



US AMBASSADOR to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas Jr. speaks on the importance of partnerships and cooperation at a global level to initiate positive change. He spoke at the opening of the 9th Annual Corporate Social Responsibility Expo 2010 with the theme: Synergizing for Change. The expo was held at the SMX Convention Center of the Mall of Asia in Pasay City and organized by the League of Corporate Foundations. ROY DOMINGO

Corporate donors talk disasters in venue crippled by 'Basyang'

BY DENNIS D. ESTOPACE
Reporter

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 under-privileged 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.

Chowking, 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 each.

Strong winds and monsoon-rain types of disasters that affected some 1.04 million annually in 2004-06 have also increased the assistance for every affected person to P83.

Nonetheless, Amistad said this year's LCF expo is better than expected.

"We're hopeful with a new government."

Also addressing the forum, US Ambassador to Manila Harry Thomas spoke on the need to promote partnerships and cooperation at a global level in order to stimulate positive change. He cited the public-private partnership model of the US Agency for International Development EQUALLS2 program, which Thomas claims to have been successful in implementing livelihood programs in conflict-riddled areas of Mindanao.

Balisacan suggested focusing on investments in infrastructure and market-friendly institutions.

He also urged LCF members to help expand access of the poor to productive assets.

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