

ENCASH Network Services, the country's first Independent ATM Deployer (IAD), and MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center, a Mindanao-wide federation of cooperatives, hold the distinction of being the first MegaLink non-bank members. As affiliate network members, they are rapidly extending MegaLink ATM convenience to previously unreached markets.

Both institutions help MegaLink fulfill its aim of bringing banking to where people need it most. Whether its distance, lack of infrastructure or costs that hinder the deployment of ATMs, MegaLink is rising to the challenge.

Initial services available are standards such as balance inquiries, withdrawals, cash advance and fast cash. Bills payment and the standard MegaLink POS service, which will allow an ATM cardholder to pay through MegaLink POS terminals in certain establishments, will soon be made available to those new members.

Among rural banks, ENCASH's connection with MegaLink meant more than just distinction. Their local banking publics embraced the services, and partner rural bank operations have significantly improved. With an initial network of 6 ATMs, ENCASH started operations on the 16th of December 2007. Reflecting its wide acceptance in the market, the fast-growing network ended April 2008 with an installed base of 61 ATMs, all using the PLDT Shops Work UnPlugged (SWUP) wireless data communication service. Within the next quarter, ENCASH expects to receive the balance of their first 100 ATMs from suppliers.

Bank of Florida, a charter member of the Pampanga Federation of Rural Banks, and listed as one of the top rural banks in the country, has felt the warm acceptance of clients of their first ATM. In terms of resources among rural banks, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation has listed Bank of Florida second in Pampanga, fourth in the region and 20th in the country.

Bank of Florida client Robin A. De Leon of San Jose, Floridablanca, endured the hassles of commuting just to gain access to his bank account. "Now it's more accessible and comfortable. I can instantly withdraw cash from the ATM," De Leon said.

Leny C. Beltran of Paguiruan, Floridablanca complained of the same traffic and sometimes, lack of transportation just to get to an ATM. "But now I save time, and I know the ATM location is safe," she said.

GM Bank in Nueva Ecija, on the other hand, is a consolidation of Community Rural Bank Inc. (CRBI) and the Muñoz Rural Bank Inc. (MRBI). GM Bank has gained the largest share in Nueva Ecija covering 80% of the market, and is poised to become one of the largest rural banks of Central Luzon.

"It has increased our market share, attracting more clients with the additional global service we provide through the ATM. Our clients have increased in number. Having an

ATM has proven our capability to provide banking needs and financial services to our clients in the rural and remote areas. It also provided us with the technological advantage and some prestige,” said Ramon D. De Ocampo, Senior Vice-President of GM Bank, Inc.

Their first ATM in Rizal, Nueva Ecija was placed in the public market. In March this year, GM Bank was awarded a plaque of appreciation from the Rizal LGU for their initiative. The plaque carried the appreciation of its townspeople, and local government officers and employees for contributing to improving their lives. The mayor, vice-mayor and all councilors also issued a memorandum expressing gratitude for GM Bank’s initiative of installing the town’s first ATM.



Joan Salazar, a 26-year old housewife from Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija is grateful for the change. “I go to Cabanatuan City for my ATM transactions, which is located 45 kms from my residence more or less. Because of the distance, it causes a lot of inconvenience and disruption in my everyday activities. Nakakapagod at magastos talaga,” she recalls.

With the new ATM conveniently accessible, Salazar said, “It’s more dependable in case of emergency, and even at nighttime. At the same time I save a lot of money and time. It’s within reach and I don’t have to go to Cabanatuan City.”

Bank client Maricel Dizon lauds the convenience afforded of having a nearby ATM within the community as well. “My bank was far from our place, and it was not safe to travel with cash,” she said. “Now we can easily withdraw our money anytime, and we don’t

have to go to the nearby town especially in case of emergency. I feel more secure.”

Among MASS-SPECC members, Oro Integrated Cooperative (OIC) in Cagayan de Oro City, Sta. Catalina MPC with ATM in Antipas, North Cotabato, Paglaum MPC and Sta. Ana MPC are among the first to have established ATM services.

Established in 1966, OIC was the first community type coop in Cagayan de Oro City. From the P88 savings of its 24 founding members, OIC has become sustainable over the years. By yearend 2007, it recorded total assets at P334 million from 26,688 members serviced in 11 branches across Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental. Its Pinoy Coop ATM has stood in service of ATM cardholders like Josefina Clarin, a 68-year old pensioner, and Darryl Macas, 26 of Kauswagan, Cagayan de Oro.

“The Pinoy Coop ATM card is already my second ATM card,” said Clarin. She collects her pension from her account in another bank, but uses the Pinoy Coop ATM card for her savings fund. “I can withdraw anytime I need money for medicines and other personal needs. I’m glad it is now connected to Megalink, so I can have wider access to my funds wherever I am.”

Macas, meantime, is excited over the many benefits of his sole Pinoy Coop ATM card. “It’s very easy and convenient for me to withdraw anytime I want to from the Pinoy Coop ATM, especially now that it’s connected Megalink. I’ll now be able to transact from any Megalink ATM in the country,” he said.

Paglaum MPC on the other hand, owns the first and so far the only ATM in Plaridel, Misamis Occidental. Plaridel lies several kilometers from the capital of Oroquieta City, where the nearest ATMs are found.

“I am so happy that Paglaum MPC now has an ATM,” said Agustina Bugahod of Looc Proper, Plaridel. “This is very helpful now that I don’t have to travel to Oroquieta just to withdraw money sent by a relative through my account. Oroquieta is far from here. It will cost me P60.00 fare, going back and forth.”

Claudia Albarracin of Divisoria, Plaridel feels the same way about having an ATM nearby. “Now I don’t have to ask my nephew to transact for me. If there is an emergency, I can easily make transactions because the ATM is near,” she said.

With the positive feedback received from existing and new cardholders, MegaLink hopes to continue to expand its network by bringing in new members and partners. Through this endeavor, MegaLink hopes to share the convenience of electronic banking through out the country whether cities or countryside.

Source: [Megalink News](#)