

Description

Location (accessibility, multiplier effects on neighboring regions), population, size, reputation in the country

The OPAL area is situated in the western portion of Pangasinan, which is the largest province in the Philippines. OPAL has a combined land area of 251,694.57 hectares covering one (1) city, six (6) municipalities and 150 Barangays. The OPAL represents 48 percent of the total land area of Western Pangasinan. It is located 170 kilometers north of Manila and 57 kilometers south of Baguio City. It is bounded in the west by the South China Sea and Lingayen Gulf.

The OPAL area has rich agricultural land and vast pasture areas representing about 70 percent of the combined land area. Given its resource base, agriculture remains the main source of economic activity particularly the production of rice, vegetables, livestock and fisheries. The agriculture lands are generally rainfed areas and only around 30 percent of farm lands are irrigated. Despite the agricultural resource base, the OPAL area is a net importer of food products, vegetable and livestock from neighboring urban centers and provinces.

Political/Legal Position in the Respective Political Structure (name of local chief executive, term in office, next election period, decision-making structures)

Being an alliance of LGUs, OPAL is composed of 7 co-equal local chief executives. The OPAL member LGUs have been working together on common development programs since 1995. The OPAL was formally organized as an economic alliance in February 13, 2009 through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the seven (7) LGUs in the Western Pangasinan. The MOA binds together the LGUs to pool resources, combine capacities, complement comparative advantages and share lessons and experiences in sustainable economic development. The MOA created the OPAL Development Council which is headed by the City Mayor of Alaminos, as the lead convenor. The MOA also established the Technical Working Group, which is composed of the City/Municipal Planning and Development Coordinators of OPAL to serve as the technical arm of the OPAL Council.

As a result of the 2010 national elections, 5 out of the 7 local chief executives who initiated the OPAL MOA are re-elected. 2 of them have been replaced by new mayors, who are equally interested and supportive of the Alliance. The next local election is in 2013.



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Human and Financial Resources (number of civil servants working in the public administration, overall annual financial budget, etc).

The Sanggunian Panglungsod (Alaminos City) and the Sanggunian Bayan (of the 6 OPAL municipalities) have issued their respective Council Resolutions expressing commitment and support to the development plans and programs of OPAL and pledged fund support as counterpart contribution.

The OPAL strategic development plan was prepared through an inter LGU cooperation led by the OPAL Lead Convenor. The preparation of the comprehensive development plans of the respective LGU members were undertaken in consultation with the multi-sector representatives to the local development councils. Local level planning processes were conducted involving the participation of the representatives from the national government agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Specific political, social, cultural and economic character/framework

There are around 4,351 business establishments within the OPAL area. These establishments can be classified as either agriculture or aquaculture related industries, commercial and retail establishment, resorts and tourism related amenities. Among the bigger industries are the stone crushing plant in Mabini and the 1200 MW coal-fired Sual power plant. A developing industry in the area is small scale mining and quarrying activities in Sual and Mabini.

Two major infrastructure projects are scheduled to be undertaken within the OPAL area within the next 2 years. These include the Alaminos City Airport and the Sual International Seaport. These major infrastructure projects are expected to improve the attractiveness of the area in terms of investment inflow considering OPAL's strategic geographic location. The OPAL area falls within the North Luzon Growth Quadrangle which is anchored on the development of air and seaports, expressway, and special economic zone. It is also strategically located across the East Asia Growth Corridor – Hong Kong, China and Taiwan.



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