

## COVID-19 vaccines essential for MSME recovery



**10 MAY 2021, MANILA**—The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), through Projects SIKAP and T3, highlighted the importance of vaccines to the recovery of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) during a recent online forum which tackled COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy.

Attended by more than 350 participants from all over the country, the webinar, “Bakunang Ligtas, Negosyong Bukas: Championing MSME Health and Safety” was the first part of an online series focusing on MSME resilience beyond the pandemic.

A panel of speakers from the Department of Health (DOH) Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, DOH Field Implementation and Coordination Team, and the Philippine Society for Microbiology and Infectious Disease addressed questions and concerns particularly about the prioritization of vaccines and timelines of the national vaccination program. According to DOH, the new, detailed breakdown of priority group A4 now includes different industries such as manufacturing, food, retail, hotel and accommodations, education, telecoms, and other utilities.

PDRF President Butch Meily reiterated that having vaccines available to everyone, especially small business owners, will accelerate economic recovery.

“If we are able to access more vaccines this year, our hope is that a variety of vaccines will be available to small business owners. You will have a choice of vaccines and choose to be vaccinated. You will then be able to reopen your stores, rebuild your income, and resume a normal life,” said Meily.

In addition, Center for Disaster Preparedness Deputy Executive Director Mayfourth Luneta also emphasized how vital it is to take care of the health of all MSMEs by dispelling their fears about the vaccines and providing life-saving options to them.

“The more na mapro-protect ang mga [MSMEs], the more na mas marami tayong mabubuksang mga negosyo at mas safe ang community,” said Luneta.

(“The more that we protect our [MSMEs], the more we can reopen businesses and build a safer community,” said Luneta.)

PDRF Chief Resilience Officer Bill Luz presented the initiatives of Taskforce T3 (Test, Trace, Treat)- public-private task force which was convened in April 2020 by the Inter-Agency Task Force-National Task Force and DOH, with support from the Asian Development Bank, to help with COVID-19 response efforts.

T3 has helped expand PCR testing efforts, distributed personal protective equipment to hospitals and facilities, established the One Hospital Command Center, launched the Ingat Angat campaign, and is now actively involved in the national vaccination program.

Luz also discussed the role of the private sector in the national vaccine rollout. He said that the private sector is involved in the “procurement [of vaccines], portfolio, logistics, administration, supply chain management, communication, and data.”

Employers Confederation of the Philippines Vice President George Barcelon expressed his support in the collaboration efforts between the public and private sector in ensuring that enough of the population will be inoculated in order to achieve herd immunity.

The event was organized as part of the Asian Preparedness Partnership, a regional platform supported by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the Philippine Preparedness Partnership, a tripartite platform represented by the Office of Civil Defense, the Center for Disaster Preparedness, and PDRF.

Other than the upcoming SIKAP webinars, Taskforce T3 also launched an online series called “Bakuna Benefits Live” which will run every Tuesday and Thursday starting May 4th from 6:00 – 8:00pm via Ingat Angat Facebook Page. This series is designed to address specific processes with respect to vaccine rollouts and the vaccination process from registration to inoculation on a per city basis.

SIKAP or Synergizing Recovery Initiatives, Knowledge, and Adaptation Practices for MSMEs—is a unified online resilience hub that provides information on loans, events, and programs for MSMEs and organizes free mentorship opportunities

provided by industry leaders and experts. To learn more about SIKAP's upcoming activities, visit <https://sikap.com.ph/>