

High-risk communities mark International Disaster Risk Reduction Day

Philippines, 13 October 2010

Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte and Maragusan, Compostela Valley, two of the most high-risk communities for floods and landslides mark this year's International Disaster Risk Reduction Day by planting mangroves along the coast, planting fruit trees along the river bank and planting rubber trees in watershed area. They also conducted separated fora to better understand the new Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act and its implications in their present disaster risk reduction initiatives.

In Saint Bernard, some 200 persons participated in the early morning, 6-km walkathon from the municipal grounds to Himbangan village where they planted mangroves and fruit trees. They spent the afternoon by participating in a forum wherein the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act was discussed and the efforts of Saint Bernard to be a resilient community were presented. After the symposium, the participants signed a commitment to integrate DRR in their local development plans and to sustain DRR efforts that they have started.

"In Saint Bernard, we have various hazards. We can't do much about the hazard, but we can do much more by increasing our capacity to prepare for these hazards. Disaster happens when hazard strike a vulnerable community. That is why today...right now is time to prepare", explained Saint Bernard Vice Mayor Rachel Avendula.

Another public awareness activity was the mounting of five-day exhibit of disaster risk reduction activities of Saint Bernard at the municipal terminal. At night, short films about earthquake, typhoon, and climate change were shown.

In Maragusan, Compostela Valley, the day started with a forum linking disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation. Resource persons from the municipal environment and agricultural offices presented climate change and climate change adaptation measures that can be done especially since they anticipate heavier rains that can trigger landslides in the valley. The forum ended with the signing of a joint covenant to pursue risk reduction measures using their local resources especially after the duration of the foreign-assisted project in the municipality.

In the afternoon, the participants proceeded to Bagong Silang village, the protected water shed area and planted rubber trees as their participation in the ongoing disaster risk reduction project of the municipality.

The CARE Nederland team in Manila through its partner, the Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development (ACCORD) joined the other international organizations in a dialogue with key national line agencies like the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the Climate Change Commission and Department of Interior and Local Government to pursue concerted efforts in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate

change adaptation in local development process to sustain initiatives utilizing local resources and capacities. A joint commitment was signed by all parties to cap the dialogue.

The disaster risk reduction activities were done through CARE Nederland's ASCEND Project (Advancing Safer Communities and Environments against Disasters) and Food Facility Project (Making Safe Food Available and Accessible for Rural Household in the Philippines). Both projects are supported by the European Union.
