

PRESS RELEASE

PDRF, Hilton Foundation help farmers, small businesses in Catanduanes recover from, prepare for disasters



Photos (L) training session with MSMEs and (R) distribution of cash-for-work incentives to abaca farmers

February 28, 2022, VIRAC, CATANDUANES — The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), in partnership with Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, conducted training sessions on business continuity with three batches of small business owners and while also distributing cash to more than 1,600 abaca farmers. In 2020, Hilton awarded PDRF a \$250,000 grant to help Catanduanes communities devastated by typhoons Rolly and Ulysses.

More than a year after those two typhoons, the destruction of subsequent storms, and the continuing complication of the COVID-19 pandemic, Catanduanes is gradually regaining its footing. This project, with the support of both the local government and private sector, seeks to empower the communities to restart their livelihoods and rebuild their lives.

“The Provincial LGU is committed to mitigate the aftermath of any calamity because we do not want something like Super Typhoon Rolly to come on our way again. There's two things that we learned: one, that typhoons are inevitable in Catanduanes and two, that we can save a thousand more lives when we collectively prepare for disaster,” said Catanduanes Governor Joseph Cua.

Last November, PDRF conducted a training session on disaster preparedness and public service continuity planning for 53 officials from various local government units (LGUs) and agencies in the province.

From November 2021 to February 2022, with the support of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Catanduanes, PDRF conducted the training program “Open for Business: Strengthening Enterprise Resilience” which focused on different aspects of business development and benefited 67 MSMEs from the 11 municipalities of the province.



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Each batch underwent a 2-day intensive training session, the first day a workshop led by experts from Google, DTI and other groups on digital transformation, inventory management, digital marketing, and financial literacy and the second day focused on learning about and drafting a business continuity plan

“Sa ating mga MSMEs, napakahalaga ang inyong lakas ng loob after a calamity na ipagpatuloy ang negosyo, kasi doon lang tayo magkakabangon muli, pati na rin ang ating ekonomiya,” said DTI Catanduanes Provincial Director Maria Belma Escueta in her opening remarks for the first batch.

[“To our MSMEs, your courage to continue your business after a calamity is so important, because that will lead not only to your recovery but that of our economy as well.”]

“I hope that you will be able to share the learnings today with your colleagues to show them that business continuity is not rocket science. It’s easy to follow and it is really doable,” said PDRF Executive Director Veronica Gabaldon.

The training sessions adopted a blended approach, with fully-vaccinated participants gathered in one physical venue while the trainers facilitated their lectures via videoconference. All health and safety protocols were observed.

Last December, to promote economic recovery through livelihood opportunities and revitalization of the agricultural sector, the PDRF team hiked mountains and crossed rivers to reach *abacaleros* in the remotest areas of Catanduanes and to provide the cash-for-work support. This continued in January, with another batch to receive the assistance in March. These incentives will help farmers procure abaca suckers (seedlings), pay for labor to clean the *abacahan*, and purchase food for their families.

In the coming months, as part of the program, PDRF will launch the Farmers Field School on Abaca Production and Organic Farming and Livelihood Training, where selected farmers will be trained in other viable abaca processing methods and alternative agri-livelihood programs.

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About PHILIPPINE DISASTER RESILIENCE FOUNDATION

Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) is the country’s major private sector vehicle and coordinator for disaster resilience. As an alliance of businesses dedicated to building the disaster risk management capabilities of the private sector in the country, PDRF aims to contribute to the sustainable development and the general welfare of the Filipino people. For more information, visit www.pdrf.org.

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