

SCLF PHILIPPINE PARTNERS' STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

November 2008

Maryhill Retreat House, Taytay, Rizal, PHILIPPINES

We, the Philippine partners of SCLF, who have come together at Maryhill (Taytay), for the SCLF Philippine Partners Consultation on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (November 24-26, 2008) to reflect on our work, hereby affirm the position taken by CIDSE on Development and Climate Justice. Likewise, we are alarmed by the very visible effects of Climate Change that we have experienced firsthand together with the vulnerable sectors that we are serving in various parts of the country.

In December 2004, more than 2,000 of the 27,000 inhabitants of Infanta, Quezon died from flashfloods and mudslides triggered by 3 typhoons (tropical cyclones) that hit the eastern coast of Luzon in a week's time. In June 2008, another typhoon caused the sinking of an inter-island ferry in Philippine waters, drowning more than 700 passengers, mostly women and children. The same storm ravaged the island of Panay resulting in damage to crops, infrastructure, and property worth over 2 billion pesos. Several communities served by PINA Foundation, an SCLF Partner engaged in sustainable agriculture in Kalibo, Aklan and KMALIG another partner organization in Negros have suffered damage to their crops, livestock, houses and farm infrastructures estimated at P2.8 million.

Climate Change is a life and death issue for Filipinos! Its adverse effects compound our already difficult situation as we struggle to survive within a systemic impoverishing structure historically imposed upon us!

Marginal farmers bleed the land for dwindling yields, while confronting the uncertainties of unseasonal climatic extremes of relentless rains and drought. The farmers served by MASIPAG, GASA, BDSI in Mindanao, by CSR, VIMCON, KMALIG and PINA in the Visayas, and PARRDS and SARILAYA in Luzon have experienced dramatic reduction in their harvests due to constant flooding, and unpredictable weather conditions. In many parts of the country, some crops like corn could no longer be planted because of heavy rainfall or long drought.

Small fishers settle for the meager catch that contaminated and polluted waters (rivers and seas) grudgingly offer amidst bleaching of reefs,

destruction of mangrove forests, and degradation of fishing grounds. The fishers served by VIMCON in Ormoc, Leyte, CERD in Mondragon, Northern Samar in the Visayas and Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur in the island of Mindanao have started to relocate themselves to higher grounds due to rising sea levels. Whereas they could go out fishing for six months some years back, today they could only fish for three months further reducing their already meager incomes.

Our indigenous peoples struggle for survival while lamenting the loss of their homes, ancestral land, and culture, the MNCs unabated mining and logging operations, and the construction of dams for electrification of cities. The Agtas in the Sierra Madre served by TCD/SPA have been afflicted by malaria, typhoid, and TB due to widespread resurgence of disease-carrying mosquitoes, shortage of food, and low access to basic health services. They have also been forced to resettle deeper into the hinterlands because of rising sea levels, flooding, and the encroachment by multinational businesses (including legal and illegal logging) into their ancestral lands.

Poor rural and indigenous women who are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources are threatened by climate change as traditional food sources become more unpredictable and scarce.

The risks of women contracting a serious illness can also be aggravated by environmental effects caused by climate change. They will not only be affected by the disease itself but also by increased work caring for sick family members.

These conditions make poor women more vulnerable to situations of violence as they struggle to keep their families alive. In fact, majority of those who died during the disasters in Infanta and Panay and those who drowned in the recent sea tragedy in the Philippine waters at the height of a strong typhoon were women and children.

Our people cry out for Justice! Global warming impacts do not fall evenly across people and nations, for it is the poor nations and the poor within countries who suffer most, exacerbating inequities in wealth and health status and access to adequate food, clean water and other sources. Ironic, given that it is the developed countries (including China and India) that cause so much harm comparative to the developing countries of the south.

Our government on one hand recognizes the urgency of addressing the evident impacts of climate change. On the other hand, its economic platforms, policies and support structures remain slanted towards the proliferation of ecologically destructive businesses. Mining and logging industries continue to lord over the mineral and forest resources all over the

country. Various plantations are still allowed to operate using toxic chemicals, to dump hazardous wastes in our rivers, do aerial spraying and to encroach into our watersheds. The operation of coal and fossil fuel-based power plants and transportation facilities remain unregulated. More ironic is the fact that the government does not lift a finger to hold the polluter businesses and companies accountable for their contribution in poisoning the environment.

Amidst this deplorable situation, we commit ourselves to implement the following urgent tasks:

- To develop a strong network and partnership structure among SCLF partners and advocates at the national level;
- To challenge government to make its policies consistent with internationally accepted standards for the protection of the environment and for the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere;
- To pursue initiatives and to develop mechanisms to address problems of food insecurity and poverty;
- To intensify our efforts to develop awareness and capabilities to address issues on climate change and disaster risk reduction among the people in our local communities;
- To engage the youth in initiatives addressing climate change and disaster risk management;
- We further commit ourselves to continue and intensify the implementation of the efforts that we already started to address climate change such as:
 - mangrove reforestation and management
 - promotion of sustainable agriculture and indigenous cultural practices
 - promotion of diversified integrated farming system
 - identification and pilot-testing of disaster resilient livelihood technologies
 - continue exploring sources for clean and renewable energy
 - adopt and promote alternative, healthy and sustainable lifestyles
 - conduct researches on the impacts of climate change in the local communities
 - demand the business community to include climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in their corporate social responsibility
 - engage the business community on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction issues and accountabilities
 - popularize concept of ecological debt
 - sustain campaign against development aggression projects such as mining, dam and logging

- To develop international solidarity networks that will work for climate justice;
- To explore mechanisms for the enforcement and implementation of international laws and protocols
- To advocate against the use of petro-chemicals and genetically modified organisms in agriculture and patenting of life forms at the international level

We have been strengthened by the initiatives and by the gains of the communities in preserving lives and in protecting the environment. We have been moved and encouraged by their resilience and their willingness to share amidst difficulty and scarcity. We have been inspired by the spirit of solidarity and by our common resolve to overcome all obstacles to achieve meaningful change. In unison with our faith and deep spirituality, we can make our Earth livable and the FULLNESS OF LIFE a reality.

Signed by the participant of the 2008 SCLF Philippine Partners' Consultation on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction on 24-26 November 2008 at Maryhill Retreat House, Taytay, Rizal PHILIPPINES:

Integrated Pastoral Development Initiative Inc.
 Integrated Pastoral Development Initiative Inc. South
 Balay Dabaw Sur Inc (BDSI)
 Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG Mindanao)
 Group of Advocates on Sustainable Agriculture (GASA)
 Center for Empowerment and Resource Development Inc. (CERD Hinatuan)
 CERD Mondragon
 Visayas Management Consultancy Inc. (VIMCON)
 People's Initiative and Network in Aklan (PINA Foundation)
 Medical Mission Group (MMG)
 KMALIG INC.
 Christians for Social Reforms (CSR)
 Christians for Social Reforms – Negros (CSR-Negros)
 Tribal Center for Development (TCD)
 Sentrong Paaralan ng Agta (SPA)
 Kasarian – Kalayaan (SARILAYA)
 Institute of Women's Studies (IWS)
 Partnership for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services PARRDS
 International Movement of Catholic Students – Asia Pacific (IMCS)
 International Young Christian Students of Asia (IYCS)
 YAPAK Prelature of Infanta
 Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)
 Task Force Detainees Philippines (TFDP)
 Kahiusahan sa mga Layko sa Mindanao (KALAMI)
 Children and Youth – Prelature of Infanta