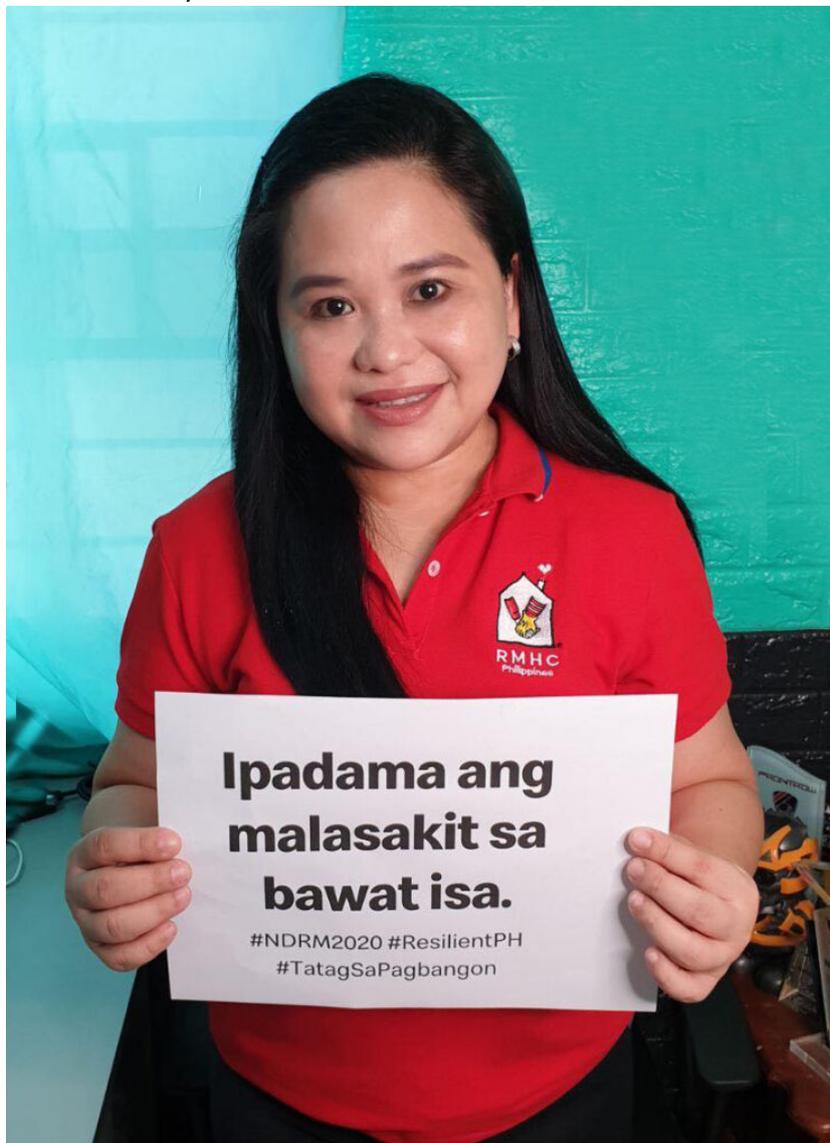


## **Bayanihan toward resilience: Filipino frontliners and entrepreneurs supporting communities amid pandemic**

**AUGUST 12, 2020** – Amid the ongoing community quarantine in the Philippines due to COVID-19 and its prolonged impacts on the country’s economy and healthcare system, on individual lives, and on communities, the *bayanihan* spirit of Filipinos shines through, with all sectors and walks of life working together to bounce back and bring assistance to those most affected by the pandemic. What does resilience in the “new normal” look like in the eyes of humanitarians, frontliners, and enterprise owners? What role does recovery play in the resilience of the country? Here are some of the insights and experiences shared by our partners from different regions across the country. Marie Angeles, the Executive Director of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Philippines, has been working with humanitarian and charitable organizations for many years now. Through their Kindness Kitchen Program, they have provided meals to frontliners, medical practitioners, volunteers, and communities affected by COVID-19.



*Marie Angeles of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Philippines holding a placard that reads “Ipadama and malasakit sa bawat isa” (Translation: Show concern for everyone)*

The pandemic has greatly affected Angeles' physical and mental health. But with the support of her team and her family, she managed to find time to keep her health in check. It was unfortunate that their programs and fieldwork had to be put on hold due to COVID-19, but this did not stop them from fulfilling their mission: "It even fueled our desire to be of service to the community," Angeles says. For her, disasters bring out the *malasakit* or genuine concern in people. "As we have seen on the news, everyone is pooling their resources to help others out. From private entities to even students creating their own fundraising campaigns, we all want to help the country bounce back from what the pandemic has brought us." In the eyes of a humanitarian, there is no such thing as "new normal," says Angeles. "No matter what kind of disaster hits the community, it is in our core to be of service to those in need. What changes is how the operations work. But the value you put into your work remains the same or becomes even greater." — Marcos Mejia, Vice Chairman of the Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council in Barangay Bagumbayan in Quezon City, believes that recovering from losses and going back to where they were before the pandemic is no longer possible. The residents have been receiving so much help from the national and local government since the community quarantine started but they need more assistance to be able to really get back on their feet and start anew.



*Kagawad Marcos Mejia of Brgy. Bagumbayan, Quezon City advocates for establishing health standards to bounce forward to the "new normal"*

"I think yung term na bawi, hindi na ganoon dahil marami ang naapektuhan nitong pandemya lalo na yung mga low-income na mga tindera, construction workers, at BPO workers. Naka-survive sila sa four months with the help of the local and national

government — yung mga grocery packs at financial assistance. Malaking tulong, pero kung titingnan natin, short pa rin ang ating mga ka-barangay para makabawi sa kanilang kabuhayan.” For Mejia, establishing health standards and conducting a nationwide mass testing are essential to adapting to the “new normal.” He starts with his family by practicing handwashing, regular house sanitation, and other personal safety measures to minimize the risk of getting infected. “Sa tingin ko, safety lang ang pwedeng makatulong sa pagbangon ng mga tao sa ‘new normal’. Nae-educate naman sila through media and barangay tungkol sa wearing of facemask, pag-sanitize, at paghuhugas ng kamay.” — For entrepreneurs, resilience means aligning their business model to the current situation and coming up with new strategies to keep their business afloat despite the pandemic. As mobility and physical transactions are limited, many businesses have shifted to selling their products online. Allan Orais, a proprietor of a growing peanut butter processing business in Tacloban, had to close his business due to COVID-19. His operations stopped for almost two months. “If only I had enough capital to prepare beforehand,” he says, realizing the importance of preparedness in continuing operations despite mishaps.



*Allan Orais holding a placard that reads “Always be prepared, adapt online strategies, and saturate the local market.”*

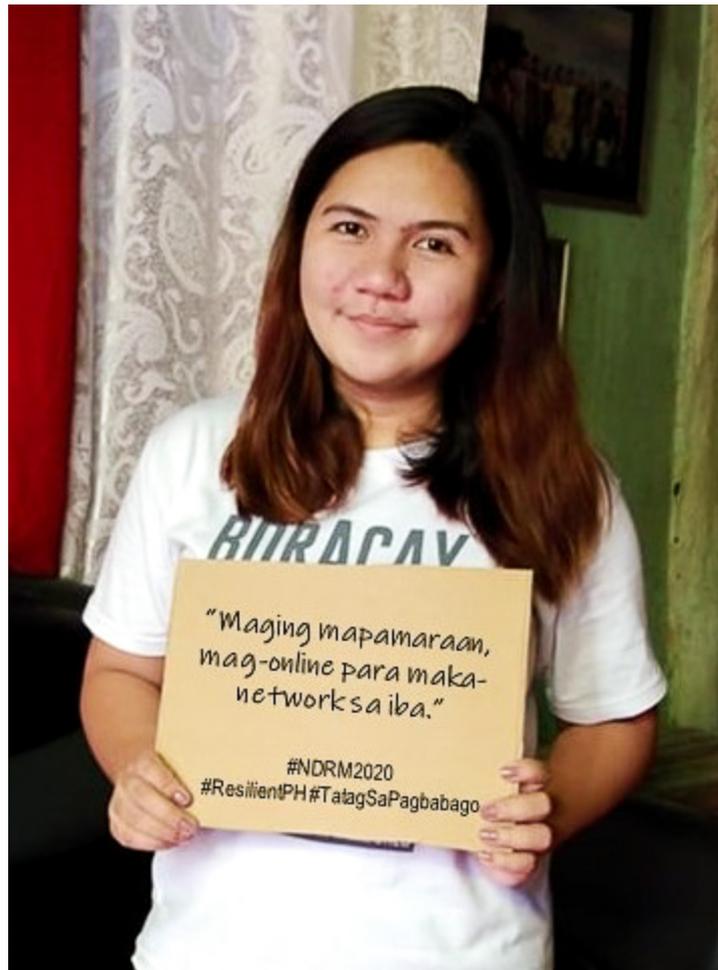
Upon reopening his business last May, Orais began getting orders and settling transactions online and personally transporting raw peanuts from farmers to his production center. He also started delivering in nearby places. For him, resilience in the new normal means maintaining production and delivery practices and adopting alternative marketing

strategies. Another enterprise owner also encountered challenges in attending to operations and delivering goods due to quarantine restrictions. In order to adapt and continue operations, Lurie Mary Grace Fajutag—owner of a manufacturing business in Oriental Mindoro that produces calamansi concentrate, wild honey, and black rice coffee among others—had to constantly market her products online and maintain communication with resellers. She also sought help from government agencies to find solutions to emerging problems.



*Lurie Mary Grace Fajutag says that she has adapted to the new normal*

“My definition of ‘disaster resilience’ in the context of the ‘new normal’ is having to still think positively, to feel blessed and be able to share those blessings with our personnel and community, and being able to adapt and still thrive despite disasters. COVID-19 made us realize that health is wealth and cleanliness and sanitation in our line of business are very important.” The recent restrictions on travel and leisure activities affected the tourism industry and so are the businesses that rely on it. Lea Hiangnan’s native delicacy “pasalubong” business was already thriving prior to COVID-19. When the pandemic hit the country, orders were cancelled due to low demand in tourism-support products and logistical concerns. Their operations stopped for a few months and Hiangnan struggled to pay her dues.



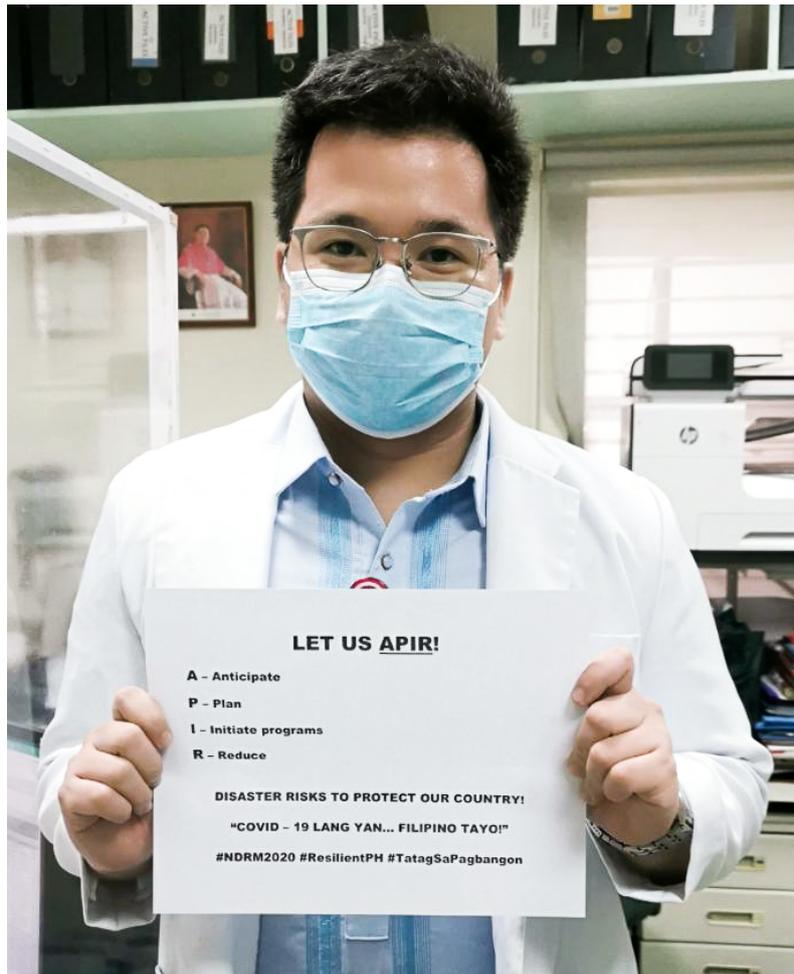
*Lea Hiangnan recommends going online to sustain business network*

Eventually, by going online, she was able to resume her business. She started offering “pasabay” services, a trend for retailers where they act as personal shoppers for multiple buyers and offer door-to-door delivery of products. To keep her business running, Hiangnan is establishing a broader network and strengthening ties with her business partners. “I will always find ways to make sure that our business will always run by building linkages and taking advantage of every opportunity I find,” she says. — For medical frontliners who face the challenge of being away from their families and exposing themselves daily in order to provide care for others, resilience means learning and constantly adapting. Dr. Bernadette Pua Velasco of East Avenue Medical Center is one of the health professionals that were trained by the COVID-19 Training of Trainers Program for Philippine Health Workers. She finds it useful to learn new medical approaches and procedures to treat COVID-19 patients. “COVID-19 is a new disease. We need to learn and unlearn things based on the most recent scientific evidence and guidelines,” she says.



*Dr. Bernadette Pua Velasco of East Avenue Medical Center*

For Moises Gangano, a nurse from Cardinal Santos Medical Center, anticipating and reducing disaster risks and initiating disaster risk reduction programs are key to protecting the country and building resilience. He believes that challenges brought on by COVID-19 can be overcome if we all work together to come up with solutions.



*Nurse Moises Gangano of Cardinal Santos Medical Center pushes for disaster risk reduction management to protect the country from COVID-19*

“I am still hopeful that we will surpass the challenges brought on by COVID-19 even if there is still no vaccine. We need to continue best practices, avoid crowded spaces, and accept the reality of temperature screenings. I believe we must continue these safety procedures and remain cautious in order to achieve a COVID-19-free environment. Continue wearing masks, social distancing, and always practice handwashing.” The true measure of resilience lies in our ability to get back up—not just as individuals but as a society. Evident in these stories is a *bayanihan* that transforms—a bouncing back that is innovative and fortifies us against future challenges, reminding us that to be resilient, we must all lend a helping hand.