

# Strengthening Partnerships for National Resiliency

Eduardo D. Del Rosario

Administrator, Philippine Office of Civil Defense

Executive Director, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council

## Empowering Communities to Reduce Risk

The task of building a safer, disaster-resilient, and climate-change-adaptive Philippines is still in progress. We have come a long way as a nation, learning many lessons through challenges and triumphs—although we are still in the process of understanding some of them, based on our experiences. In the course of rising anew from numerous disasters, we have moved from a reactive to a more proactive stance in disaster risk reduction and management, improving the ways we do things on the strategic and tactical levels. This is a colossal undertaking, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) as its implementing arm, is taking the lead in this effort to build Philippine resilience.

The growing intensity and frequency of natural hazards has become a major concern, especially given our country's rapidly changing leadership landscape. Leadership in times of disaster is a bulwark of security for all Filipinos living in harm's way. But this highlights the fact that while leadership bears a significant portion of this responsibility, it must be shared with the other stakeholders and local leaders to be effective, efficient, and synergistic.

Our endeavors in this area inevitably face various limitations. But one key realization brought about by the OCD's partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is that limitations can be surmounted through the assistance of willing and able partners.

One of the main thrusts of the NDRRMC is community empowerment. This thrust is greatly aided by the complementary Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management component of JICA's Capacity Enhancement Project. Assessment of tools and training methods, applied to participants from dif-

ferent government offices and communities, has paved the way for the adoption of best practices and strategies. This expedites the achievement of our collective goals.

## Capacity-building Is the Key

OCD's collaboration with JICA can be characterized as a relationship of harmonious dynamism where we are able to adapt and accommodate each other's needs, views, and suggestions. Since we are all working toward the same end, we complement each other's efforts.

JICA has been lauded by its partners for bringing in corps of experts to assist counterparts with their development activities. The dynamic JICA strategy of supporting capacity-building exercises has greatly helped us at OCD to improve the services we provide to clients.

Given the challenges that OCD faces as the prime mover of disaster risk reduction and management in the Philippines, JICA's *kaizen* philosophy of continuous improvement is very apt for us. We need to ensure that all civil defense staff in the country are capable of serving the people with sufficient know-how, professional and technical skills, and the most up-to-date procedures.

We commend our partner JICA for its assistance in honing the capability of the Philippines' disaster managers not only in the OCD, but also in

local governments across the archipelago. It is our hope that JICA will continue working tirelessly in our partnership, bringing fresh inspiration and energy to keep up the good work. In this way, the OCD-JICA partnership will grow ever stronger, leading to new and significant achievements in the field of disaster risk reduction and management and paving the way in building safer, more disaster-resilient communities in the Philippines.



## New Inexpensive Test Kit to Fight Disease in Zambia



The new test kit will be a valuable tool in African healthcare efforts.

Early discovery and treatment is essential in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, but many cases go undiagnosed in developing countries due to the high cost of testing. A particular threat is tuberculosis, which causes 1.4 million deaths a year and infects one in three people in Zambia. Sub-Saharan Africa sees an estimated 50,000 annual deaths from the spread of human African trypanosomiasis (HAT), also known as sleeping sickness.

Responding to a request from the government of Zambia, JICA worked with the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) to develop an inexpensive testing kit that quickly and accurately screens for tuberculosis and HAT.

Professor Yasuhiko Suzuki of Hokkaido University's Research Center for Zoonosis Control was chief advisor to the project. The new kit uses gene amplification technology to detect the tuberculosis bacteria and the parasite responsible for HAT in phlegm or blood samples taken from patients. This innovative kit reduces waiting time for results from days to around an hour and has improved test accuracy, which previously varied widely, to nearly 100%.

The use of an experimental testing chemical developed by Hokkaido University has successfully lowered testing costs from ¥1,000-¥2,500 to only ¥100. Lower cost will allow a greater number of people to be tested. Hopes are high that this will lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment, greatly reducing the spread of these diseases.



## Japanese Athletes Sent to Developing Nations



Participants watch a presentation at the JOCV study session for athletes.

Nearly every country in the world, 204 nations, participated in the 2012 London Olympics. But 80 of them, mostly developing nations in Africa, have never won a medal of any kind. This is because the quality of a nation's sports environment stands in proportion to the nation's wealth.

Sports are important for more than just medals. In combination with robust physical education in schools, healthy athletic programs can inspire a country's people to be healthier as well. This makes shortages of experienced athletes to guide exercise an important health issue to address.

Momentum is building for Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) to send more

Japanese athletes to developing countries to help develop PE programs and provide athletic training. Cumulatively, over 3,000 JICA volunteers have given instruction in judo, swimming, baseball, and other sports, and around 100 such volunteers are currently active overseas. JICA plans to boost significantly the number of athletic volunteers by the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

To this end, a JOCV study session was held in Tokyo on February 25 for individuals active in sport. According to the JOCV head office, "Having men and women take part in sports together helps to reduce gender inequality. Sports can also build character by teaching people to follow rules." With sports as another channel for sharing Japanese experience with people around the world, JICA intends to further contribute to social development.



## Empowering Africa's Woman Entrepreneurs



Kali (left) shares her experience with the audience. The event was also a valuable networking opportunity.

As countries move from developing to developed status, they depend heavily on entrepreneurs to energize their economies. They also need women to play central roles in development and growth. A February 3 event titled "Empowerment of Women Through Entrepreneurship," cohosted by JICA and the city of Yokohama, promoted those goals.

Three African woman entrepreneurs shared their success stories in the panel discussion, part of the "Growing Together with the Rising Women of Africa" symposium. They noted the challenges they faced—lack of financing and gender discrimination among them—and the benefits they have brought to their countries.

Fikirte Addis Tedla of Ethiopia, owner of a fashion company, spoke of her "healthy relationship" with workers and subcontractors, including good pay and consideration of their work-life balance. Ellen Otaru Okoedion of Tanzania runs a corporate PR firm—a male-dominated industry she found hard to enter at first. Education was the key to boosting her earning power, giving her the ability to finance her own business. Finally, Bongive Kali of South Africa talked about her efforts in the poultry industry, which won her the 2008 South African Female Farmer of the Year award.

JICA President Akihiko Tanaka gave the opening remarks, followed by keynotes by Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi and US Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy. The event painted a picture of an energetic Africa whose women will help to drive development in the future.

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