

PDRF highlights collaborative response to “new normal,” launches enterprise recovery programs



05 June 2020, MANILA — The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) recently launched two new recovery programs for enterprises during a virtual forum that gathered the country’s top business leaders and key government officials to tackle the prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Titled “Shaping Business Resiliency 2020: The Private Sector’s Response to the New Normal,” the virtual forum aimed to discuss and address the challenges that businesses face as they respond and transition to the “new normal.” Held in partnership with the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), the forum was attended by over 750 representatives from the business sector, humanitarian groups, and government agencies.

Keynote Speakers included Ayala Corporation Chairman and CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Department of National Defense Secretary and National Task Force against COVID-19 Chairman Delfin Lorenzana, and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles who is also the Co-Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

The Ayala Group is actively involved in several public and private initiatives to accelerate the country’s recovery from the pandemic. “We try to put ourselves in the shoes of our stakeholders and understand what they are going through. We have teams right now across the Ayala Group embedding themselves in each industry group to learn how the consumers are shifting, how they are changing, how they are doing things in new ways, and learning from that. We do not want to just go back out and behave the way we used to. We want to

understand how the consumers change and what they want to do and make sure that our organization is adjusting to that,” said Zobel de Ayala.

Cabinet Secretary Nograles stressed that the public and private sectors should focus on and invest in science, innovation, research and development, and health resiliency. “A lot has been said about resiliency in terms of disaster, but I think the new normal necessitates resilience in terms of the health aspects. And I think, we now have to really consider health resiliency as one of the new things we have to really consider moving forward,” he said.

Panelists Gareth McGeown, President and CEO of Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc.; Ricardo Isla, CEO of AirAsia Philippines; Atty. Alexander Cabrera, Chairman and Senior Partner of PwC Philippines; and Atty. Francisco Ed Lim, President of MAP; and Moderator Atty. Anne Marie Corominas, Head of Public Policy, Government and Corporate Affairs, and Communications, Philippines and Asia/Interim of Pepsico, also shared their insights on reopening the economy amid the “new normal.”

For McGeown, companies should consider work-from-home arrangements for their employees. Coca-Cola Philippines has around 2,000 people working from home and “it has been very insightful that we are actually able to run a business with such a remote workforce. We have been leveraging technology much more than we did in the past and it has forced us to reimagine a little bit about what we could do forward,” he said.

PDRF President Rene Meily emphasized the need to reinvent businesses. “We have learned so much from the pandemic—lessons that we intend to apply to future emergencies. But perhaps the most important lesson is that we are all connected. The challenge for many companies, big or small, is how to reinvent themselves to provide services in the digital world.”

One of the new business recovery projects of PDRF is the Sari-sari Store Recovery Program which aims to assist 400 sari-sari stores in Metro Manila through consumer goods and telco packages worth 25,000 PHP on a low to no-interest loan basis. According to Meily, “this initiative is really aimed at the heart of the Philippine small business—the sari-sari store we all know of—which is an important supply chain in large companies. For each store, we are helping a family, an entire community.”

Another PDRF initiative is SIKAP or Synergizing Recovery Initiatives, Knowledge, and Adaptation Practices for MSMEs, a unified online business recovery hub that helps micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) bounce forward to the “next normal.”

“Clearly, all the businesses will have to transform themselves. There is going to be a big pivot for most businesses. It is really the reimagination of the business,” said PDRF Chief Resilience Officer Guillermo Luz. “This particular hub is focused on helping MSMEs do exactly that but they cannot do it alone. We are going to need the participation and support

of the government, large corporations, and service providers to help them not only survive but also recover.”

SIKAP was launched in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with the support of the Connecting Business initiative (CBI).

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.