

Corporate donors talk disasters in venue crippled by 'Basyang'



Economy

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BESIDE a shopping mall crippled by a power outage and dried-up water taps, some 500 officials of corporate donors confronted a major reason for their being: disaster.

The day after Typhoon Basyang (international name Cosnon) hit the metropolis and ruffled President Aquino, members of the League of Corporate Foundations Inc. (LCF) discussed why poverty remains despite their years of giving back to the country's poorest of the poor.

At the SM mall beside the LCF conference venue, stores remained dark two hours after opening at 10 a.m., but at the same time LCF president Cecilia Alcantara said her group "continued to respond to government's call for private-sector support to development, particularly in the underserved and underprivileged sectors."

Major franchise brand stores like Jollibee, restaurants like KFC and Mang Inasal, were closed. Customers trying to have lunch were politely turned away, saying lack of water has decimated their menu offerings.

Chouking, a restaurant under the Jollibee Foods Corp., only offered bottled water and two dishes. The absence of water prevented the cooking of rice, a staple in Filipino meals.

Still, LCF chairman Edgardo Amistad told the BusinessMirror the number of delegates was still more than their expected 600.

"We expected the number to be half of that because of the typhoon last night," Amistad said in the conference hall still chilled by air-conditioning and brightly lit with fluorescent lights.

Arsenio Balisacan of the University of the Philippines-Diliman and Asia-Pacific Policy Center said disasters remain the major cause of poverty and vulnerability in the country, the latter two being the major concern of corporate givers.

In his presentation, Balisacan said between 2004 and 2006, typhoons have reduced 0.18 percent of the income of poor people; the assistance for every affected person has more than doubled to P16

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