

OPINION & FEATURES

Preparedness

NOW is the time for all sectors of society, including the government, the private sector, the academe and the scientific community to sit down and make a comprehensive 10-year plan for disaster reduction and preparedness.

They should have a relatively easy time doing this because they have learned their lessons from the two recent disasters brought about by the two very deadly and destructive storms Ondoy and Pepeng. They also have the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, drawn up at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 in Kobe, Japan, to refer to.

If they have not yet read it, every government official, from the President down to barangay chair, and all the leaders of the private sector should get a copy of the 22-page Hyogo Framework and make it a reference for their action plan.

The Hyogo Framework notes that "disaster loss is on the rise, with grave consequences for the survival, dignity and livelihood of individuals, particularly the poor, and hard-won development gains." And it identifies five priorities:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks

GUEST EDITORIAL

and enhance early warning.

3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and

resilience at all levels.

4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.

5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

The Hyogo Framework says that "there is now international acknowledgment that efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programs for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and supported through bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including partnerships."

A model and reference have been provided by the Hyogo Framework. The work of a projected government-private sector task force will now simply be to supply the details and draw up a comprehensive disaster reduction and preparedness program so that the nation will be prepared at all times to cope with any disaster. (*Inquirer.net*)



Philstar.com

Global Filipino relief and reform movement

THE 6th Global Filipino Networking Convention would have been held in Cebu towards the end of January next year. This gathering of overseas Filipinos, mostly from the US and mostly members of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), plus OFWs and activists from Europe, Asia and the Middle East would have discussed common problems and opportunities in their adopted countries, but the main event of the convention would have been a forum with the 2010 presidential candidates.

Those plans may be all wet now—literally—submerged by our concern for the victims of the multiple calamities that have hit Metro Manila and Northern Luzon. Even our co-organizers in Cebu, the movers of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies (NAITAS) have conceded that holding the 6th Global as scheduled may not be advisable in face of the national emergency.

On second thought, holding the meeting of overseas Filipinos, along with concerned community groups in the Philippines, early in 2010 may just be what our country needs.

For sure, our people need relief from the devastation caused by the natural disasters. But, just as importantly, the country needs reforms in the face of the plague of politics, the erosion of ethical and moral standards, pervasive mediocrity and incompetence, the rape of the environment and the general feeling of helplessness and hopelessness afflicting the Filipino people.

Much of what need to be done obviously have to be undertaken by the people in the Philippines. They need to get over the self-pity and the habit of blaming everyone and everything but themselves for the country's ills, and take responsibility for their destiny.

But we overseas Filipinos must accept our share of the responsibility for mobilizing relief and for instituting reforms in the country that we continue to regard as our homeland, where our friends and relatives live, and where many of us would prefer to have our earthly remains interred.

It was in this context that Rodel Rodis and Viki Bamba, chair and vice-chair, respectively, of the organizing committee of the 6th Global, Dr. Eustaquio 'Boy' Abay, prominent neurosurgeon and recent recipient of the 12th Filipinas Magazine Achievement Award for Medicine, and myself have begun to work on the details of a retooled 6th Global convention that would promote a Global Filipino Relief and Reform Movement.

I kicked off the process with a paper entitled, Now is the time for all Global Filipinos to come to the aid of the Motherland!

The paper reads: We propose to retool the 6th Global Filipino Networking Convention into a massive movement of Global Filipinos answering the call for help of the Motherland.

The worst typhoon in memory has just vented its fury on the Philippines. But, worse yet, the Motherland has been suffering from the cancer of corruption, incompetence and opportunism that have mired the Filipino people in poverty and hopelessness and have kept them in bondage, under the heel of political, criminal, dynastic and business overlords.

It is not enough to raise money, donate food, medicine and clothing and rebuild the shelters of the victims of the flood. We are now being given both the challenge and the opportunity to help our Motherland BOTH in rising from her ruins and in recovering from her lingering affliction.

Shall we help rebuild the country from its

temporary devastation or should we take on the greater challenge of excising the cancer and restoring the national health? The answer should be an unequivocal Yes!

The presidential election in May 2010 offers us this historic challenge and opportunity. The biggest challenge is choosing a president who will effectively, diligently and honestly lead our people in the process of national rehabilitation.

What should we do? Under the umbrella of the 6th Global Filipino Networking Convention, launch the Global Filipino Relief and Reform Movement.

- Hold the 6th Global in San Francisco instead of Cebu.

- Call on the delegates, who would otherwise spend thousands on the overseas trip, to donate generously to the relief fund.

- Call on the most influential Filipino community leaders in the US, starting with the Filipinas Magazine Achievement awardees over the past 12 years, to get involved in the movement.

- Involve recently launched Philippine-based reform movements (Ako Mismo, ABS-CBN's Boto Mo, I-Patrol Mo, Moral Reform Movement, etc.) and ask them to participate in the convention.

- Harness the US and global capabilities of ABS-CBN and GMA Network to telecast the 6th Global worldwide.

- Harness New Media (Google, Facebook, Twitter, video streaming, etc.) to involve Global Filipinos in the event.

- As the core activities of the 6th Global: Mobilize relief for the calamity victims.

- Mount a massive fund-raiser, tapping resources beyond the Filipino community; the idea of a concert and a telethon should be pursued.

- Address the issue of sustained recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the face of health threats, loss of property, destruction of crops and an imminent food shortage.

- Launch the national socio-political and eco-

nomie reform movement.

Raise awareness of the stakes in the presidential elections, the issues, the qualifications, the track record and the commitment of the candidates.

Invite the presidential candidates to the convention (given the limitations on premature campaigning) to express their views on the problems of the Philippines and the most effective solutions as envisioned by them.

Kick off a massive, worldwide and sustained voter education campaign to:

Reignite the Spirit of People Power in both Global Filipinos and voters in the Philippines.

Help put in place the mechanisms to protect the integrity of the ballot.

Harness the resources and influence of Global Filipinos to fund the voter education campaign, guide relatives in the Philippines in making the right choice of candidates, and support a corps of IT experts and international observers who will help ensure the integrity of the ballot.

Mount a parallel voter education and information campaign in the Philippines, harnessing the resources of the Philippine advertising and marketing industry (make a presentation at the Philippine Advertising Congress in Baguio this November).

Mount another parallel campaign in the US to create awareness among US leaders and persons of influence, in media, the academe, Corporate America, the state houses and legislatures and in Washington DC of the high stakes in the presidential elections.

"Revive the theme of the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention (which we held in Cebu in January 2005) as a call to all Global Filipinos to come to the aid of the Motherland: A Gathering of Heroes. *Pagbabalik Ng Mga Bayani!*"

Maybe we're trying to bite off more than we can chew but we think it's worth a try. (*gregmacabenta@hotmail.com*)



STREET TALK

Greg B. Macabenta

Opportunity

"CLIMATE uncertainty is now the rule rather than the exception," says Undersecretary Graciano Yumul of the Department of Science and Technology.

He is one of those who will attend the "multisectoral stakeholder" convention called by government to formulate a consolidated response to disaster. The challenge is to find responses to an altered situation where the old rules no longer apply.

I should think the time to have done that was many years ago when "climate uncertainty" was already patent. The series of disasters that visited this country, quite apart from the world, which



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were mind-boggling for their severity and frequency, should already have indicated it. Except that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and entourage were too busy traveling abroad, like a flock of birds going south for the winter.

Indeed, it's not just the (un)natural disasters that should have compelled us to rethink our lifestyle much earlier. A couple or so years ago, I was already warning about the need for it given the looming worldwide food and oil shortages and an impending recession that various scientists were warning about, along with global warming and its apocalyptic consequences.

We were sufficiently alarmed

last year about the sudden oil and food scarcities to start contemplating radical lifestyle changes, but forgot all about them as soon as the rice lines disappeared and gasoline prices fell. We were sufficiently alarmed as well by the landslide that buried Infanta, the supertyphoon that flattened Albay, and the winds that howled in Metro Manila, but forgot about them as soon as the sun went up in the sky.

Each respite makes us think things will be all right, Mama Mary won't let us down. When in fact we're in the eye of the storm, waiting for all hell to break loose.

What to do in these conditions?

Well, desperate times call for desperate measures, radical times call for radical solutions. A consolidated response to disaster must take account not just of natural disasters but human disasters, the latter often ravaging more bitterly. First thing the con-

vention should recommend is to remove the biggest disaster that has befallen this country, which is the creature that has (mis)ruled it for the last nine years.

That said, several other things:

One is to do away with corruption. Or dam public money more formidably than you dam water. Government officials can talk till they get blue in the face, but they won't get anywhere without this. The question foremost in the minds of the victims of "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" was: Where are the calamity funds? And the answer was that they were in a calamitous state, made so by a calamitous state.

If Ondoy and Pepeng drove home anything, it is the truth that corruption kills. Corruption does not separate fools from their money, corruption kills. Corruption does not just waste people's money, corruption kills. Corruption does not just divert public money, corruption kills. Corrup-

tion is the rope that should have been thrown to the drowning but is nowhere to be found.

Two is to mount posthaste a food security program. The rice scarcity last year and the storms over the last few weeks must show up the insanity of depending on the kindness of strangers. Take it from Joseph's advice to the Pharaoh: The point is to fill the granaries with grain during the seven years of plenty to take care of the seven years of want. That is done not by importing rice but by producing rice, which in turn can only be done by giving local farmers an even break. Who'd want to farm with their wretched conditions?

Three is for us to shift from private cars to public transport. The only thing of course that will be harder to do than make the Filipino elite and middle class part with their cars is to make them part with their guns. The respite from the oil crisis is just that, a respite. Oil prices are only bound

to get higher as oil gets scarcer. The normal excuse of private car owners is that public transport sucks. Well, the MRT doesn't, except on rush hours when you push against another person just by breathing. That's how I go to Makati all the time. Public transport won't get better with more cars.

Alternatively, collect the guns and ship them to Iraq and Afghanistan in exchange for food.

Four, corner the litterers on the sidewalk and beat them black and blue. I don't know what can be done about drivers who drop off wrappings from the food they eat from the windows of their cars. Maybe a special division of motorcycle cops can be formed just to run after them. And beat them black and blue.

Teach Philippine history to Filipinos. You heard right, teach history.

My reason for this is simple: It's the only way I know to give us a sense of country. I know it

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