

## Lifeline companies unite to combat COVID-19 spread in the Philippines



**19 MARCH 2020, MANILA**— Amidst the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, which has spread to more than 140 countries including the Philippines, service providers and lifeline companies are stepping up, finding ways of giving aid to frontliners, communities, and workers who are heavily affected due to the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine.

Private sector disaster risk reduction and management network Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) has partnered with Globe Telecom’s e-wallet service Gcash, digital finance group Fintech Alliance Philippines, Smart Communications’ e-wallet service Paymaya, and online crowdfunding platform Gava Gives to help purchase essential protective gear for healthcare institutions in need of immediate support. In partnership with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Admiral Transport, the Department of Labor and Employment, and Phoenix Petroleum Philippines, PDRF will also be deploying ten buses starting March 20 to give transport assistance to healthcare workers. Aside from this, the network will be procuring disinfectants and ventilators for public hospitals.

The MVP Group of Companies—including PLDT-Smart and Meralco—will be donating disinfectant ethyl alcohol, face masks, and personal protective equipment (PPE). The group also adopted measures such as work from home; advanced 13th month pay; continuation of salaries and benefits for all employees; preservation of vacation and sick leaves; and allotment of vitamins for employees and field personnel. Smart Communications is also providing free calls to emergency hotlines, free access to official websites containing vital information on COVID-19, and free WiFi hotspots across the country. For prepaid subscribers, Smart has discounted eLoad, and for postpaid subscribers, it has put in place a 30-day payment extension.

“The MVP Group is one with the President in coping with this virus. We are helping our employees by maintaining their salaries and benefits during the crisis. We continue to serve our customers with the service they need at this time, including the provision of relevant

financing, when required,” said PLDT-Smart Communications Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan in a March 16 post on Facebook.

The Ayala Group of Companies—composed of Globe Telecom, Ayala Malls, and AC Health—alotted a COVID-19 emergency response package of Php 2.4 billion composed of wages, bonuses, leave conversions, and loan deferments. The package includes Php 600 million in salary continuance for displaced workers at construction sites, malls, and retail spaces.

“In these most trying times, those significantly affected by the COVID-19 situation are the thousands of workers that will be affected by the enhanced community quarantine because their places of work have been closed. Ayala continues to ensure that those who are most directly affected by this emergency are taken care of through these financial assistance measures,” said Ayala Corporation Chairman and CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, who shared the corporation’s response efforts on Facebook last March 17.

San Miguel Corporation will provide food to public hospitals and select government centers, and its food facilities will operate 24/7 for supply to supermarkets and for food distribution efforts in communities. Petron and SMC Global Power Holdings will likewise continue operations. In addition, SMC will be distributing disinfectant ethyl alcohol for San Miguel employees to augment market supply and has adopted salary continuation for all employees during the quarantine period.

SM Supermalls has allocated Php 100 million to protect medical frontliners by distributing PPE as well as critical urgent supplies to public hospitals. It has also waived rental payments from March 16 to April 14 for all tenants affected and unable to operate during the quarantine.

JG Summit Holdings’ Gokongwei Brothers Foundation has set up a Php 100 million fund to support national and local frontline health workers and local communities. PPE for hospital staff as well as rapid test kits will also be distributed. Its food unit, Universal Robina Corporation, has been providing food to health workers in various hospitals, while Robinsons Land, its property unit, has been supporting the procurement of test kits for hospitals in Metro Manila. It has also waived rental charges for tenants forced into closure by the quarantine. JG Summit Holdings’ retail unit, Robinsons Retail Holdings, continues operations through Robinsons Supermarkets, Rustan’s Marketplace, Shopwise, and other stores, and its aviation unit, Cebu Pacific, has allowed passengers to rebook flights without additional fees or to bank the value of the ticket in a travel fund for future travel.

Jollibee Foods will be giving Php 100 million worth of food to frontline health workers and on-the-ground checkpoint personnel. This will be administered through Jollibee Group Foundation’s FoodAID Program and will consist of food packs from Jollibee, Chowking, Mang Inasal, Red Ribbon, Greenwich, Burger King, Panda Express, and PHO24.

In partnership with the Department of Health, Alliance Global will be donating 1 million liters of 70% disinfectant ethyl alcohol for use by hospitals nationwide handling COVID-19 patients.

Aside from assistance given to employees and customers, Metrobank and GT have pledged Php 200 million for COVID-19 response efforts. The fund will initially focus on procuring test kits developed by UP-NIH and purchasing PPE for frontline health workers.

The Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine is currently affecting over 57 million people, with strict measures on quarantine for all households, suspension of public transport, and regulation of essential health and food services put in place.

Established in 2010, PDRF is the major private sector coordinator for disaster risk reduction and management in the country. Composed of over 85 member companies, PDRF is co-chaired by PLDT-Smart Communications Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan, Ayala Corporation Chairman and CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, and Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle.