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RADIO ASPECT OF THE PINATUBO ERUPTION

DISASTER BROADCAST

BY JOHN S. MANALILI
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Philippine Broadcasting Service

BRIEF ON PBS-RADYO NG BAYAN

PBS-RADYO NG BAYAN, the Philippine government radio arm, has 34 radio stations nationwide, four in Metro Manila. PBSA is only one of several radio networks in the Philippines, where there are more than 500 radio stations, mostly private and commercial. It is under the Office of the Press Secretary, the information arm of Philippine Government.

PINATUBO ROLE

BEFORE

RADYO NG BAYAN held regular interviews with Phivolcs director and other officials on the updates of their monitoring of volcanic activities of Pinatubo and another one, Taal. As mentioned in an earlier paper, Phivolcs supplied media outfits with pertinent info.

DURING

Parenthetically, we would like to briefly describe a nationwide disaster management structure of the Philippine Government. We have the National Disaster Coordinating Council headed by the defense secretary, with other support agencies of the government. Under it are regional disaster coordinating councils, and then provincial, municipal and barangay levels.

Aside from the usual interviews and coordination with regional and local disaster officials, mayors and governors of affected provinces, and also with the victims, PBS-Radyo ng Bayan immersed itself in the disaster area.

It set up a "satellite station" with a Mosley transmitter, handheld and mobile radio transceivers. This satellite station relayed to the main studio in
Manila information on the rainfall and lahar flow emanating from the watch points of Phivolcs and the Regional Disaster Coordinating Councils. We had radio connections with almost all the municipalities in the affected areas, as stated in an agreement we forged with local officials. Our reports then come from the victims themselves, represented by their leaders. One unique feature of the sustained coverage was the close monitoring of infrastructure projects being set up, like dike reconstruction, to ensure the quality.

AFTER

The Pinatubo disaster is unique in that its effect is continuing. It is estimated that the millions of cubic meters of lahar, which Pinatubo spewed out, will be washed down on year 2001 yet.

Coordination was also made on rehabilitation aspect, with the Mount Pinatubo Commission on the following: resettlement, livelihood, early warning, and relief work. Since the budget secretary of the government then headed the commission, we had access on the information on the financial side of it.

IMPLICATIONS

Close coordination among the victims on how they see the disaster from their point of view, including listening to their own proposed solutions, was one area that was taken advantage of in this PBS Radyo ng Bayan coverage of the Pinatubo tragedy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Disaster Broadcasting will be more responsive and effective if the media outfits do involve actively the victims in finding out possible solutions and actions to their predicament.