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\$37.92B ODA over 20 years failed to promote welfare--UP prof

By Veronica Uy

MANILA, Philippines -- The \$37.92-billion in foreign aid to the Philippines over the last 20 years has “largely failed in its mission” to promote the welfare of Filipinos, a University of the Philippines (UP) professor said Tuesday.

In his “Citizens' Report on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in the Philippines,” Dr. Eduardo Climaco Tadem of UP’s Asian Center said that from 1986 to 2000, ODA on projects related to human development comprised only 11 percent of the total assistance to the country. He said this has further gone down to 7 percent from 2001 to 2006.

Tadem, who will present his report at Wednesday’s tomorrow's Philippine Development Forum between the government and donor agencies, said infrastructure projects took in 50 percent of the ODA from 1986 to 2000 and 67 percent from 2001 to 2006.

Geographically, he said, foreign aid tends to be poured into the more developed areas of the country instead of the less developed areas. He said that in 2002, Luzon got 31 percent of the ODAs, Visayas 10 percent, and Mindanao 7 percent.

On the other hand, Senator Francis “Chiz” Escudero said Congress may soon be able to provide a check and balance on the issue of ODA.

He said that for the first time since the country started receiving foreign aid, the Congressional Oversight Committee on ODA will get an appropriation of P5 million from the national budget this year.

In the same forum, he said that the Senate was able to insert a provision so that the body can start performing.

Escudero, who as chair of the Senate ways and means committee co-chairs the bicameral body, said that even without the appropriation, he has already written all government agencies for contracts, agreements,

analyses, and other documents pertaining to ODA.

However, he said that as of Monday, he has not received a single response from any government agency, “not even a courtesy letter” indicating that they have received his request.

The committee, he said, would helpfully provide the third check and balance for ODA outside of the National Economic and Development Authority and the Commission on Audit.

“From the time that I became congressman in 1998, the oversight committee has not functioned. It had no money, no secretariat, no rules, no budget, no data-gathering. .We are starting to formulate the rules so that by May, we would be able to subpoena people for their testimony and their documents,” he said.