly resilient to weather conditions, can be controlled automatically and safer. Beneco need not buy them all but certainly, research will be able to determine what advancements will Beneco have to pursue.

Lastly is people empowerment. Not only does the the workforce need empowerment. The MCOs must be too. Both have a role to play. BENECO advocates for an educated, organized and empowered consumers. MCOs must know what is happening in the industry, the issues that confront the EC and the future of energy development. Even the simplest awareness of their basic rights and obligations would empower them. How much more if they could evaluate programs and present possible policies that would translate to better quality of service.

"BENECO CARES, this is our guiding principle," said Licoben



ENSURE RELIABILITY. Linemen continue to install tree wires from sitio Amgaleygey, Buguias to Sinipsip Substation as a mitigation measure to major storms and to assure the community for a reliable supply of power. (Dairic Pallogan)

Electrical Safety: How aware are we?

BY CHRISTOPHER GONZALES

On February 1, 2021, the death of Filipinos Ferdinand Tejada, 53, and his daughter, Janine Reyn Tejada, 20, went viral on newsfeeds. Both were electrocuted in their home in Panorama City, Los Angeles on January 25, a Monday.

The accident occurred when Ferdinand Tejada responded to a "loud pop" coming from their backyard. He went out to check the same but he accidentally got in contact with a live electrical wire. Her daughter went towards him in an attempt to rescue him but she too got caught by the live wire. Both died immediately from electrocution.

In 2019, there were five electrocution incidents reported in BENECO with seven electrocution victims. Among these seven, one died while the other six were hospitalized for medical treatment. Four of these incidents occurred in structures with on-going construction activities. And most were workers carrying some highly conductive materials like steel bars, purlins, steel pipes and aluminum panels that unknowingly got in contact with high voltage power lines. The remaining incident involved a water delivery service when the victim tossed a water hose that accidentally got in contact with a primary line.

In 2020, the five incidents of electrocution in 2019 rose to nine with seven recorded major power cuts due to the tripping of power fuses in sectionalizers with a total duration of 9.5 hours. Three of the victims died, two suffered physical deformities and the others were confined in hospitals for medical treatment.

Same reason. Five of the victims were involved in construction or renovation activities, two cases were due to tree trimming/pruning, one due to fruit-picking and the other, due to a grounded fence.

The incidence of highest fatality due to electrocution in 2019 in the US was recorded in the construction industry as per data of the US Bureau of Labor Statistics as published by Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI). And death due to electrocution appeared to be highest among the 25 to 34 age bracket.

"Thirty per cent (30%) of all electrical fatalities occurred at a private residence. Industrial places and premises accounted for another 30% of the fatalities. Public buildings accounted for 13%, street and highway accounted for 11%, farm for 6%," reported ESFI.

Electrical safety has been embedded in all information-education-campaigns (IEC) of the cooperative. Time and again, Beneco's radio broadcasts have put a prime on reminding member-consumer-owners about safety precautions. No pre-membership education seminar (PMES) for new applicants of service connection gets to be completed without emphasizing safety.

But still, incidents occur, some fatal, others non-fatal though in most cases, the victims suffer physical deformities especially those that got in contact with high voltage electrocutions.

This is avoidable. If only we put in mind: safety first. How should we do it?

Request for conductor cover if you are constructing structures near a high voltage line. Ensure that workers are using personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times. Identify electrical hazards in the construction site. And install temporary barriers like guard rails or fences to avoid accidental electrical contacts during hauling of highly conductive materials. Assign a safety officer to oversee activities and ensure that safety protocols are being met. See to it that power lines are installed with horizontal clearances from walls, unguarded windows and balconies in the building design.

Never ever prune trees or clear any vegetation near power lines without consulting the electric cooperative. Always request for assistance. Never attempt to remove tree branches in contact with power lines.

Always remember that air and wood sometime contains moist especially during cold and rainy weather. That makes them highly conductive to electricity due to water particles. Never pick any fruit, entangled kites or any object using wood or bamboo near a power line. Always remember that electricity is powerful that it can follow any object near to the ground.

Always assume that cut power lines are energized. Do not try to pick them up. Move away from the downed lines and call BENECO at once. This includes sagging power lines. Do not try to fix the line or move it to clear passage.

Do not immediately respond to electrical emergencies

TO PAGE 9

Man-asok mini hydro project nears completion

BY ARTEMIO BACOCO



Completed Structure : (L-R) Weir, dessander and powerhouse.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the three (3) megawatt (MW) mini hydro power plant of Beneco in Man-asok, Buguias may see its turbines running before the year ends.

As of December, 2020, the civil works of the project is now at 78.31% completed. The portions on the verge of completion are the weir, desander and the powerhouse.

The weir is the structure of the facility that traps the water and raise to desirable levels. The desander captures the silt of the water that flows from the weir while the powerhouse hosts the turbines that converts the water current into electricity.

The remaining 21.69% which is still on-going covers the construction of the steel headrace with a length of more or less 1.2 kms., the surgetank and penstock. The headrace is the conduit that conveys the water from the reservoir to the turbine. The surge tank is a water storage device that is used to control water pressure. The penstock, meanwhile, is the sluice or gate or intake structure that controls water flow. It is an enclosed pipe that delivers water from the forebay to the turbines.

Once the civil works are done, the installation of the electro mechanical system (EMS) and the grid interface substation follows.

Based on the project's catch up plan, the project's testing and commissioning

is expected to happen on the third quarter of 2021. This will depend, however, on the progress of the pandemic and the availability of the consultants from Austria whose company supplied the EMS components of the mini hydro facility.

The project started in 2016 following its award to PHESCO being the winning bidder/contractor. Beneco, however, decided to terminate the contract in 2017 on the ground that PHESCO committed serious breach of obligations as to the execution of works pursuant to the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Beneco took over the project in 2018 with the assistance of the ATDINUM Energy Inc. as a local consultant.

Beneco pursued the development and construction of the project in its bid to provide lower cost of electricity to its member consumer-owners. It also marked the electric cooperative's first stab in the production of renewable energy.

The project was also meant to promote the economic development of the host communities by way of providing them adequate power supply and employment opportunities.

The local government of Buguias will also be benefitted once BENECO complies to give the mandatory benefits required of power generators as stated in the law.

Even before the project took off, Beneco has already

committed part of its programs for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by donating ten (10) closed circuit television camaras (CCTVs) for the Philippine National Police (PNP) based in Buguias.

To augment efforts to ensure peace and order, the EC also installed five streetlight fixtures each for the five host barangays — Amgaleyguey, Baculungan Sur, Lengaoan, Poblacion and Sebang. The cost of the streetlights and fixtures will be charged to the benefits of the local government units which they are expected to receive in the future.

Pressed to provide more, Beneco also installed free internet connections to five schools in the municipality of Buguias to help the students in their studies.

As a gesture of good faith, the board of directors of the EC passed a resolution approving the request of the municipal government for the release of P 3.5 million as advanced payment of the town's benefits from the operation of the facility. The town requested for the money to purchase equipment to be used during calamities.

Local employment was also considered during the construction stage of the project. Beneco hired 45 locals to become part of its workforce. Beneco also involved the services of the lot owners to participate in the implementation of riprap projects under the "Batog mo, Kabite mo" work scheme. Under the agreement, those whose lots

will be affected by the project were contracted to haul boulders and riprap materials to be used in concreting the walls and sides of their lots.

Five elders also made it to the project's payroll to assist Beneco in the immediate settlement or resolution of right of way problems and other disputes that may arise between the EC and the residents.

Beneco vowed to complete the project pursuant to its calendar but there were delays along the way. Some parts of the project needed to undergo variations such as the rerouting of the headrace due to right of way concerns. Admittedly, the project also got stalled by the intervention of some groups, the unsettled negotiation with lot owners and natural calamities.

Of course, the major delay was brought about but the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted to a halt in the deployment manpower, equipment and materials.

Once operational, the power to be generated by the project will be connected to Beneco's distribution lines. This will result to an additional capacity of power that Beneco can make available to its consumer. It will also improve the reliability of the EC' distribution network in the northern part of the province.

The increased supply of electricity is expected to trigger the flow of investments in the area.

NEA targets 100% sitio energization

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) is targeting the 100 % electrification of all sitios across the country by 2022.

Speaking at the 5th Annual Philippines Power and Electricity Week held at Paranaque City on Wednesday, NEA Chief Edgardo Masongsong said that from 2011 to 2016, the agency has completed the energization of 32,441 target sitios.

Masongsong said 23,464 sitios in the country have yet to be energized through the Sitio Electrification Program (SEP), saying that the cost to electrify one sitio is more or less P1 million.

To enable NEA and its partner electric cooperatives to meet the target of energizing the remaining intended SEP beneficiaries, Masongsong said an estimated budget of P5 billion a year is needed.

The state agency aims to energize 2,410 sitios this year and 1,800 sitios in 2018. The funding allotted by the Department of Budget and Management for the SEP next year is only P1.8 billion, he said.

"We hope that by 2019 to 2022, we will be getting between P4.8-billion to P5.2-billion per annum so we will be able to energize all these sitios until 2022," Masongsong said.

"By 2022," according to the former party-list representative, "we hope that the last household will be served with electricity."

The NEA chief was invited to speak at the 5th Annual Philippines Power and Electricity Week on the current status of the Rural Electrification Program of the Philippine government.

During the conference, Masongsong also discussed the challenges faced by the agency and the 121 electric cooperatives in the implementation of the rural electrification program, foremost of which is the devastation in the wake of natural disasters.

Due to the pandemic, the construction of distribution lines for the 2019 SEP was suspended to adhere to the rules of the community quarantine. The fund to be used for the projects were also reverted back to the national treasury as

way of helping supplement the national budget under the We Heal As One Act. Of late, the NEA released the fund anew from its 2020 budget.

As a result, the electric cooperative was compelled to work double time to be able to energize the sitios. First in the process is the conduct of pre-construction meetings to inform the residents and encourage them to cooperate when the distribution lines will be installed in their areas. The meetings were designed to resolve issues on the following: Right of Way problem;;Line Clearing; Safety/Electrical Safety; Conduct of Pre-Membership Education Seminar (PMES) to identify potential consumers who are qualified for the free housewiring; and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) about BENECO operations.

The EC has finished site verification of 56 of the 82 sitios already. In the meantime, the EC is keeping track of sitios that are still to be energized. The list have been submitted to the Department of Energy for future funding under the government's Sitio Energization Program (SEP).

VIEW FROM THE BOARD ...

FROM PAGE 4

can deliver within our human capabilities.

Of course we should not forget our civic duty to also faithfully abide by all the government directives that our duly constituted authorities are duty bound to implement, all for the interest of public health and safety.

The management has not missed briefing the board regularly on the status of Beneco's operations, a move that I and the other directors appreciate as the policy making body of the EC.

Our business calendar in the board

consumes institutional, financial, technical and audit concerns. Digesting them takes a lot of process as we have learned that the business of electric distribution is indeed highly complicated. But we are trying our best to get through.

I call on our employees to keep up their diligence and team spirit in the pursuit of our ideals of rural electrification. I also encourage our consumers to have faith in the EC with a reminder that they must always ensure their safety.

Your board will always be here for you.

UPRATE...

FROM PAGE 4

need all hands on deck. You are absolutely correct, that everyone in this country, everyone in this planet, uses electricity. And when you use electricity, you need to pay for it. But more often than not, we do not know how the payment and the computation for what we are paying is being derived. And this is where consumer group should come together, not only to make noise. Making noise is actually the easy part but to study the industry, complex at that, is the most difficult part."

He is the chairman on Committee on Energy, authored and co-authored equity bills like the Murang Kuryente Act and Extension of Lifeline Rate Act (hearing still on-going).

Gatchalian wants to create an independent consumer-based watchdog group that will ensure consumer protection and enhance the competition in the power industry.

He wants to push for the enactment of "Energy Advocate Act" that seeks to create the Energy Advocate Office (EAO), which will represent consumers in all rate-setting, rule-making, and other energy related cases and proceedings before government agencies, including judicial and quasi-judicial bodies, formerly Senate Bill No. 2222 now Senate Bill No. 173 for the 18th Congress.

"The state must recognize the right of

energy consumers to reasonable rates, adequate and reliable services, and transparent processes involving these rates and services," the senator said. "Towards this end, there is a need for institutionalized and independent consumer representation in energy-related cases and proceedings before government agencies."

The EAO will represent consumers in energy sector in matters affecting the public interest before any department, commission, agency, or court. This will be headed by the Energy Consumers Advocate (ECA).

As stated in the proposed bill, it prohibits the ECA and Deputy ECA from serving as members of the board or as officers, employees, or consultants of any energy company, and from having any interest, ownership, or stake in any energy company during their term of office to ensure their independence. They are also enjoined from being members of a political party or committee and from engaging in partisan political activity

If passed the EAO will join the bandwagon in consumer people empowerment with all the existing power partylists group – Philippine Rural Electric Consumers Association (PHILRECA), Ako Padayon, RECOBODA, APEC - and the long list of consumers group and advocates, including Kuryente.Org.

Too many minds.

APRICUS...

FROM PAGE 5

Out of the twenty-six trainings (in-house and off-plant) attended by employees for 2020, 20 were conducted on line. The trainings ranged from enhancing supervisory skills and safety protocols to technical conventions and ISO audit.

While there may be disadvantages of these virtual trainings and meet-ups, there are also some advantages. Foremost is the cost incurred for trainings. Virtual trainings cost way much less than face-to-face trainings in terms of registration fees. Also, it saves time for the participants because they need not travel to attend the training. Lastly, other participants may join as viewers to webinars without necessarily registering as participant provided that the training venue for the participant will be set up properly to accommodate several participants.

How much longer will virtual trainings last? It will be here to stay until the

pandemic goes away. But will face to face trainings resume assuming that all are already vaccinated? That still remains as a question.

But one thing stands for sure. The pandemic forced us to embrace on line and virtual trainings. We were constrained to adopt to technology whether you are a newly recruited employee or a veteran about to retire in a few year's time.

All organizations, BENECO not excluded, must adopt to such reality. Or else we will be left behind. Beneco's training calendar was severely affected by the pandemic. But it still managed to hold the following via "on line."

Although we look forward to attending trainings face-to-face again in the future, virtual trainings and virtual meet-ups are here to stay. We have no choice but to adapt in order to survive.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING...

FROM PAGE 5

pipe. It is measured in amperes

Generator. A device which converts mechanical energy into electrical energy.

Kilowatt-hour (kWh). The product of power in kW and time in hours. For example, if a 100W light bulb is used for 4 hours, 0.4kWhs of energy will be used (100W x 4h / 1000 Watts x 4 hours). Electrical energy is sold in units of kWh.

Open Circuit. An electrical circuit in which the continuity is broken so that current does not flow. It is similar to a closed valve in a water system.

Short Circuit. When one part of an electric circuit comes in contact with

another part of the same circuit and diverts the flow of current from its desired path.

Blackout. A complete interruption of power in a given service area.

Brownout. A partial and temporary reduction in system voltage or total system capacity.

Electrocution. Death caused by electrical current.

Lightning Arrestor. A device used to protect an electrical component from over-voltage.

Load. An electrical device that uses electric power. Example TV, refrigerator, etc.

RECLOSER...

FROM PAGE 5

flipside – that they are political animals who can be tapped to advance the cause of their ranks.

For AERM, the equation is simple. Educate, organize and mobilize the MCOs. Use electricity to lift them from poverty and let them be engaged in meaningful livelihood. Even the acronym MCO drew life under AERM's helm at the NEA. The letter "O" meant owners. The member consumers own the EC and thus they can say and do a lot about their EC.

Here's what AERM said in one of his keynote speeches in an AGMA; "I am here to advance the cause of MCO empowerment because I believe that an EC's life expectancy is dependent on its ability to keep itself relevant to its primary and most important stakeholder—the member-consumer-owners."

Very well said.

The task at hand is that the ECs must take full grip with the rationale why our consumers were officially rechristened as member consumer owners or MCOs. Their hold of electric power, literally that is, matches the power that can be harnessed from them or that they can exercise, politically that is.

Let's admit barefaced. Consumerism in the power industry is no longer just using electricity and paying the bills when they come due. That's passe. And all of us must perform our part to seduce from oblivion the power that lies with them.

Policies of the energy sector could go astray. Resolutions of state regulators could screw the rights of consumers. Sometimes, we get skewed with regulations that that

DIALOGUE...

FROM PAGE 5

the adverse effect of the pandemic.

The BELU helped collect from consumers by being present in rolling collection centers the EC deiced to erect in strategic sites in the city and La Trinidad, Benguet to allow consumers to come and pay instead of going to the ECs' collection centers. With the pandemic easing up a bit, the meter readers begun to go on field to read the meters, all equipped with PPEs to ensure safety.

The BELU members also did an act of charity despite the pandemic. The willingly contributed to a collection fund initiated by the Health and Safety Officer to provide help to the EC's contractual employees who suddenly found their contracts pre-terminated since the projects they were assigned to do have to cease and desist from proceeding.

Our tellers also braved queues of consumers in their posts to receive payments at the risk of face to face encounters.

Indeed, are proud to say that the BELU had its own version of "frontliners." Of course, we will not discount the 24/7 duties of the linemen that although they were advised to stay put in the headquarters at the height of the ECQ, they had no choice but to put on their gears and proceed on site once a complaint for power interruption, sagging lines and tilting electric poles were received.

These tasks are indeed risky. The possibility of anyone of us contacting the deadly virus is very high given the fact that the "enemy" cannot be seen and whose attack cannot be calculated.

Until now, we know that going out everyday to work is very risky for us and our families but working is better than

would make us hapless and we have no option but to comply. The docility of our consumers will not favor us. Their ignorance could perpetuate the hold of oligarchs in the power industry. And unless we unleash what it means to be an MCO, we will forever remain as simply users of electricity and nothing more.

That's why we should all be sensitive of our environment. The creation of a movement for electricity consumers is providing the right direction. The victory of securing four seats in Congress is a signal that our MCOs indeed have a voice. The guys that are de Jesus, Dagooc, Guya and Ebcas, baptized as the "power bloc boys" of Congress, were not an accident. It's the power of the millions of electricity consumers who elected them into office. The message is that the MCOs are here and they deserve more in terms of responsive policies, consumer sensitive regulation and energy directions geared towards inclusive growth.

Suddenly, the electricity movement is making noise in Congress. The ECs took Congress by storm, delivering privilege speeches one after the other and sharing valuable inputs in several committees confronted with power issues. The ECs and MCOs have become relevant after all.

This is where a successful Member Consumer Owner Program for Empowerment (MCOPE) can help a lot. This is where the member consumer owners (MCO) would find the true meaning of their organization from the grassroots.

Mind you, it's a big task that lies ahead. We might as well join the bandwagon or take the risk of history passing us by.

nothing. Today, the job continues to roll. Our COMREL members are now going on field to meet the MCOs, visit communities for pre-construction meetings or gather people for pre-membership seminars.

Our linemen, meanwhile, has resume their regular chores to check and restore power. They also continue to provide light to mountainous areas, sacrificing their families for months just to complete the energization of unenergized sitios.

Yet the fear is there.

The risk of exposure lingers as a thief of the night. We recall our friend Lawrence who succumbed to death due to the virus. Lawrence was our BELU president and what an untimely death caused by a deadly enemy.

It's a matter of doing our work normally at the risk of contacting the virus. We still laugh, exchange jokes, buy our goods and gifts, eat outside under permissible conditions and go to mass on Sundays if we like.

Our only ammunition aside from our face masks and face shields are strong willed prayers. We ask for divine intervention as our shield against this virus which they said emanated from bats being traded in Wuhan, China.

Now, we are fed with news about a new variant of the virus that is more fatal than Covid 19. This all the more forces us to be apprehensive.

Yet life must go on.

For as long as there is BENECO to allow us to survive, we take the opportunity to the hilt.

Indeed we are still lucky. But such state will always hang in the balance.

Let's keep our fingers crossed.

EC now...

FROM PAGE 1

tantamount to conversion, explained Martin Manodon, senior cooperative development specialist and information officer-designate of the CDA in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CDA-CAR). "There are still concerns to be accomplished by Beneco and hopefully it can finish them within six months from the date of the issuance of the certificate of registration," he said.

Beneco is currently working on the final provisions of its articles of cooperation and by laws pursuant to the Cooperative Development Act (Republic Act 9520) to be submitted to the EC's general assembly for approval.

The process of conversion requires the EC to declare an authorized capital stock (ACS), subscribed capital stock (SCS) which must be at least 25% of the ACS and paid up capital (PUC) which must also be 25% of the SCS.

Crucial to the effort towards conversion is the treatment of the past contributions of member consumers to the EC's payments for loans to fund the EC's capital expenditure. The item in the bill identifies the collection as RFSC or Reinvestment Fund for Capital Expenditure.

Then known as Members Capital Contribution (MCC), the RFSC is now pegged at P.2178 per kilowatt hour (kWh).

The technical working group (TWG) for the CDA conversion has sustained the general assembly's decision to value at P100 per share the equity or members' contribution. The committee proposed that the each member consumer must subscribe to a minimum of five shares of

P500.00.

The conversion of the RFSC as share contribution, however, has caused a deadlock in the conversion efforts of the EC following its CDA registration.

The EC has already written the Energy Regulatory Commission to ask if each members' RFSC payments can be declared as part of the consumers' share contribution.

The CDA believes that the RFSC must be treated as share contribution but Edna Espos, a utility economics expert, has already told the EC last year that the RFSC cannot be converted as share contribution.

Espos conducted last year a seminar for Beneco officers on how to shift from a cash flow rate methodology to a return on rate based tariff methodology which the EC earlier intimated to pursue once it is registered with the CDA.

The legality of treating the RFSC as part of every consumers' share contribution came to the fore after the EC was able to secure a copy of the ERC's reply to a letter of the Guimaras Electric Cooperative (GUIMELCO) stating that the RFSC cannot be converted as members' share contribution.

Under ERC Resolution No. 14, series of 2011, CDA registered ECs are mandated to convert the RFSC as members' share capital.

Beneco's letter query to ERC, dated Dec. 1, 2020, bluntly asked the following questions: (1) Can BENECO convert the RFSC payments into equity or as share contribution of the member consumers? (2) Should this be possible, can BENECO start the determination of

the equity of member consumers from 2001 and onwards since it was in 2001 when the unbundled provision of the EPIRA became effective?

Signed by lawyer Esteban Somngi, BOD president, the letter was addressed to lawyer Agnes VST Devanadera, ERC chairperson. She has yet to reply as of this writing.

The CDA technical working group has been divided into several subcommittees to iron kinks in the proposed articles of cooperation and bylaws with that of the provisions of the CDA law.

The subcommittees – membership, capitalization, documentary requirements, mandatory committees and finance – are expected to complete their recommendations the first quarter of 2021.

The EC earlier engaged the services of a separate CDA committee that worked on the initial draft of the articles of cooperation and by laws which the Board of Directors used as benchmark in the drafting of the official articles of cooperation and by laws to be submitted to the CDA.

The TWG was composed of Manodon, Rafael Gayaso (chief executive officer of the Northern Luzon Federation of Cooperatives and Development Center/NORLU CEDEC), lawyer Renat Fernandez of the Baguio Benguet Community Credit Cooperative (BCCCCI), Dr. Peter Cosalan, Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) of the Sangguniang Bayan of Tublay, Benguet, Emerita Fuerte of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reform (NASECORE) and lawyer Franco Bawang Jr., CDA-CAR regional director.



POWER RESTORATION. Linemen carefully navigates their way among vegetations carrying a distribution transformer needed for restoring power at Country Club Village, Baguio City. Beneco incurred about P12 million total cost of damages during the onslaught of Typhoons Ulysses, Ambo and Pepito last year. (CTTO)

Power...

FROM PAGE 3

increased towards the second semester of last year," he added.

During the first quarter of 2020, the total billed amount of P718 million was higher by P31 million compared to P687 million in the same quarter in 2019. But this shockingly fell by P175 million by the second quarter of 2020. The amount billed for the first quarter in 2020 was about P781 million, up from P606

million in 2019. The results were not that favorable in 2020.

A silver lining occurred somehow, Pallogan said. By the end of the first semester last year, the local economy started to move. Gradually, sales started to climb, inching towards recovery. But still, compared to 2019, the billed amount for 2020 still fell short by P89 million for third quarter which went further down by P61

million for the last quarter, he said.

"We hope for the better this year of 2021. With the rolling out of vaccines in some countries and hoping it will be here soon, the economy and tourism industry could probably open up. And with the help of our member-consumer-owners especially by promptly paying their monthly bills, I think we will slowly rise up," said Pallogan.

Electrical...

FROM PAGE 7

especially when you heard a "pop" or saw an electrical fire. Without proper training as a first responder in electrical emergencies, you must never ever attempt to rescue someone being electrocuted. You might end your life as well. Wait for proper authorities and trained professionals to do the rescuing. Maybe, if free from danger, you can switch off the main breaker if far from the person being electrocuted. Wait till the linemen turn off the power supply.

Inside the house, always familiarize yourself with the

circuit breakers so that you will know what breaker to switch off in case of emergency. Check the labels per circuit breaker and ask an electrician to label it if there is none. Always ensure that the frontage of the main control panel should be free from obstacles for easy access. Teach or inform others where the circuit breaker is and what to switch-off during emergency. You do not know when knowledge will become handy.

Stop adding load by using power strips (also known as extension).

Octopus wiring is considered dangerous and there is always a risk of overloading a circuit. If additional plug or circuit is needed, ask the services of a professional electrician.

Install child protect electrical plugs: plugs that are designed with covers. If the ones installed are open plugs, buy individual electrical plug covers. These would prevent children to insert things like forks, pins, spoons or their fingers inside the uncovered electrical plug.

Be aware. These are simple tips but it could save lives.

Sinipsip...

FROM PAGE 3

disposing the old transformer, we rehabilitated and repaired it and subsequently commissioned to augment the supply for southern Benguet and parts of northern Benguet," Licoben said.

The Lamut transformer will power barangays Beckel to Shilan, all in La Trinidad, and from Beckel towards Loacan, Itogon and parts of Bokod and Kabayan.

Mayor Romeo Salda, La Trinidad mayor, in his

message thanked the management of Beneco in behalf of the officialdom of the municipality for continuing to ensure the steady supply of electricity specially to La Trinidad.

Salda said: "We also look forward to the continuous partnership of La Trinidad and Beneco in all aspects to serve better our constituents."

At present, Beneco's total substation capacity is 168.75 MVA with a peak load of 78 MVA, meaning

there is enough capacity to address additional load demand in the future.

Present during the switch of the Lamut substation were the members of BENECO's board of directors, management and some residents of barangay Beckel headed by Gregorio Antonio, barangay chairman. Rev. Fr. Francisco Gaeyla of the CICM of the St Padre Pio Parish in Beckel officiated the blessing ceremony.

Two...

FROM PAGE 3

(PCA), in case of coconut trees, the concerned local government units (LGUs) and other relevant agencies.

The electric cooperative or party doing the trimming must, however, give notice to the said agencies.

Network Services Department manager Ramel Rifani said, "The law is good for us because we will eventually could cut and trim trees that threatens the power line corridor in our distribution system without the long wait in securing permits and clearances from certain agencies. But it could have bad impact in terms of

additional load for us because it is possible that DENR will pass all trimming of trees requests to us."

Those found liable for violating the law shall be punished as follows: First offense – the penalty of arresto mayor or a fine of fifty thousand pesos (P50,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court; Second offense – the penalty of prision correccional or a fine of one hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00), or both at the discretion of the court; and, Third offense – the penalty of prision mayor or both at the discretion of the court.

Arresto mayor is imprisonment from one day to 6 months; prision correccional is from 6 months and one day to 6 years and prision mayor is from 6 years and one day to 12 years.

"If there is to be any energy-related lesson to be learned from the many typhoons that have struck our country it is that keeping power line corridors clear and free from any obstruction or potential debris will minimize the risk of power lines getting damaged during natural calamities," Senator Win Gatchalian, who authored the law, said.

EC...

FROM PAGE 1

them were formerly general managers of ECs and one, an incumbent board president, these guys have gone along way filing their bills and delivering their privilege speeches that earned them and the sector they represented the respect worth the salt of a dedicated legislator.

Dagoc relinquished his post as the GM of Siargao Island Electric Cooperative and Dinagat Island Electric Cooperative, Ebcas gave up as GM of Camiguin Electric Cooperative (CAMELCO), and Guya left as GM of Davao del Sur Electric Cooperative (DASURECO) to take on the more daunting task as partylist representatives.

De Jesus, the president of the Board of Directors of the Isabela Electric

Cooperative I (ISELCO I), retained his position but has not faltered in matching the vigor of his three friends in the movement.

And they did not disappoint.

De Jesus saw to it that the little known ECs, despite being non-stock and non-profit, were able to allocate a sum of P405,570,801 for the ECs' Pantawid Liwanag program that subsidized the bill payments of an estimated 3,367,847 electricity consumers in the country.

Dagoc bravely called the attention of the NGCP of the sudden spike in the billings for ancillary services charges during the pandemic. He also vocally sought for consideration of energy stakeholders to relax certain provisions in their bilateral contracts with distribution utilities in order to address the needs of the consumers.

Not to be outdone, Ebcas urged power suppliers to heed the call for the lifting off or adjustment of some provisions in their Power Supply Agreements (PSAs) with distribution utilities to curb the surge in electricity rate.

The solon strongly reiterated the ECs' appeal for the suspension of minimum energy offtake (MEOT) and the capacity fee to ease the burden of the ECs during the pandemic.

Guya, meanwhile, took to task the seeming ignorance over the efforts of the ECs' own version of frontliners to ensure the availability of electricity during the pandemic. He said that amid the lockdown, the ECs' linemen, known as "Warriors of Light," were still dispatched to man their posts to avoid any power interruption that could compromise the health of those confined in quarantine facilities, health and

medical centers or to see it that the power supply of centers for disaster preparedness are on 24/7.

These are just a few of the noise the four EC guys made.

How about bills they filed? Well, they still didn't sleep over.

There's this measure they filed to convert the National Electrification Administration (NEA) into an authority to make the government agency more responsive and autonomous in attending to the needs of ECs.

Recently, they had it docketed "Three-Gives Law" that seeks to provide a moratorium on all residential electric, water, internet, cable and telephone bills when a state of calamity is declared by the president of the country.

The measure calls for an installment scheme on all amounts which fell due

during the moratorium period in order to promote social justice and ensure the economic security of the people.

Still another is also a bill proposing the creation of a Mindanao Power Corp. to address the peculiar concerns of the power industry in the area. There's also the bill to formulate a Magna Carta for the workers in the energy sector.

All of them also sought amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).

The "power bloc" wants its message delivered – that ECs are still the government's major foot soldiers in the energization of the countryside and that as part of the energy sector, the ECs must be included in all government plans and programs that involve responses to the ongoing crisis.

Now, the numbers are coming.

De Jesus is now the chairman of the House Committee on Cooperative Development. Dagoc is now the assistant minority leader. Guya became a member of the franchise committee and Ebcas remained as the vice chairperson of three huse committees – public works and highways, MSME and cooperative development.

The ascent of Guya, Ebcas, De Jesus and Dagoc to Congress marked a milestone in the movement to unite and empower all electricity consumers in the country. After all, the number of more than 14 million consumers of electricity in the country is no joke.

Ask Edgardo Masongsong, NEA administrator, and lawyer Janeene Colingan, executive director and general manager of PHILRECA. For sure, they could not agree more.



NEA welcomes funding boost for rural electrification program in 2021

Published: 06 January 2021

State-run National Electrification Administration (NEA) welcomed the increase in funding for the implementation of the government's rural electrification program for this year.

Under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2021, the NEA was allocated PhP2.498 billion for the rural electrification program. This amount is PhP670 million higher than the PhP1.828 billion recommended under the 2021 National Expenditure Program (NEP).

"We are pleased to receive this additional allocation of P670 million to support the government's rural electrification program, especially the emergency funds for the electric cooperatives (ECs) during calamities," NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong said.

The PhP2.498 billion is broken down as follows: PhP1.628 billion for the sitio electrification projects (SEP); PhP750 million for the Electric Cooperatives

Emergency and Resiliency Fund (ECERF); PhP100 million for the installation of solar panels in schools in Lipa City, Batangas; and PhP20 million for the installation of solar panels in public schools.

In the implementation of SEP, a special provision in the GAA states that the NEA shall "prioritize sitios where absolute number of indigents and the incidence of poverty are high as identified in the latest official poverty statistics of PSA as well as those with the high probability of being energized."

The NEA shall also release funds only to ECs which have fully liquidated funds from previous years' electrification projects. In cases where the ECs are not qualified to implement projects for barangay and sitio electrification, the NEA "may enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the latter through its district engineering offices will implement the project."

The release of SEP fund shall also be subject to the

following: submission of National Unified Electrification Strategy as certified by the Department of Energy (DOE); submission of parameters for the selection of beneficiary sitios as certified by the DOE; and submission of a certification from the Barangay chairperson on the population and number of houses per sitio, map of the municipality or city indicating the sitios and barangays to be energized, and cost of energizing a sitio.

Under the 2021 NEP, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) recommended PhP1.828 billion subsidy for the implementation of the rural electrification program, with PhP1.628 billion for SEP and PhP200 million for ECERF pursuant to Republic Act No. 11039, also known as the ECERF Act.

The ECERF Law, enacted in June 2018, seeks an orderly and continuing means of financial assistance to ECs in the form of grants for the immediate restoration or rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure after a fortuitous event or force majeure. ###

received these loans were Cagayan II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CAGELCO II), Camarines Sur I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CASURECO I), Camarines Sur III Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CASURECO III), Davao del Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (DANEKO), Masbate Electric Cooperative, Inc. (MASELCO), Misamis Oriental I Rural Electric Service Cooperative, Inc. (MORESCO I), Occidental Mindoro Electric Cooperative, Inc. (OMECO), Sorsogon I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SORECO I), Sulu Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SULECO), Surigao del Sur I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SURSECO I), Ticao Island Electric Cooperative, Inc. (TISELCO), and Quezon I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (QUEZELCO I).

Meanwhile, the NEA extended P128.080 million in calamity loans to 13 ECs. The ECs that availed of the calamity loans were

CASURECO III, MASELCO, OMECO, SORECO I, SORECO II, TISELCO, Iloilo III Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ILECO III), Lubang Electric Cooperative, Inc. (LUBELCO), Marinduque Electric Cooperative, Inc. (MARELCO), Northern Samar Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NORSAMELCO), Oriental Mindoro Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ORMECO), Tablas Island Electric Cooperative, Inc. (TIELCO), and First Catanduanes Electric Cooperative, Inc. (FICELCO).

Of the total calamity loans released by the NEA to ECs, P25 million went to FICELCO for the repair and rehabilitation of its damaged power distribution facilities due to the onslaught of recent typhoons Quinta and Rolly.

The calamity loan, which bears an interest rate of 3.25 percent per annum, has a 10-year repayment term and one-year grace period. ###

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE



NEA enjoins ECs to implement 'no disconnection' for lifeline consumers

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) has enjoined all electric cooperatives (ECs) in the country to implement a "no disconnection" policy for low-income households or lifeline consumers amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In a memorandum dated February 10, NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong advised the 121 ECs to fully observe the directives issued by the Department of Energy (DOE) regarding the extension of "no disconnection" policy for lifeline consumers.

The DOE issued an Advisory on February 5, 2021 directing all distribution utilities, including ECs, to "implement a no disconnection policy due to non-payment of bills falling due by March 2021 for all electricity consumers whose consumption level are within the lifeline rate set by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) for the DU's franchise area."

This will apply to all unpaid regular bills and installment payments relative to various advisories of the DOE and the ERC. In addition, all power consumers who are still unable to pay their bills may coordinate with their DUs to enter into socially equitable and manageable payment terms to prevent eventual disconnection of electricity services.

The NEA chief also enjoined the electric co-ops to post the DOE Advisory on their respective websites and consumer welfare help desks for the information of their member-consumer-owners.



KEEPING THE ALLIANCE STRONG IN PURSUIT OF RURAL ELECTRIFICATION



FIND US ONLINE FOR MORE INFORMATION
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NEA loans to power coops reach P400 million in 2020

Published: 09 January 2021

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) disbursed P440-million worth of loans, including calamity loans, to 20 electric cooperatives (ECs) last year.

Data from the NEA Accounts Management and Guarantee Department (AMGD) showed that the total loans extended to ECs from January to December 2020 reached P439.983 million.

Bulk of which, or P311.903 million, went to 12 ECs to help fund their capital expenditure (CapEx) projects and working capital requirements.

The P311.903 million translates into 127-percent accomplishment rate of the agency. The NEA set a 2020 target of P245 million for lending to ECs for their electrification projects.

Among the ECs that

NEA electricity connections hit 14 million mark

Published: 10 December 2020

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) and the electric cooperatives (ECs) have crossed yet another milestone in the rural electrification program despite the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The NEA, in partnership with the 121 non-profit power distribution utilities across the country, passed the 14 million mark in consumer connections after electrifying over 150,000 new consumers in the third quarter of the current year.

Latest data from the NEA Information and

Communication Services Department (ITCSD) showed the overall consumer connections now have reached 14,008,603 within the coverage areas of the ECs.

About 6.574 million or 46.93 percent of the overall connections are located in Luzon; 3.747 million or 26.75 percent are found in the Visayas; and 3.688 million or 26.32 percent are in Mindanao.

"This is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and commitment of the agency and the 121 ECs nationwide to provide electricity to the remaining households in remote and rural areas despite the coronavirus restrictions,"

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong said.

For the third quarter alone, the NEA ITCSD data showed the ECs delivered 156,075 additional consumer connections, bringing the number of new connections to 365,856 or 80 percent of the 460,000 corporate target for 2020.

The number was higher compared to the 75,346 new connections recorded in the second quarter and 134,435 consumers in the first quarter of the current year.

The NEA ITCSD data also showed that the number of unserved consumers in rural areas is now down to 1.686 million based on the 2015 census. ###

ECS reminded to ensure timely conduct of CSP

Published: 23 February 2021

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) has reminded all electric cooperatives (ECs) to ensure timely conduct of the competitive selection process (CSP) in procuring their power supply requirement.

NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong recently issued a memorandum reminding the 121 ECs nationwide of their compliance to NEA Memorandum No. 2019-035 dated June 27, 2019.

Masongsong cited in particular Item No. 6 in the memorandum, which states that "ECs with expiring Power Supply Agreements (PSAs) in three (3) to five (5) years can start the conduct of CSP on power supply procurement to ensure the continuous and sufficient power supply."

Under the CSP, the electric co-ops must conduct a bidding in the procurement of Power Supply Agreements for the captive market to ensure transparency and fair competition and full public

accountability.

The timely conduct of CSP in procuring power supply is currently being proposed before the NEA Board of Administrators to be included in the overall performance assessment of ECs nationwide.

An attached agency of the Department of Energy (DOE), the NEA has the supervisory powers over 121 ECs as mandated under R.A. 10531, otherwise known as the "National Electrification Administration Reform Act of 2013." ###

News stories lifted from NEA website

8-929-1909 | www.nea.gov.ph | Diliman, Quezon City PH

WE ARE NEA

Committed to the ideals of Rural Electrification

A PHILIPPINE STATE-OWNED CORPORATION ATTACHED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

7-POINT ELECTRIFICATION AGENDA

- 1 COMPLETE THE RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAM
- 2 INTENSIFY EC CAPACITY BUILDING
- 3 EMPOWER ELECTRIC CONSUMERS
- 4 ENCOURAGE RURAL DEVELOPMENT
- 5 ENHANCE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
- 6 ENSURE COGNIZANCE OF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
- 7 PREPARE FOR FEDERALISM



One ECMCO Movement

19 JANUARY 2021
HOUSE APPROVES
POWER BLOC'S LIFELINE
SUBSIDY AND MICROGRID
BILLS

Isang malaking tagumpay ang nakamit ng Power Bloc matapos aprubahan ngayon sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa sa Kongreso ang dalawang panukalang batas na naglalayong paunlarin ang antas ng pagpapailaw sa kanayunan. Kabilang dito ang HB 8145 o An Act Extending the Implementation of the Lifeline Rate at HB 8203 o An Act Promoting the Use of Microgrid Systems to Accelerate the Total Electrification of Unserved and Underserved Areas Nationwide.

Ang HB 8145 ay panukalang-batas na isinumite ng mga representante mula sa Power Bloc upang mapalawig pa ang implementasyon ng Lifeline Rate. Ang Lifeline Rate ay isang subsidiyang ibinibigay sa mga marginalized o low income consumers na nahihirapan o walang kakayahang magbayad ng kuryente sa buong presyo nito.

Unang tinawag na HB 7059, isinumite ito noong Hulyo 2020 upang tumugon sa nalalapit na pagkapaso ng bisa ng Lifeline Rate Subsidy sa taong 2021. Matapos ang mga committee at plenary deliberation, ito ay inamyendahan ng mga mambabatas sa Kongreso at tinawag na HB8145. Ang pangunahing layunin ng panukalang ito ay ang pagpapalawig ng implementasyon ng lifeline rate subsidy ng karagdagang sampung taon o hanggang sa taong 2031.

Sa pamamagitan ng panukalang na ito, inaasahan na makakatulong ang lifeline rate sa ating mga

kababayan nangangailangan ng interbensyon ng gobyerno upang matustusan ang araw-araw na bayarin.

Ang HB 8203 naman ay nagtataguyod ng pagkakaroon ng Microgrid Systems sa mga lugar na hindi lubusang naaabot ng linya ng kuryente. Ang Microgrid System ay ang pagsasama-sama ng iba't ibang pinagkukunan ng kuryente at magkakabit na 'loads' sa isang grupo na tumatakbo bilang isang yunit na namamahala sa distribution at subtransmission sa mga lugar na nangangailangan ng kuryente. Maaari itong kumunekta at kumalag sa main grid upang mapaandar ng nakakabit o sa sariling enerhiya.

Katuwang ng Power Bloc sa adhikaing ito ang mga rural electric cooperatives, lalung-lalo na ang mga nasa Small Power Utilities Group (SPUG) Areas upang ipaglaban ang kanilang karapatan sa pagkamit ng maaasahang suplay ng kuryente.

Kasalukuyang tinatalakay pa rin sa Kamara ang mga panukalang-batas na nauna nang isinumite ng Power Bloc. Patuloy na magsusulong ang mga Kinatawan mula sa Philreca Partylist, Apec Partylist, Recoboda Partylist, at Ako Padayon Pilipino Partylist ng mga makabuluhang panukala tungo sa pagkamit ng total rural electrification. Kabilang ito sa iba't ibang mga hakbang na ginagawa nila upang masuportahan at makatulong sa mga konsumanteng patuloy na naghihirap sa gitna ng pandemya. Sinisuguro ng mga representante na walang kababayan ang mapagiiwanan hanggang tayo ay sabay-sabay na makaahon muli. ### (lifted from one ec movement)

POWER BLOC LAUDED FOR INCREASE IN NEA 2021 BUDGET

The National Electrification Administration (NEA) is allocated with P2.948 billion in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2021.

The increase in the agency's budget is a victory to the whole rural electrification sector as NEA is the implementing arm of the rural electrification program of the government.

From the 2.948 billion budget, 1.628 billion is allocated to the Sitio Electrification Program (SEP), 750 million is for the Electric Cooperatives Emergency and Resiliency Fund (ECERF), and the 120 million is intended for the installation of solar panels in public schools.

As the voice of the 121 electric cooperatives (ECs) and 14 million member-consumer-owners (MCOs), PHILRECA, APEC, RECOBODA, and Ako Padayon Pilipino Party-lists Representatives strongly voiced the importance of having access to electricity and the need for sufficient fund for electrification.



Aprubado na ang panukalang batas na House Bill 8203 o ang "An Act Promoting the Use of Microgrid Systems for the Total Electrification of Unserved and Underserved Areas" sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa sa Kamara.

Ang batas na ito ay isinulat at isinumite ng mga kinatawan ng Power Bloc na binubuo ng PHILRECA Party-List, APEC Party-List, RECOBODA Party-List at Ako Padayon Pilipino Party-List.

Itinataguyod ng panukalang-batas na ito ang pagkakaroon ng microgrid systems sa mga lugar na hindi naaabot o kulang ang nakakaabot na kuryente sa mga konsumante. Ang Microgrid System ay ang pagsasama-sama ng iba't ibang pinagkukunan ng kuryente at magkakabit na 'loads' sa isang grupo na tumatakbo bilang isang yunit na namamahala sa distribution at subtransmission sa mga lugar na



The unwavering support of the Power Bloc in Congress has been instrumental to this achievement. During the budget deliberations, the Power Bloc constantly pushed for the restoration of NEA's 2021 budget. Under the 2021 National Expenditure Program (NEP), only PhP1. 828 billion was recommended to NEA for the rural electrification program.

The Power Bloc stands by NEA as it endeavors to energize an additional 3,915 sitios and enhance the grid connections of 74 barangays in 2021.



POWER BLOC'S MICROGRID BILL APRUBADO NA SA KAMARA

nangangailangan ng kuryente. Maaari itong kumunekta at kumalag sa main grid upang mapaandar ng nakakabit o sa sariling enerhiya.

Ang mga kinatawan ng Power Bloc ay isinulong itong panukalang-batas upang mapailawan ang mga lugar na hindi pa naabot ng mga linya ng kuryente at pagtibayin ang koneksyon ng mga lugar na hindi pirmihang may kuryente.

Bukod pa dito, masusuportahan ang pag-unlad ng mga kanayunan sa kasalukuyang kalakalan ng modernisasyon. Makakatulong ito sa ating mga kababayan upang masiguro na walang mapagiiwanan nang dahil lang sa lugar na kanilang tinitirhan.



Power Bloc: Gamitin ang EC compounds sa pagroll-out ng bakuna

February 10, 2021
Assistant Minority Leader made his privilege speech regarding Power Bloc's call for electric cooperatives to cooperate with the government's wide vaccine roll-out plan.

The Power Bloc is the four Congressmen carrying the advocacy of 121 electric cooperatives to light up rural communities. Among them are PHILRECA Representative Presley De Jesus, Ako Padayon Filipino Representative Adriano Ebcas, RECOBODA Representative Godofredo Guya and APEC Representative Sergio Dagoo.

In his speech, AML Dagoo said the suggestion that the compounds of electric cooperatives can be used as vaccination sites, to reach even those living in the remote parts of our country that are lit by our cooperatives.

While our government is preparing for the vaccine, electric cooperatives are ready to help roll out COVID-19

vaccines by offering to use large spaces in their compound as gymnasium or multi-purpose hall as vaccination sites for safe and fast roll-out of vaccines," according to him.

In addition to AML Dagoo, electric cooperatives are ready to contact Local Government Units (LGUs) to assist their vaccination plan. Because of the 121 electric cooperatives represented by Power Bloc in every corner of the Philippines, he believes that vaccination will be greatly eased for our countrymen if there will be alternative or additional vaccination sites.

"We know that there are still communities that are far from hospitals or government centers; and there are barangay health centers that don't have enough space. If electric cooperatives deserve to be part of the solution and offer their compounds for fast, bulk and in accordance with proper physical distancing vaccination," he added.

As a representative of

millions of Filipino electricity consumers in the countryside, Power Bloc is pleased to share the initiative of electric cooperatives to be an active partner of the government in rolling out the vaccine against COVID-19.

It will be remembered that only from the beginning of the community quarantine last year, electric cooperatives conducted a 'Pantawid Light Program' where they helped more than three million Filipinos with their electricity bills in response to the pain caused by the pandemic.

Together with 121 electric cooperatives, the representatives of Power Bloc wish to be part of the revival of our nation from this pandemic. Lawmakers believe that with our voluntary cooperation we can achieve a brighter tomorrow.

Resiliency of rural electrification Officially launched today, 28 January 2021, The sixth issue of DAGITAB,

the official newspaper of One EC-MCO Movement. This issue features the stability of rural lighting advocacy despite the pandemic and disasters. This issue covers the initiatives and aspirations of One EC-MCO Movement for the development of citizen's lives.

Centerfold narrates the successful programs launched in collaboration with One EC-MCO Movement, PHILRECA, and Power Bloc, including (1) liveliness programs for cooperatives, (2) DOLE TUPAD, (3) Power Restoration Rapid Deployment Task Force, (4) Sitio Electrification Program, and (5) Pantawid Light Program through DSWD Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS).

The issue contains the power Bloc's more strengthened forces from the achieved counterparts positions of Congressional Representatives. Some of these are the election of PHILRECA Party-List

Representative Presley De Jesus as Chairman of Cooperatives Development (CoopDev) Committee, APEC Party-List Representative Sergio Dagoo as Assistant Minority Leader, and RECOBODA Party-list Representative Godofredo Guya as Committee member on Legislative Franchises.

The 14 pages of DAGITAB 6 also includes articles about various programs implemented by cooperatives in their respective areas to help their member-consumer-owners develop and mitigate the impact of the crisis today. Some of these programs are ANECO's Corporate Social Initiatives-Livelihood (CSI-LP); NEECO's 2 2 KapeNECO 2 2 II-Area 2 spreading timely information that can help MCOs; ZAMECO's 2 2 Report DAGITAB 2 2 ; and Successful response of ILECO II Lighting Soldiers to those who were victims of Typhoon Quinta and Rolly.

The sixth edition of DAGITAB featured a new

section titled 2 2 A Day in Their Lives 2 2 (pages 12 and 13). Power Bloc Representatives personally expressed their thoughts in relation to public service in the midst of the pandemic . They describe what each one is doing to fulfill their role of representing the lighting sector in rural, inside and outside the Congress.

The one EC-MCO Movement's rural solidarity was included in the total issue of DAGITAB 6 Each Fire Soldier symbolizes the stability, courage, and purpose of rural lighting advocacy.

Together with Power Bloc Representatives in Congress, leaders and employees who make up 121 electric cooperatives nationwide, and over 121 million electricity consumers, we work together to face each challenge. The dedication, service, and compassion that each brings will be the key to a brighter open for every home.### (lifted from DAGITAB)



Message of Solidarity

Isang mainit na pagsalubong sa buwan ng Marso para sa lahat.

Magiisang taon na mula noong inilagay ang Pilipinas sa ilalim ng mga community quarantine upang labanan ang COVID-19. Maraming buhay at kabuhayan ang nawala dahil sa mga pasakit na dala ng pandemya. Dito nasubukan ang **malasakit ng bawat Pilipino** sa bawat isa.

Sa kabila ng mga panganib patuloy pa rin ang naging serbisyo ng ating mga Warriors of Light para pailawan ang tahanan ng ating mga Member-Consumer-Owners. Inilunsad din natin ang Pantawid Liwanag Program upang kahit papaano ay mapagaan ang kalagayang pinansyal ng ating mga lifeline consumers. At parati ring nakaabang ang ating Task Force PRRD upang sumaklolo sa mga lugar na nasalanta ng mga kalamidad.

Ang nakaraang taon ay naging patunay ng pagkakaisa ng ating mga kooperatiba. At **sa ating pagkakaisa, malalampasan natin ang anumang sakuna.**

Maraming salamat sa inyong pakikiisa at dedikasyon sa ating sinumpaang tungkulin. Isang masaganang buwan ng Marso sa ating lahat.

Hon. Presley C. De Jesus
Representative, PHILRECA Party-List



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One EC-MCO Movement



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WOMEN'S MONTH

MARCH



Atty. Janeene Depay-Colingan
Executive Director/General Manager, PHILRECA

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

MARCH

First, let me express my utmost appreciation to all Warriors of Light of the rural electrification movement for braving the first two months of this year. As we end the first quarter of the year, I can only hope that we will continue to work together in attaining the goals of our advocacy. Let us continue to take pride as we light paths, homes, and the future!

In the month of February, PHILRECA attended various meetings with the national government agencies, as well as House and Senate committee hearings to ensure that the voice of the electric cooperatives is maintained and that the concerns of our MCOs are well represented in matters relevant to our sector. As your umbrella organization, PHILRECA will continue to represent the rural electrification sector with the goal to deliver impacts that are beneficial for our MCOs and electric cooperatives.

As we close the first quarter of 2021 this month, we continuously ask for your support as our challenges also grow in number. Let us take said challenges as opportunities for growth, improvement, and better realizations of the goals of the movement and our goals as Warriors of Light. *Manatili po sana tayong nagkakaisa sa hangarin nating makamit ang mga layunin natin.*

Lastly, I would like to thank the National Electrification Administration, under the leadership of Administrator Edgardo Rama Masongsong, for giving the assistance to PHILRECA in being the voice of the rural electrification movement. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the General Managers for the support given to PHILRECA in the past events and webinars that we conducted last month. I am also taking this opportunity to remind all EC Allied Organizations and all electric cooperative employees to be more active in consultations and other request for comments—these are our way of creating a more inclusive and more cohesive positions in matters that affecting or could affect our sector.

Muli, hinahangad ko pong mas makita natin ang rason kung bakit tayo nandito. Hangad ko po ang patuloy na kaligtasan ng lahat habang patuloy natin hinaharap ang mga pagsubok na kasama sa ating tungkulin.

United We Stand, We Stand United!



RESILIENCY OF ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Tila isang madilim na panaginip ang dumaan noong sinagupa natin ang sunod-sunod na unos na dala ng taong 2020. Mula sa pagsabog ng Bulkang Taal, pagpasok ng pandemyang COVID-19, pagyanig ng mga lindol, hanggang sa pagsalanta ng mga bagyo. Waring nagpapaligsahan ang bawat isang sakuna kung alin ba ang may pinakamalaking epekto sa ating bansa.

Maraming buhay at kabuhayan ang nawala. Maraming luha ang itanngis at galit ang isinigaw. Ngunit hindi natatapos ang buhay. **Mayroon laging mga maliwan at magpapatuloy. Kaya tuloy pa rin ang liwanag.**

Sa nakaraang taon, hindi huminto ang mga electric cooperatives sa paghahatid ng serbisyo sa abot ng kanilang makakaya at higit pa. Hindi sila tumigil sa pagpapailaw lamang, kundi bukas palad silang tumulong sa lahat ng mga nangangailangan.

Ilan sa mga programang inilunsad ng mga electric cooperative, sa koordinasyon ng PHILRECA, Inc., One Network Foundation, Power Bloc at ng Once EC Network Foundation, ang Pantawid Liwanag upang magbigay ng subsidiya sa mga bayarin sa kuryente. Ang programang ito ay naipaabot sa mahigit tatlong milyong konsumers sa buong bansa sa unang bahagi at patuloy pa ring nakakatulong hanggang sa kasalukuyang ikatlong bahagi.

LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS
Bilang tulong upang magkaroon ng pangkabuhayan ang mga MCOs, naglunsad ang ilang mga ECS gaya ng ASELCO ng 10-day Dressmaking Training bilang livelihood program sa pakikipagtulungan sa National Center of Electric Cooperative Consumers (NCEC-CO), Inc., ASSAI and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

DOLE - TUPAD
Ang DOLE-TUPAD Program ay isang cash assistance program na idinaan sa mga ECS bilang tulong ng gobyerno sa mga mamamayang naapektuhan ang mga hanapbuhay noong nagkaroon ng mga quarantine dahil sa COVID-19. Kasama dito ang mga disinfecting at sanitation projects kung saan ang mga kalahok ay nabibigyan ng sahod para sa tulong na kanilang ibinabahagi.

POWER RESTORATION RAPID DEPLOYMENT (PRRD) TASK FORCE
Noong sumalanta ang mga bagyong Quinta, Rolly at Ulysses, agad-agarang rumesponda ang PRRD Taskforce upang mabalik ang kuryente sa mga naapektuhang lugar.

SITIO ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAM (SEP)
Bagamat karamihan sa atin ay palagi nang nakaasa sa mga electronic devices, marami pa rin tayong mga kababayan sa kanayunan ang hindi pa

nakakaranas ng kaluwagan ng pagkakaroon ng kuryente. Ipinabaabot ng SEP ang kuryente sa mga liblib na lugar sa ating bansa.

PANTAWID LIWANAG PROGRAMS 1, 2 AND 3
Bilang sagot sa hiling na suporta ng mga MCOs dahil sa kawalan ng kabuhayan buhat ng COVID-19, inilunsad ng mga electric cooperatives, kasama ng PHILRECA, Inc., Power Bloc at ng Once EC Network Foundation, ang Pantawid Liwanag upang magbigay ng subsidiya sa mga bayarin sa kuryente. Ang programang ito ay naipaabot sa mahigit tatlong milyong konsumers sa buong bansa sa unang bahagi at patuloy pa ring nakakatulong hanggang sa kasalukuyang ikatlong bahagi.



DSWD ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS IN CRISIS SITUATION (DSWD-AICS)
Ang Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation ng DSWD ay nakapagbigay ng transportation assistance, medical assistance, burial assistance, educational assistance, food assistance, at cash assistance para sa mga MCOs.

Lumubog na ang araw sa taong 2020 at hanggang ngayon ay nakakakita pa rin tayo ng LIWANAG. Malaki ang naging tulong ng kahandaan ng mga electric cooperatives sa pagtugon sa mga sakuna upang makapagpatuloy pa rin ang buhay ng bawat isa.

Malaki ang utang na loob ng samahyanang Pilipino sa tulong na inibot ng mga ECS. Kaya naman hiling namin ang dagdag na pagpapala para sa bawat isang bumubuo sa ating mga kooperatiba. Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat sa patuloy niyong pagbibigay ng serbisyo para sa ating mamamayan.

BAGUIO CITY LA TRINIDAD SABLAN TUBA ITOGON BOKOD KABAYAN
TUBLAY KAPANGAN KIBUNGAN ATOK BAKUN MANKAYAN BUGUIAS