

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Digital transformation key to recovery of education and business sectors amid pandemic**

**09 NOVEMBER 2020, MANILA**—As part of the Philippine Preparedness Partnership (PhilPrep), the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) recently highlighted the need for strengthened collaboration in digital transformation during a webinar titled [“The Digital Shift: Adapting to Business and Education Challenges in the New Normal”](#), in which key representatives from government agencies and the private sector shared their current, future, and proposed joint efforts in helping educators and businesses adapt to the new normal. Held simultaneously via Zoom, Youtube, and Facebook, the event was attended by over 200 educators and micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) owners.

To highlight the challenges brought about by lockdown limitations to both the business and education sectors and explore current and future solutions related to digital transformation in the new normal, the webinar focused on the following topics: conducting online marketing and training, analyzing consumer behavior, embracing e-commerce, and securing data online.

“Digital transformation boosts opportunities for MSMEs in attracting more clients. Having an online presence affords greater visibility and wider outreach to previously untapped markets. The COVID-19 pandemic challenges the government, private sector, and development organizations to provide web-based tools and platforms to help local businesses survive and thrive. We must work together in building the capacity of MSMEs to further improve the quality and delivery of their products and services,” said Edwin Salonga, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center’s Country Program Manager for the Philippines).

Giving an overview of how ready the country is for digital transformation, Department of Information and Communications Technology Director for ICT Literacy and Competency Development Atty. Alvin Navarro shared that according to the UN International Telecommunications Union, the Philippines ranks only 101<sup>st</sup> among the 176 countries and territories surveyed in the ICT Development Index. Furthermore, results from the 2019 National ICT Household Survey show that only 24% of households have communal cellphones and only 17.7% of households have their own Internet access at home.

To address these gaps, DICT programs are focused on laying a national infrastructure broadband backbone, assisting government agencies’ digitalization programs, upskilling public and private workforces, and providing learning management system assistance for academic institutions and training programs on digital education. Apart from these, Navarro highlighted the need for public-private partnerships for these programs.

Department of Science and Technology VI Regional Director Engr. Rowen Gelonga, on the other hand, presented DOST’s Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) 4.0, DOST’s program assisting MSMEs through digital and other technical shifts. Major components of the SETUP 4.0 include developing and promoting digital marketing and e-commerce, providing enterprise resiliency and continuity

assistance, and improving SME access to and use of digital infrastructure. He also emphasized that MSMEs have varying needs and that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

“COVID-19 has dominated our lives for so long. It determines how we do business, how we are educated, how we socialize. One of its biggest impacts has been to accelerate the shift to a digital way of working, buying, learning, and consuming entertainment. The pandemic has hurt certain industries while creating new ones. Companies have had to pivot to new ways of doing business in order to survive. For many of us, it is a life-altering adjustment. For small businesses, it is a matter of surviving or closing shop. We need to work together in order to adapt,” said PDRF President Butch Meily.

During the webinar, Grab Philippines and Vitalstrats Creative Solutions also talked about current digital transformation solutions for MSMEs and shared tips and recommendations on adapting to the new normal. PDRF, together with Rocket Concepts, also [introduced iADAPT \(Innovations Academy for Disaster Awareness, Preparedness, and Training\)](#), PDRF's newest e-learning platform that offers self-paced online courses, interactive seminars, and in-depth training on disaster risk reduction, business continuity, and climate change adaptation.

Established in 2017, the Philippine Preparedness Partnership (PhilPrep) is a tripartite platform represented by key societal actors from the government (Office of Civil Defense), private sector (PDRF), and the civil society (Center for Disaster Preparedness) dedicated to strengthening the country's multi-sectoral resilience and recovery. Prior to the Digital Shift webinar, Philprep—through PDRF—held an online forum on [Engaging MSMEs in Disaster Preparedness and Response](#) and a webinar on [Pandemic Adaptive and Resilient MSME Supply Chains](#).

Philprep is part of the Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP) which is supported by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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#### **About PHILIPPINE DISASTER RESILIENCE FOUNDATION**

Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) is the country's major private sector vehicle and coordinator for disaster resilience. As an alliance of businesses dedicated to building the disaster risk management capabilities of the private sector in the country, PDRF aims to contribute to the sustainable development and the general welfare of the Filipino people. For more information, visit [www.pdrf.org](http://www.pdrf.org).

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