

National Forum on RA 9418

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Batasan Complex, QC

REACTION / AFFIRMATION

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I'm happy with RA 9418 because it defines volunteering as I want it to be: an act that is empowering and good to both giving and receiving parties without counting the cost as the service comes from the heart of the giver. It is now a state declaration that volunteering is caring for others. For us Filipinos, moved by our faith or religious conviction and exposure to the *bayanihan* culture of giving, helping sharing and caring, volunteering as a way of life is not that difficult to internalize.

But have we been strategic about all our volunteering efforts? Have we maximized the opportunity to participate in public and civic affairs without being hired as government employees or elected to public office after spending so much?

RA 9418 mandates us to be strategic in our *paglilingkod-kusang loob* in order to achieve our goal of, not only rural but national development and international understanding. Since the volunteer act of 2007 did not define national development and international understanding in the context of volunteering, I would like to think that *pagkukusa at pagbubukas-palad* may engage in and contribute to any aspect of development, *basta hindi naghihintay ng bayad o pabor, kundi ang makatulong sa kapwa*.

Most volunteer organizations and volunteer service programs under VOICE are engaged in "development" volunteering. For a year or two, their volunteers are deployed as informal or formal teachers, pastoral workers, health workers, community organizers, youth formators or small business advisors. But development planning has several unsolved problems. Development strategies come to nothing when natural calamities and killer disasters strike.

After the Ondoy experience and the Haiti catastrophe, *naisip ko na dapat nga talagang maging strategic ang volunteer sector. Kaya interesado ako ditto sa ginagawang roadmap. Nais kung makita ang volunteer roadmap na merong merging traffic, hindi yong intersection na may nakahinto at merong lumiliko, kundi yong parang QMC kung saan lahat ng mga stakeholders ay magkasama at sabay-sabay na umiikot pero pagkatapos ng ikot, kanya-kanyang direksyon na naman ng paglalakbay*.

Each volunteer organization or service program has its own mandate and specialty contributory to local or national development. That's why each travels in different roads. Yet, these volunteer groups must merge from time to time to effectively and strategically achieve this goal. I believe RA 9418 is giving us this opportunity to meet at the rotunda. One concrete fruit is this national forum. *Maswerte ang andito ngayon kasi kasama ka sa pag-engineer ng unang kalsada ng paglilingkod kusang-loob na lalakaran natin sa loob ng anim na taon kasama ang bagong Pangulo ng Pilipinas sino man sya (pero sana ang manok ko!)*

If I were to prioritize what to do the next 6 years, I go for proposals on capability-building & training particularly on the strengthening of volunteering in LGUs down to the barangay level where the action really is) and regular skills training for volunteers). *Pangarap at nakikita kong matutupad ito dahil sa RA 9418.*

Calamity prone area and Pilipinas, average of 20 storms a year. *Pangkaraniwan na lang balita na may nasusunog na palengke, residential areas, schools, boarding houses. Lindol na ala-Haiti? Parating na raw, di lang alam kung kelan. Di ba mas ok kung sa bawat barangay sa Pilipinas, merong organized and skilled rescue and emergency volunteers? Di ba mas basic need sila kaysa 'development' volunteers?* As earlier said, our national development depends on how fast and effective we are in responding to these unsolved problems of development planning. *Matuto tayo sa Ondoy (nakita naman natin sa slides sa opening prayer) at sa Haiti earthquake. Babagal ang pag-unlad n gating bayan kung matagal tayo makaahon sa lindol at baha at bagyo na hindi natin mapigilan.* So it's just strategic for every barangay to have skilled and ever-ready rescue volunteers and if possible at least 50% of the population there is trained of these survival skills well. *Nalaman kong nasunog ang buong palengke ng aming bayan. Tumawag pa ng volunteer fire-fighters sa kabilang bayan dahil walang sariling trained fire-fighting volunteers ang bayan.* We promote volunteering as a way of life. Pero diba mas strategic if we have trained and skilled volunteer-citizens who internalize the culture of safety. Volunteering as a way of life is good citizenship and living out the culture of safety as self-defense and preservation in times of disasters that will sustain our development strategies.

Mahirap bang gawin ito the next six years? Armed with RA 9418 and this roadmap, we various stakeholders in the volunteer sector together with the CRD of Congress can help each other in achieving this goal and perhaps as a sector, this will be our greatest contribution to national development. We can partner with Red Cross that I think is planning something like this. What is the first step? Ayon sa RA 9418, let's gather and see each other at the volunteer rotunda (baka ito na seguro ang maging volunteer consortium, where the merging traffic of service from the heart will take place. Talking about kind hearts that serve, advanced happy valentines day to all and enjoy volunteering.