Less than a week after Yolanda made landfall, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova deployed 10 urgently needed UNESCO professionals in Manila and the affected regions to assess needs with the line departments and local organizations. The team included a hydrologist, a Disaster Risk Reduction specialist, a Cultural Heritage expert, a senior specialist in education in emergencies, an education program coordinator, a communication and information program specialist, a post-disaster response program coordinator, as well as the director of the UNESCO Jakarta Office.

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In addition, a UNESCO Desk Manila headed by Senior Coordinator was deployed from Paris to oversee operations in PH in the medium term. The office is temporarily camped at the Enterprise building on Paseo de Roxas and prepared for a long haul to cooperate with local officials and international donors at rehabilitation work.

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The Paris-based international organization is equipped to respond to post-conflict (Iraq, Afghanistan) and post-disaster (Haiti, Aceh, Myanmar) situations. It looks to the Philippines to take the lead and will support with processional and lend its experience in rehabilitation work.

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Sensible to the church as the center of the community, UNESCO will tap the local populace in restoration or rebuilding of churches “to give them ownership” and to revive their hopes and dreams. Jobs are welcome bonus.

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Spain for historical reasons will take the lead in restoring the churches in Cebu and in Bohol (the latter, a pre-Yolanda victim by the 7.2 Richter earthquake). American early ties to Guian may focus on the churches there. UNESCO will concentrate on Leyte, principally Tacloban.

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Wherever possible, UNESCO wishes to assist PH in restoring the churches according to the old technique, including mortar from white of eggs; (expect surfeit of Tocino del Cielo). A partner country expert’s suggestion to use coral stones won’t fly, knowing UNESCO’s program on coral reef protection.

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(Ernie Fajardo suggests veneer slices of corals pasted on hollow blocks. Lafarge may also lend its developed modern technology to simulate/recreate similar surfaces.)

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For churches that were totaled and beyond restoration, Fr. Milan Ted Torralba of Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) looks at “sustainability design,” – meaning that if tsunami and earthquake are the new norm, the structure should be designed to be built and rebuilt.
First proposals were made and coordinated through the UN Humanitarian mechanism. UNESCO desk Manila sees the immediate need for zoning and to tap local radio stations while distributing portable radios to inform and to lift spirits of the community. (Like how Pacquiao’s win lifted spirits.) Finally, there is a crying need to restore PAGASA’s capability to monitor sea surge.

Philippines/UNESCO-ICCOM mission met on December 4 to assess the extent of the damage with NCCA, National Museum, National Historical Commission, UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, the CBCP, and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). A folio documentation by NCCA of damage to churches and historical edifices was working document of the meeting.

At last week’s “Ateneo Night” fund-raising for Yolanda victims, in addition to the gate receipts from SRO crowd, the stars RJ Jacinto, Mr. Shooli aka Jun Urbano, Gary Lising, Joe Mari Chan, Jimmy Bondoc, and Karylle handed to Red Cross chairman and perennial cheerleader Dick Gordon two checks – R1 million from Katrina Ponce Enrile and over R500 K from Rico Agcaoili (prexy of Baguio Country Club).

Professor Agrípino “Nonoy” Diestro, former Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Conductor and President and Resident Conductor of Angono National Symphonic Band, passed away. He was looking to use his talent to support Yolanda victims. “Nonoy” was related to Angono’s two national artists – via his grandfather, the eldest brother of Lucio Diestro San Pedro, and his mother Gaudiosa, youngest sister of Botong Francisco’s wife Nene. He was laid to rest in Angono last Saturday, his left hand clutching a rosary and the right holding a baton, ready to conduct the next piece. FEEDBACK: jaz_aide@yahoo.com}

0 comments

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