

REACTION TO THE ROAD MAP FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR (2010-2015)

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The overall goal of RA 9418 of strengthening volunteerism as a rural development strategy is highly commendable and is definitely the right direction to take. Foreign Volunteer Organizations (FVOs) have proven that this strategy works and it is good to note that there are already established best practices for this approach that can be utilized by the volunteer sector as it envisions institutionalizing this approach throughout the country. It will be worthwhile to look at these approaches and adapt them.

In general, the Road Map for the Volunteer Sector provides some sound recommendations on how the goal of the RA can be achieved. We appreciate that this was developed taking into consideration the inputs of various stakeholders in the voluntary sector. The participatory manner by which this was crafted is essential in ensuring that the Programs support the needs and directions of stakeholders. We hope that this will continue as we work further towards finalizing the strategy.

Relative to the draft Road Map, I would like to post the following comments for consideration of the Government and the Committee:

- 1) **Recognition, Rewards & Incentives.** Focus must be on inculcating the principles of volunteerism in people's daily lives and not only on advocating volunteerism as a movement. Volunteerism must become a way of life for Filipinos and more importantly an opportunity to take part in nation building. It must be viewed as a means to an end and an opportunity to exercise our patriotism and love of country and people. As such, we must not use 'rewards and incentives' as a driver of volunteerism as this defeats the very principle of volunteerism. Volunteerism must be a selfless act that individuals or group of individuals must be willing to take without the benefit of rewards or incentives. Therefore, "self-gain" must never be attached with voluntary acts. Public recognition of voluntary acts should be sufficient.
- 2) **Volunteer Processes.** Volunteerism must not be bureaucratic. It must remain spontaneous and it must encourage people through ease of engagement. It is important to ensure that volunteerism is not exploited by self-serving individuals or groups as such it is necessary to put in place certain security blankets, however the processes must not be rigid. We should establish a welcoming atmosphere that would encourage wider participation by all sectors.
- 3) **Partnership Building.** Establishing public-private sector partnership in volunteerism can be an effective approach and the environment for such partnerships to develop and flourish must be created and facilitated to ensure that such engagements happen and become successful. Local partnerships and volunteer programs must be encouraged and supported, however this does not necessarily mean that Government (PNVSCA) is on top of it all. PNVSCA's role should continue to be a coordinator and facilitator of volunteerism and not in

implementation. As such, I would caution against having them actively involved in volunteer program implementation, including the PNVSCA-LGU-SCU partnership. PNVSCA should continue to be a regulatory and oversight agency.

- 4) **Volunteering for Development.** Local volunteer initiatives must be based on local needs and circumstances, and volunteer programs must conform to these needs. We must encourage the development of provincial or municipal/city volunteer strategies and these must be aligned with the local development agenda. We must harness local participation and partnerships, so that volunteers become the stakeholders themselves and therefore have a clear stake in the initiatives they will be participating in. Community Ownership must also be established, programs must be owned by the communities and not by corporate, LGU, GA or NGO's implementing or facilitating them. It must become a genuine community initiative and the people must be part of all community development efforts.

On behalf of the Foreign Volunteer Organizations we would like to reiterate the significance of this initiative and we commend the people behind this move. We will continue to support the growth of the volunteer sector in the Philippines because we sincerely believe that volunteerism is indeed a key strategy to national development.