

ABS-CBN LAUNCHES 'KAPIT BISIG SA ILOG PASIG' Reviving, Restoring Pasig River

By MOMAR G. VISAYA
AJPress

MAKATI CITY—Gina Lopez has embarked on yet another gargantuan task, that of cleaning the Pasig River and restoring it to its old glory.

On February 24, at a grand media launch held at the Makati Park and Garden, Lopez led a multi-sector group to launch "Kapit Bisig sa Ilog Pasig" - a massive clean-up and rehabilitation campaign to rescue the ailing Pasig River. The project is led by the ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. (AFI) and the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC), under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Lopez, the Managing Director of AFI, called the significant event a "genuine display of bayanihan," with public servants and the private sector working together for one noble cause - bringing back life to a river "intimately connected to our history, culture and origin as a people."

Mayors Alfredo Lim of Manila, JV Ejercito of San Juan, Mercedes Fernando of Marikina, Jejomar Binay of Makati, Benhur Abalos of Mandaluyong, Freddie Tinga of Taguig, Vicente Eusebio of Pasig and Sonny Belmonte of Quezon City have all agreed to work together for this project.

"No matter how much money you spend to clean the river, the river's still going to be dirty. We have to change the way we look at the river. We should use the media to awaken the consciousness and the reverence that people should have for the Pasig River," Lopez said.

Sec. Lito Atienza of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) lauded Lopez and her group for their commitment to the project.

"We will not progress as a nation if we do not put the revival of Pasig River on top of our priorities. We are now on the road to addressing this issue head-on and I am happy that Gina volunteered to do this," Sec. Atienza said.

To get every Filipino involved, "Kapit Bisig sa Ilog



Gina Lopez signs MOA with Pasig Rep. Roman Romulo



ABS-CBN talent Bugoy Drilon performed during the launch



Lopez also signed a MOA with the Department of Science and Technology

"The Pasig River is intimately connected to our history and identity as a people. Tagalog comes from the root word Taga-ilog which means from the river. Our forefathers were originally settled along the riverbank.

The cleaning of the Pasig River is not just a physical effort. It is the cleansing of our psyche. It is resurfacing the values of reverence for the environment and the bayanihan spirit. These are the very values that are essential to our growth as a nation. Cleansing the Pasig Rivre is the resurfacing of love, will and confidence in who we are as a people.

Failure is not an accepted possibility. There is no way we cannot succeed. We can do this and we can do this together. Private sector suport is of utmost necessity. Money and volunteers are needed to run the program and make it a success."

**—Gina Lopez, Managing Director
ABS-CBN Foundation, Inc.**



DENR Secretary Lito Atienza lauded Lopez and the group for their commitment to the environment.

"Other AFI programs like Bayanijuan, Bantay Bata 163, Bantay Kalikasan, Sagip Kapamilya, Bayan Micro-Finance, and E-Media will also take part. Everybody's working together so the settlers will be happy to transfer to the resettlement sites," Lopez added.

Multi-sector Support

Lopez is calling out to everybody, from the private sector to the military, the national government, and other non-government organizations to help in transforming the Pasig River into a scenic spot where people can play, engage in water sports, and cultivate aquatic life.

Prior to the launch, the corporate sector has already heeded the call led by Goldilocks, which donated P6 million, and Globe Asiatique Realty Holdings Corp. The builder of the famous "Pinoy Big Brother" house agreed to build 800 houses in the Calauan resettlement site, including a sports field where kids can play.

ABS-CBN's Gabby Lopez is hopeful that Manila, like its neighbors in Bangkok, Taiwan and Jakarta, can solve the problem. "Let's join hands and show that we are proud to be Filipinos, and this is what it is all about," he said.

Pasig Rep. Roman Romulo, on the other hand, is the KBSIP's first congressional donor.

"Marami ang nagdadasal para sa proyektong ito, isa na po ako," ("A lot of people are praying for this project, I am one one them") said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, adding that it was actually a good thing that someone from the private sector was leading the group.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. echoed Binay's sentiments, saying that if this were all government, there would be one-upmanship among the local officials.

"I'm glad that Gina took up the cudgels. I knew something would happen, when I learned that Gina would be leading this. If this river were to come to life once more, may we be in a position to say, 'Dahil sa amin 'yan'," Belmonte said.

"The problem is huge, but it can be solved. With everyone's help, we can accomplish this," an undaunted Gina Lopez said. "We are giving ourselves seven years to clean the river. We will make dreams come true."

Lopez looks forward to the day when she can say how sincere, untiring commitment and well-meaning, strong partnerships will bring the once glorious river back to life. [To help, please send your check donations and indicate "Pasig" to our office at ABS CBN Foundation, Inc. - USA 150 Shoreline Drive Redwood City, CA 94065 USA Toll-Free: (800) 527-2820 Phone: (650) 508-6119 E-mail: foundation@abs-cbni.com Website: www.abscbnfoundation.org or donate online via paypal or credit card through www.abscbn-foundation.org]

PASIG RIVER BY THE NUMBERS

- Pasig River is around 27 kilometers long (16.8 miles), 50 meters (164 feet) at its widest, and four meters (13 feet) at its shallowest.

- The Pasig River system includes four major rivers and 43 minor tributaries.

- It is the country's foremost river system and it links the country's biggest inland body of water, the Laguna de Ba', with the country's principal bay, the Manila Bay.

- The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission operates the Pasig River Ferry Service, which operates in 10 main and four satellite ferry stations.

- There are an estimated 4,040 households settling illegally on the easements of Pasig River tributaries.



Pasig" is banking on the support of the media to be its lead advocate, in order to bring different sectors together and put



lead to it. KBSIP needs to raise at least P700 million to afford the technology and operational expenses to clean the river in seven years.

The Pasig River is a 27-kilometer body of water, which stretches from Laguna de Bay to Manila Bay. Once a major transport route, source of water, and a vital ecosystem, the river is relegated today as one of the most polluted and toxic river systems in the Philippines. The deterioration of Pasig River was said to start in the 1930s. Six decades later, it was considered biologically inactive.

"Kapit Bisig sa Ilog Pasig" will use a multi-pronged strategy that zeroes in on consciousness-raising as much as physical efforts to improve the condition of the river.

Backed up by ABS-CBN, the largest multimedia conglomerate in the country, KBSIP has lined up a string of activities including a 42K marathon along the Pasig River, a nationwide songwriting competition, and the first-ever "Agos Awards," which will honor individuals, schools, organizations, government offices, and private corporations for their contributions to the rehabilitation of the river.

Meanwhile, KBSIP has also begun Phase 1 of its seven-year program with the relocation of informal settlers around Pasig River. These informal settlers are reportedly responsible for household wastes thrown into the river. According to a PRRC study, the Pasig River is polluted with 60% household waste, 35% industrial waste, and 5% solid waste.

KBSIP has taken over the Calauan resettlement site, where a community of former settlers along the Pasig River was relocated. The group targets to relocate about 1,100 other informal settlers by June to a relocation site where they are provided with housing, education, health, and livelihood assistance from KBSIP and its partners.

Seven Years

"Kapit Bisig sa Ilog Pasig" is a product of the memorandum of agreement between AFI and DENR, through PRRC, which makes AFI-Bantay Kalikasan and DENR co-managers of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Project.

The goal of the group is "zero toxic input into the Pasig River," which includes tributaries, esteros, and creeks, which



Former Miss Universe Margie Moran

the rehabilitation of the river in everyone's agenda.

Vice President Noli De Castro sent a video-taped message to offer National Housing Authority's (NHA) assistance, in his capacity as the chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council. The Department of Science and Technology's Industrial Technology Development Institute (DOST-ITDI) also committed to be the technology partner of KBSIP.

The group will also be working with local government units, the Manila Water Co., Maynilad Water Services Inc., and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. Eugenio "Gabby" Lopez III, ABS-CBN chair and chief executive officer has tendered the network's full involvement in the campaign.

"If you look at all the great metropolitan cities in the world, you will see that they are built beside rivers, and if we want Manila to be great again, then we should start by restoring Pasig River to its old glory," Lopez said.

Gina Lopez, through AFI's projects such as Bantay Bata and Bantay Kalikasan, has been successful in generating support from various sectors. Bantay Bata, for the past ten years, has been instrumental in helping abused children, while Bantay Kalikasan has been successful in the past years rehabilitating the La Mesa Watershed, enhancing and conserving the ecotourism sites of Puerto Princesa.



Corporate support was given by Goldilocks (represented by Pinky Yee, left); ABS-CBN (represented by Gabby Lopez, second from right) and Globe Asiatique (represented by Delfin Lee, right).



City mayors led by Mayor Sonny Belmonte of Quezon City (second from left), Mayor Jejomar Binay of Makati (fourth from left) and Mayor Vicente Eusebio of Pasig (third from right) join Gina Lopez at the launching of 'Kapit Bisig sa Ilog Pasig' in Makati City.