

**Regional Training Course on Disasters  
for School Heads/Officials**  
14-18 February 2011  
Crown Regency Hotel Makati, Manila, Philippines

**OPENING REMARKS**

Ladies and gentlemen, guests, my colleagues from the Department of Education- school heads and principals, our friends from SEAMEO, especially those from Cambodia, Lao DPR and Vietnam, our partners, and organizers of this worthwhile endeavour, welcome and a pleasant morning to all!

The ASEAN Region strives to achieve the fundamentals of EFA goals by harmonizing all education efforts of all Member Countries toward the achievement of these goals. It has always been the top priority of the Education Communities in ASEAN to protect, secure, and advance the learning conditions of our learners.

In spite these interventions, the emergence of new challenges, especially those that are beyond our control such as calamities, is inevitable; hence, they hamper the already established and mainstreamed learning mechanisms of learners, and at the same time, destroy available learning tools and infrastructure.

It is in this light that SEAMEO, through SEAMEO TROPED Network, seeks to ensure continuity in learning of our children. This means dealing with threats before they happen, and not after they have already destroyed everything. Thus, there is no better time than now to conduct this Training Course on Disasters in order for us to eventually achieve better

understanding and broader perspective on emergencies and disasters, as well as their effects to our education systems.

It is important to note that disasters, calamities, and emergencies have adverse impact on us. So when these unfortunate events happen, they pose threats not only on the learning aspect of our children and teachers, but more importantly on their safety.

Natural disasters destroy teaching paraphernalia, school buildings and facilities as well as homes of learners and teachers. As a result, displaced and non-displaced children are deprived of their learning tools and environment; while, unaffected schools are used as evacuation centers. This situation catalyzes a domino effect. Rehabilitation of school facilities also adds to the dilemma of our learning communities.

With all of these, we can only wish that we can turn back the time, when summer is all sunny, rainy days are perfect time to play and take solace with family and friends, and when schools are just shelters for learning.

For the reason that our schools play a significant role during emergencies, calamities, and disasters, retooling the workforce and empowering our school heads to address these gaps become indispensable. It is for the same reason that I trust this Training Course to equip our school heads, principals, and administrators with high level of awareness and know-how in managing their schools and the welfare of learners in times of emergencies, calamities, and disasters.

With the development of a Disaster Preparedness Plan by the end of the Course, we hope that the effects of these natural occurrences will be effectively handled, mitigated, and addressed by our schools.

This Training Course is like a *Little Giant* to me. It is so simple, so meek, and yet so powerful to create a huge impact and difference in protecting the welfare of our learning communities.

I commend you all for seeing the necessity to prepare in time for disasters, calamities, and emergencies. I would also like to congratulate the organizers for paving the way for a better understanding of these conditions and its impact to us.

I wish for a fruitful learning experience to all of you and a good bonding for friendship, especially this Valentine's Day.

To all our friends from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam, may you find time to enjoy our beautiful City of Manila.

Thank you very much! *Mabuhay!*