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Dare to make a difference

**UNISDR Secretariat
Administrator for the UN Sasakawa
Award for Disaster Reduction
Palais des Nations
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10**

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are writing to express our support for the nomination of the Municipality of Saint Bernard, Philippines, and its chief executive, Mayor Rico Rentuza as Laureate of the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Saint Bernard, with the leadership of Hon. Rentuza and commitment of the community, proves that disaster risk reduction is doable even in a vulnerable municipality. Capacity-building for local government units, mobilization of community for disaster preparedness through contingency planning, community drills, early warning system, and the implementation of small scale mitigation projects are some of Saint Bernard efforts to become a resilient community. In addition, schools and youth made their part on this advocacy, through integration of disaster risk reduction in school curriculum. The municipality also ensures that disaster risk reduction is being mainstreamed in their development plans. These efforts were recognized, thus two years after the tragic Guinsaogon landslide, the municipality become one of the recipients of the 2008 and 2009 Gawad Kalasag Award for best practices in disaster risk reduction.

We have been working with the Municipality of Saint Bernard and Hon. Rentuza since 2006 in the implementation of community-based disaster risk reduction projects namely ACCORD, ACCORD-2 and ASCEND (Strengthening Assets and Capacities of Local Government for Resilience to Disasters or ACCORD; Strengthening Assets and Capacities of Local Government for Resilience to Disasters Year 2, or ACCORD-2; and Advancing Safer Communities and Environments against Disasters or ASCEND). To complement the DRR projects, we are implementing the Food Facility Project with the Saint Bernard municipality. The idea is that by providing livelihood opportunities to vulnerable communities, their vulnerability is reduced and their disaster risk reduction capacities are strengthened. These projects are supported by the European Union.

Heavy rainfall on January 2011 brought about by cold front resulted to landslides and floods in the municipality. Saint Bernard contingency plans and their DRR capacities were tested. In general, Saint Bernard demonstrated that they learned their lessons from the past disasters by doing pre-emptive evacuation, organized emergency response, and disaster- and climate-proofing livelihoods.

Finally, Saint Bernard is taking their lessons from both emergency response and DRR experiences and utilizing these capacities in undertaking a long term recovery program which is one and the same as its long-term development program.

We affirm our support to Hon. Rentuza and the Municipality of Saint Bernard, Philippines to become a recipient of Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Sincerely,

Celso B. Dulce, Jr.

CARE Nederland Representative in the Philippines