



Pandemic Experience



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COVID-19

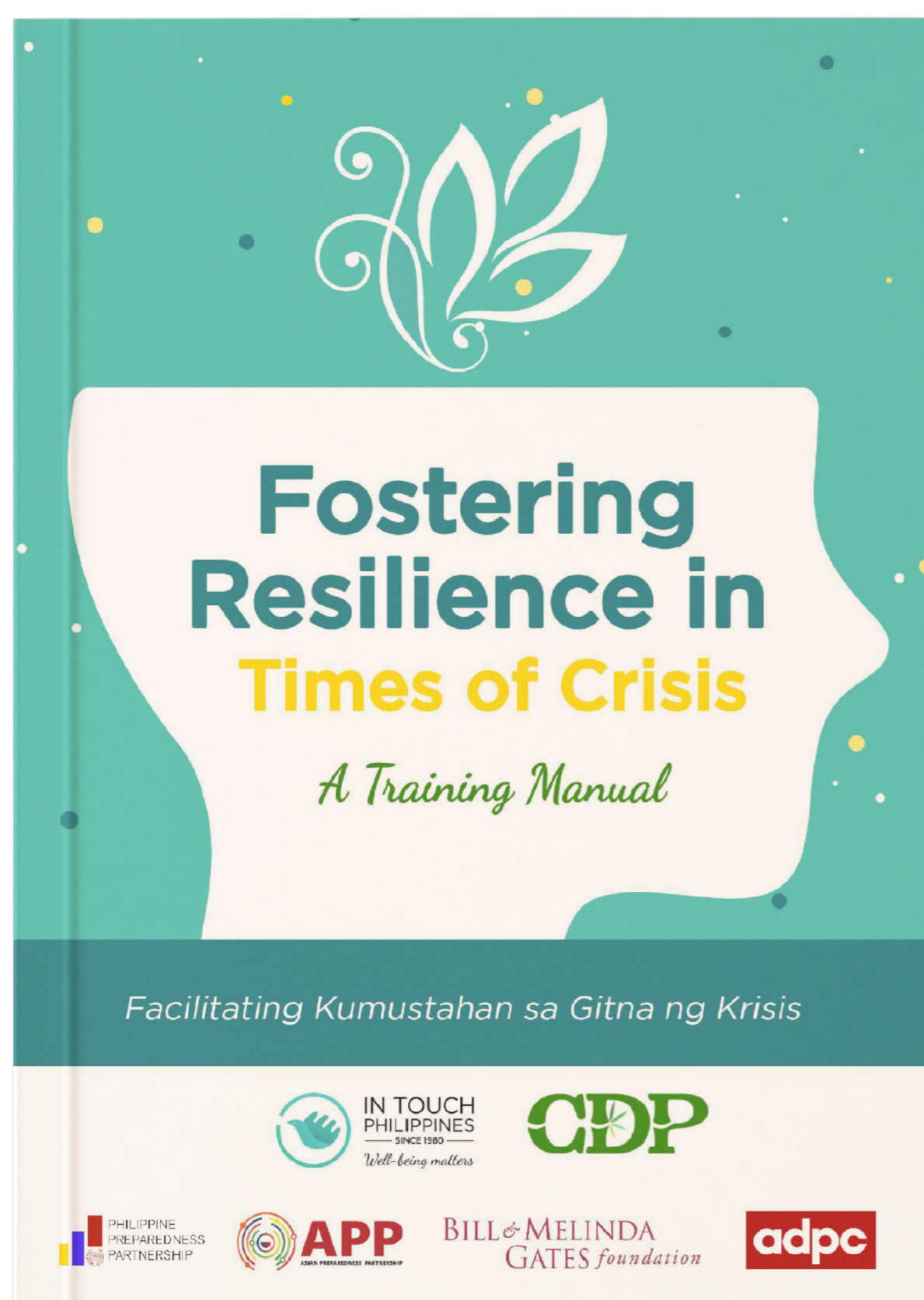
The COVID-19 pandemic caused a great impact on the general health as well as the socio-economic standing of the countries worldwide.

In the Philippines, different measures were taken by the government to flatten the curve of COVID-19 cases in the country. The measures, however, also had grave socio-economic impact to the communities especially to the most vulnerable groups in those areas under an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) (mostly in the National Capital Region). According to Ibon Foundation: "...using 2018 and 2019 labor force data, 18.9 million working Filipinos or 45% of 42.4 million employed have been displaced by the ECQ. 'Displaced' refers to job losses, part-time work, reduced pay, and other disruptions in livelihoods especially by informal earners." This meant a lot of hungry and angry disadvantaged Filipinos are still in need of help.

PhilPrep's Interventions

In the initial run of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, a growing need was felt to strengthen the emergency capacities of local actors in all levels of governance. As a contribution to that goal, the Philippine Preparedness Partnership (PhilPrep) undertook activities aimed at improving the sustainability of efforts by the front-liners by ensuring their sound mental health and wellbeing through the following:

1. Development of MH-PSS Module



In partnership with mental health professionals, In Touch Community Services, PhilPrep developed a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MH-PSS) module. This module was used in the conduct of the online sessions. Its development underwent improvements from its inception, incorporating learnings from the sessions conducted and from the innovations done by the facilitators.

2. Conduct of thirteen (13) MH-PSS online sessions

A total of thirteen (13) MH-PSS online sessions with a total of ninety-seven (97) participants consisted of people from different fields and aspects of frontline initiatives such as social workers, traffic enforcers, administrative aides, doctors, crisis line operators, call takers, monitoring personnel, safety officers, operations personnel, and municipal disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) workers. The data shows that the concentration of COVID-19 infection is highest in urban areas, particularly in Metro Manila, which is why PhilPrep targeted the areas of Quezon City and Pasig City. The latter is noteworthy in its innovative efforts in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 in its locality, proving to be an invaluable partner in the conduct of the online MH-PSS sessions. On the other hand, Quezon City constantly remains one of the hotbeds of the pandemic, leading to higher workloads and burnout rates for the front-liners. In addition, PhilPrep took the initiative to include doctors as target participants and was able to hold a session for doctors from *Ospital ng Makati*.







The sessions aimed to create a space where front-liners can share their COVID-19 experiences, including the stresses they faced and the coping mechanisms they employed, to renew their vigor and to plan for their next steps forward. Furthermore, a connection is maintained with the participants through group chats for each cluster. This provides a mechanism for the groups to continuously interact considering their similar situations and stay in touch with one another for further support. PhilPrep facilitators are also part of the mechanism to ensure that assistance is only a message or call away.

3. Development of MH-PSS Case Story Collection

Along with the online MH-PSS sessions conducted, PhilPrep identified key figures from the participants who have agreed to share their stories of resilience amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories were compiled and formed into a knowledge product highlighting the strength and resilience of our modern-day heroes during the country's crisis.



Six (6) stories of shared experiences coming from different perspectives of hope, leadership, and determination are encapsulated in the timely and relevant knowledge product.

4. Webinars on pandemic resilience and recovery for MSMEs and other identified vulnerable sectors

From September to October 2020, PhilPrep organized three (3) webinar sessions:

(i) Engaging MSMEs in Disaster Preparedness and Response

Aimed to present relevant data on post-disaster assessment as regards recent natural and human-induced disasters, the webinar highlighted best practices in disaster response measures and efforts from government agencies, private sectors, and humanitarian organizations.

(ii) Pandemic-Adaptive and Resilient MSME Supply Chains

This webinar focused on helping MSMEs develop innovative and proactive strategies for their enterprises. Being one of the heavily affected sectors because of the pandemic-induced disruption, the webinar provided insights on how they can make their supply chains secure and resilient against different hazards.

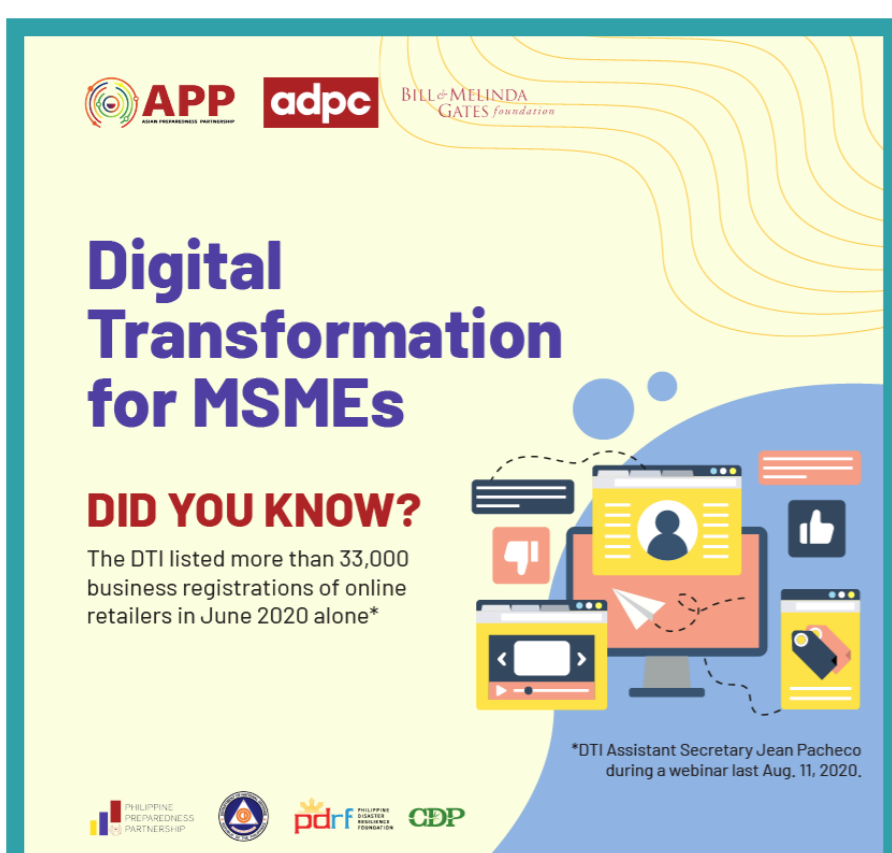
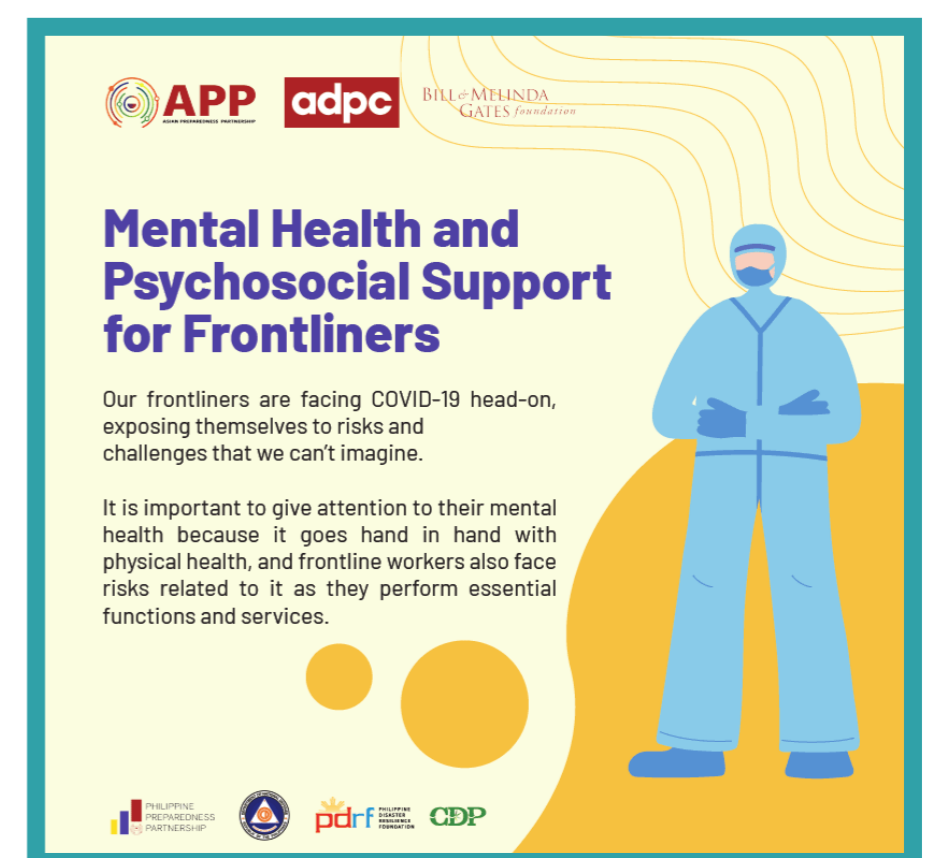
(iii) The Digital Shift: Adapting to Business and Education Challenges in the New Normal

The webinar intended to provide MSMEs and educators with guidance on making the pivot to increased online presence. The specific topics focused on online marketing and training, consumer behavior analysis, shift to e-commerce, and securing data online.



5. IEC materials such as online posters, social media cards, and infographics on COVID-19 awareness-raising and prevention in the workplace and in the community

To increase awareness and information in contribution to the prevention and response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic, six (6) information, education, and communication (IEC) materials were developed and disseminated in September 2020. In line with the overall theme of pandemic resilience and recovery for MSMEs and other vulnerable sectors, the IEC materials focused on the following topics: (i) workplace health and safety, (ii) MSME disaster preparedness and resilience, (iii) mental health and psychosocial support services (MH-PSS) for the front liners, (iv) MSME digital transformation, (v) persons with disabilities-owned enterprises, and (vi) gender and development for MSMEs.



6. Infomercial on preparedness and response for pandemic and other hazards in the community and in the workplace

Three (3) infomercials that seek to contribute to effective risk communication against the spread of the COVID-19 virus were produced. With that overall theme in mind, the three (3) infomercials cover the following topics: (i) Enterprise Resilience against COVID-19 (*Negosyong Matibay Laban sa COVID-19*); (ii) Family Preparedness for a Pandemic (*Pamilyang Laging Handa Laban sa COVID-19*); and (iii) Protecting Mental Health against Infodemia (*Pangalagaan ang Mental Health Laban sa Fake News*).



The infomercials presented stories of enterprise owners, Fely and Juan, who have been affected by the impacts of COVID-19 in their respective towns. With the Philippines being a disaster-prone country, especially those caused by natural hazards, the infomercial tackled preparedness and response measures recognizing compounding hazards with a special lens for pandemics. The story

compared how two entrepreneurs respond in protecting and preparing their respective businesses and families against these hazards. The story discussed preparedness tips, access to knowledge products such as resources and toolkits available online, and assistance from government agencies and private sector organizations.

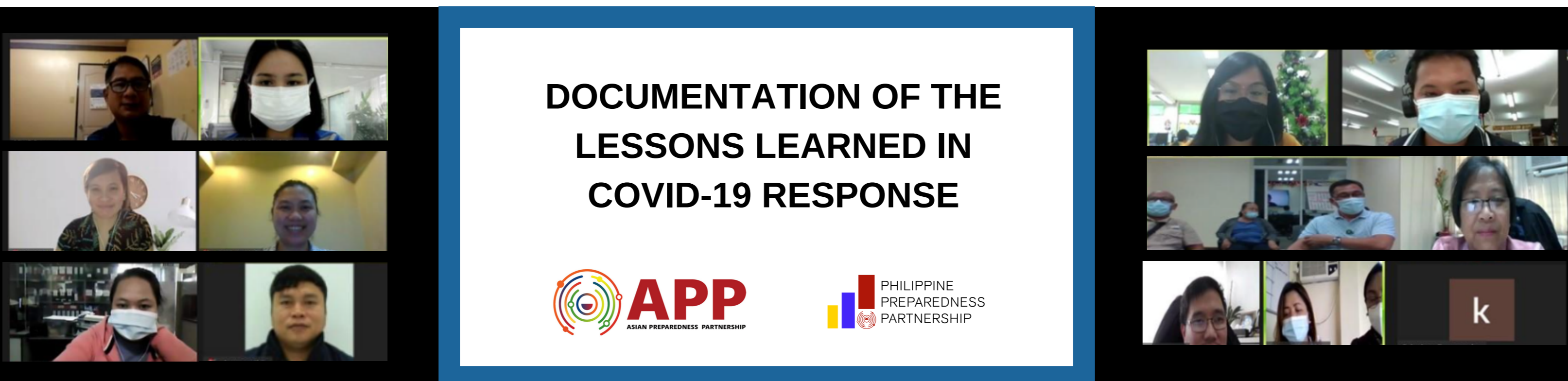
The infomercials also tackled how everyone dealt with confusion and challenges, especially in the socio-economic aspect brought about by the pandemic. To further cultivate the message of hope and resilience, the infomercials emphasized key points on the importance of disaster preparedness and response, community engagement, and mental health prioritization. The videos can be viewed in the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation's YouTube Channel.

7. COVID-19 analysis meetings for clusters

A framework was developed by technical writers commissioned by PhilPrep. It served as a guide in the facilitation of the activity. Instead of holding only five (5) cluster meetings, a total of 14 cluster meetings (focus group discussion) and key informant interviews were conducted. The participants came from identified local government units (LGUs) with the highest and lowest infection rates, key national agencies, private sector companies, and civil society organizations. This was done to ensure holistic consideration in coming up with a more realistic output.

8. COVID-19 after-action review

Documentation of lessons learned focusing on the implementation of Phase I and II of the National Action Plan were developed. This document included the timeline of actions from the planning phase up to the implementation of the national agencies down to the local government units. Several gaps and barriers were identified. At the same time, best practices were also documented. The document has already been endorsed to OCD, which acts as the secretariat and executive arm of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) of the Philippines. It is hoped that the recommendations identified in the document will be utilized for the development of the country's response plan for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.



Moreover, PhilPrep conducted an after-action review (AAR) workshop on 12 January 2021. It sought to review the actions taken at each phase of the COVID-19 pandemic response by PhilPrep and its member organizations. It also aimed to assess internal functionality and capacities in preparing for, detecting and responding to such public health emergencies. Finally, the AAR workshop aspired to identify the correct actions or improvements needed to institutionalize the lessons emerging from the management of such public health emergencies into the National and Regional APP.

Reference

APP COVID Grant Final Report. (2021). Philippine Preparedness Partnership.

