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WE just finished commemorating, albeit somewhat low key, Earth Day 2021 (actually, a three-day event celebrated from April 20 to 22). In recent years, Earth Day's primary objective has morphed into raising awareness about global climate changes. It is very apt for a country such as the Philippines, which by most accounts, is the country most prone to climate change and the disasters it spawns such as typhoons, floods and drought. These disasters, in turn, create a plethora of issues such as stronger storm surges, higher sea levels, bleached coral reefs, dwindling fish stocks, denuded mangroves and disappearing sea grass meadows, just to name a few, which in turn, have deleterious effects on coastal fish stocks, crops, coastal properties, etc., a veritable domino effect of negatives on all areas of our life.

Enter the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), an agreement whose objective is to substantially reduce disaster risks and losses in lives, livelihood and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries. The goal is to "prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks, through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery and thus strengthen resilience."

The guiding institution behind this is the United Nations Office for Disasters and Risk Reduction and the private sector partner is an international network known as the Private Sector Alliance for Disaster- resilient Societies with a very active and pioneering partner in Arise Philippines organized through the initiatives of SM Prime Holdings Inc. Other notable members of the alliance are the Aboitiz Group, Belle Corp., Meralco, GMA, Atlas Mining, Ateneo de Manila University, the Asian Institute of Management, Price Waterhouse Coopers, the Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association, Philippine Business for the Environment just to name a few.

The Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association, or PIRA, a relatively late addition to the alliance has added its muscle to the initiatives of ARISE Philippines. In a recent meeting with ARISE Global and the UNDRR, it presented the various initiatives the PIRA, in collaboration with the Insurance Commission and its woke commissioner lawyer Dennis Funa and his deputy, lawyer Erickson Balmes (whose academic credentials include higher studies in disaster risk management), together with other multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the GIZ and Earth Security, an international NGO working to recognize the value of natural ecosystems.

The initiatives currently being worked on include the Philippine Catastrophe Insurance Facility which is being created to increase Philippine financial resilience toward natural disasters to hasten economic recovery after a disaster strikes, address the catastrophic insurance gap, create a more risk-appropriate rating environment that would ensure sustainable premium rates and coverages, increase the catastrophe resilience of the local insurance industry and its capacity to retain such risks and be able to provide the populace with more inclusive access to catastrophic insurance protection.

Another is a project to create and introduce parametric micro-insurance product for micro, small and medium enterprises, as they are among the most underserved and least protected of the populace. The triggers for this product would be heavy rainfall and windstorm or typhoons. This is done in collaboration with the GIZ.

Yet another initiative, this time under the auspices of the ADB, is to increase the agriculture insurance capacity in the country by getting the private insurance companies involved initially by way of reinsurance whereby local companies offer their capacity to the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. which holds the mandate to write this type of cover.

Finally, the project with Earth Security, in collaboration with other institutions such as the Asian Institute of Management and Business for Sustainable Development, is meant to catalyze models and partnerships for insurance to support nature-based climate solutions for adaptation. The research phase is the next step and results of this research will dictate the next steps forward.

The local insurance industry recognizes the value of disaster risk management and that insurance, though part of the solution in rigid and traditionally defined roles, can do much more and go beyond accepted ways of addressing the burning issues of the day. We make ourselves available to join forces with like-minded groups and alliances with the end in mind of making the world a better place for all, especially for future generations.