

Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium

Report on the 2nd Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium,

held on July 17th-19th, 2008

Theme: "Empowering the Poor for Poverty Alleviation toward MDGs:
Partnership Building between Japanese and Philippine NGOs"

Host City: Tokyo, Japan

Venue: Nihon Seinenkan (Shinjuku Ward), International House of Japan
(Minato Ward)

Participants: NGOs from both countries (60 organizations from Japan, 23 from the Philippines), people with government ties and ordinary citizens, approximately 200 people



2nd Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium

Background: Based on the recommendations made during the 1st Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium held in November of 2006, this symposium had four objectives: (1) to further facilitate mutual understanding between Philippine and Japanese NGOs, (2) to promote ongoing cooperative projects, (3) to continue efforts to realize the long term goal of establishing the "Philippines-Japan Partnership Fund," and (4) to widen the scope of the partnership of civil society sectors in both countries.

Results:

- Thanks to the participation of 23 NGOs based in the Philippines, their understanding of the Japanese NGO situation and of Japanese society was deepened.
- Examples of collaborative efforts between Japanese and Philippine NGOs were jointly introduced, thematic groups were held where detailed opinions were actively exchanged and each thematic group summarized an action plan.
- Juan M. Flavier (Former Philippine Senator, Former Secretary of the Department of Health-Philippines, and NGO Leader), the Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Japan, and Japanese parliamentarians were invited to participate as a way for them to further their understanding and support for both countries' NGO activities. Dialogue was advanced with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), two organizations that are key to the implementation of Japanese ODA to the Philippines.
- Participation was received from Filipinos working in Japan as well as ordinary Japanese citizens and an understanding of the hardships faced by Filipino OFWs was deepened among NGO representatives and ordinary people.

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- Based on the recommendations from the 1st Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium, a new action plan called the “Tokyo Declaration” was put forward. In this declaration, a plan for a “Philippines-Japan NGO Partnership Fund” was written up, and the Japanese and Philippine NGOs agreed to actively work towards its establishment.
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Summary of Proceedings

<Opening Ceremony>



At the opening ceremony, after the organizers gave welcome remarks, they recognized the presence of Mr. Taro Nakayama, a member of the House of Representatives and the President of the Philippines-Japan Parliamentarian Friendship League, and His Excellency Mr. Domingo L. Siazon, the Philippine Ambassador to Japan.

<Keynote Speeches>

“Democracy, Empowerment of the Poor, and the Role of NGOs: What We Expect from Strengthened Partnership of Japanese and Philippine NGOs”

Former Senator Juan M. Flavier (Former Philippine Senator, Former Secretary of the Department of Health-Philippines, and NGO Leader)

Former Philippine Senator Juan Flavier said that using income as the only basis for measuring poverty is difficult and that it is necessary to look at poverty reduction from both an economic perspective and a societal perspective. He expressed that NGOs play a role in this relationship with the government and the private sector. He told the audience that even in business management, there has to be a system in which the beneficiaries can participate in the decision making process.





“Partnership Building Among Japanese and Philippines Civil Sectors: The Role of Legislators”

Ms. Wakako Hironaka (Member of Parliament, House of Councilors)

Ms. Hironaka outlined her expectations of the NGOs, saying that because the ODA budget was decreasing, there is a need for the government to work more with NGOs so as to improve the quality of ODA projects, and that in terms of international cooperation the role played by NGOs is huge.

<Panel Discussion : “How Can NGOs Accomplish Their Mission? What are their Challenges and Breakthroughs?”>

Coordinator: Professor Tsuneaki Yoshida, University of Tokyo

Three individuals representing Japanese and Philippine NGOs and one person representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part in a panel discussion. The session served as a forum for the panelists to introduce examples of collaboration among different NGOs, and collaboration between NGOs and the government or the industrial sector. It helped the audience think about the importance of

building partnerships amongst NGOs and between NGOs and other sectors, focusing on Japanese and Philippine NGOs that aim to alleviate poverty and develop society. The panelist from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, explained that there were six places in the Country Assistance Program (CAP) for the Philippines where the word “NGO” was used, and therefore, opinions of NGOs were reflected and that the Ministry recognized the importance of working with NGOs. He also emphasized that NGOs had a strong role to play in the implementation of the CAP.



<Afternoon of July 17th and Morning of July 18th,

Thematic Group Discussion I : Present Situation of NGO Partnership and Future Perspective>



Representatives from NGOs divided into groups (Children’s Education, Children’s Health [Maternal Health], Agriculture and Rural Development, Minority Groups, Peace Building, and Overseas Filipino Workers in Japan [Special Workshop]), discussed the current situation of cooperation on these matters, and exchanged opinions on what the long-term view of the situation is.

On the first day, these activities were held at the main venue, and on the second day, they were held in the respective offices of NGOs and JICA. At each group discussion, a lively exchange of information and opinions took place, and for each NGO, it was an opportunity to deepen mutual knowledge and understanding. Also discussed were the necessary steps for the future.

<Evening of July 18th, Special Workshop: “Realities and Issues on the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Japan” >

Three individuals as well as representatives from six organizations presented on issues surrounding foreign laborers staying in Japan and the activities supporting such individuals. Topics discussed included unjust conditions such as lower wages as well as the inconveniences of everyday life, and lack of awareness and knowledge among the laborers. This event served as a place for a number of Filipino laborers in Japan to air grievances about their own hardships.

For the Japanese and Philippine NGO leaders, it was an opportunity to understand the problems surrounding OFWs and to recognize the importance of supporting them. (The session included around 80 participants from the general public.)



<Afternoon of July 18th , Thematic Group Discussion II: Japanese ODA and the Proposed “Philippines-Japan NGO Partnership Fund” >

The participants welcomed the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ First Country Assistance Planning Division. After taking in his explanation of the Country Assistance Program (CAP) for the Philippines, the Japanese and Philippine NGO participants engaged him in a lively question and answer session and exchanged ideas with him. (There were about 80 participants representing Japanese and Philippine NGOs.)

<Morning of July 19th , Public Seminar: “Filipinos and their family ties in the Japanese Society – *Kotobuki, Dekasegi, Kokuseki*” >

At the first session of this open-to-the-public seminar, carried out in collaboration with the Tokyo-Philippines Study Group, there was a showing of the documentary “*Dekasegi*” as well as a lecture by its director, Mr. Rey Ventura. At the second session, two representatives of NGOs that support Filipinos in Japan as well as Mr. Ventura took part in a panel discussion with the main topic being “The current situation of Filipinos in Japan and their children’s future.” Several voices came forward at the event saying that cooperation between the government and NGOs on this issue is necessary. Also, Former Philippine Senator Juan M. Flavier said that there is a need to approach the root cause from the Philippine side. (There were about 130 participants, including ordinary citizens.)

<Afternoon of July 19th, Japan-Philippines NGO Symposium Closing Ceremony>



As the conclusion to the events of the past three days, the opinions and recommendations voiced by the discussion groups were presented, and a report from the planning committee responsible for the Philippines-Japan NGO Partnership Fund was delivered. Finally, the Tokyo Declaration that was mutually agreed upon by the Japanese and Philippine NGOs was presented and was adopted after making some revisions.

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