

PDRF and international partners create tools for MSME resilience



26 MARCH 2021, MANILA—The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation joined forces with Connecting Business Initiative (CBI), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in creating resources to help micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

During a recent webinar titled “RISE MSME: Resilience through Innovative and Sustainable Enterprises”, various tools developed by the team of program officers and consultants from PDRF and UNDP were shared with key stakeholders in the public and private sectors who can support program implementation in the long term. More than 300 participants from all over the globe with representatives from various sectors including government, private organizations, the academe, and other industries attended this culminating activity.

PDRF President Butch Meily emphasized the need to continue supporting MSMEs. “We are in a marathon and not a sprint, we are in for a fight that will last some time. But we can win it, we can help rebuild our people’s lives, we can help restart our MSME sector and our session today is one step in that journey,” he said.

Among the tools and resources developed is the SIKAP MSME Resilience Hub. SIKAP or Synergizing Recovery Initiatives, Knowledge, and Adaptation Practices for MSMEs—is a unified online resilience hub that provides information on the latest tips and blogs, as well as loans, events, and programs for MSMEs. SIKAP also organizes free mentorship opportunities for MSMEs provided by industry leaders and experts.

“This is really the beauty of SIKAP, not just as an online business recovery hub, but also as an opportunity platform that bridges the business community, the government, the UN agencies to work together for our MSMEs,” said Rhiza Nery, Local Network Coordinator Specialist of CBI.

Another resource was a survey conducted to show how MSMEs were impacted by the pandemic. Results revealed that there is an urgent need to improve MSMEs’ awareness of the available programs and assistance from both the government and the private sector. Existing programs should be strengthened by integrating innovative approaches and facilitating digital transformation must be prioritized to help MSMEs adapt to the challenges of the status quo. The survey also showed that there is a need to adopt diverse strategies and to incorporate foresight planning and sustainability paradigms in business continuity plans.

Lastly, policy recommendations for decision-makers and the MSME foresight toolkit were presented. The MSME foresight toolkit, named “PUHON” after the Cebuano term for “hopefully, in due time”, was developed to help MSMEs imagine multiple future scenarios and prepare for them accordingly.

Other highlights of the webinar included a testimonial from Madonna Elizaga of Zigmund Enterprises, an MSME graduate of the SIKAP mentorship program, and commendations from Edwin Pasahol from the Department of Trade and Industry and Edwin Salonga from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center.

“We want [MSMEs] to survive so they can plan strategically for their future. We welcome all of these outputs and acknowledge that these will really facilitate our MSMEs’ recovery,” said Pasahol.

“It is nice to have a repository of information related to the COVID-19 pandemic and MSME recovery. This is helpful for MSMEs who struggle to navigate too many resources,” said Salonga. “We encourage all of you to gain access to valuable information and knowledge resources.”

In their closing messages, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in the Philippines Enrico Gaveglia and OCHA Philippines Head Manja Vidic reiterated the importance of partnerships between the public and private sectors and international organizations.

“A new social contract has been displayed through SIKAP, one of which is where we are all rowing in the same direction. There is no private or public when facing the pandemic. We all play the same game within the diversity of our professional engagement that for some – and for SIKAP friends, it is not just a job, but a mission,” said Gaveglia.

“SIKAP is a success story of partnerships...We need to take this initiative and the tools further, and really make it a global success story,” added Vidic.

Users may access the resources presented during the webinar by signing up on <https://sikap.com.ph/>