

DOST-VIII deploys testing booths in Eastern Visayas

Tacloban City - To help fight the spread of COVID-19 via indirect contact between health personnel collecting the samples and prospective patients, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) developed a Specimen Collection Booth (SCB) through the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development and the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, both DOST line agencies. Said SCBs are deployed nationwide to support the mass testing efforts of government in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

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DOST-VIII deploys testing...

DOST-VIII, on May 20, 2020, represented by Senior Science Research Specialist Engr. Ramil T. Uy, received four sets of SCBs at Ormoc City, Leyte through the Office of the Civil Defense as coordinated by ARD Rey Gozon. The units were delivered to Ormoc City thru the Philippine Navy assisted by the Philippine Coast Guard along with the other units delivered to Cebu last week.

Dr. Minerva P. Molon, DOH-VIII regional director, made the request for the SCBs through DOST-VIII OIC-RD Engr. Ernesto M. Granada as a member of the health cluster of the regional Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). The SCBs were turned over on May 26, 2020 to the three recipients.

One unit was deployed at the DOH-VIII which was received by Dr. Molon. During the meeting, DOH commended the booth for its "well-engineered design that is very scientific."

"The advantage of this SCB is that it has a very good ventilation," observed Dr. Molon. She also added that "we are not just talking about today but also the future," referring to SCBs.

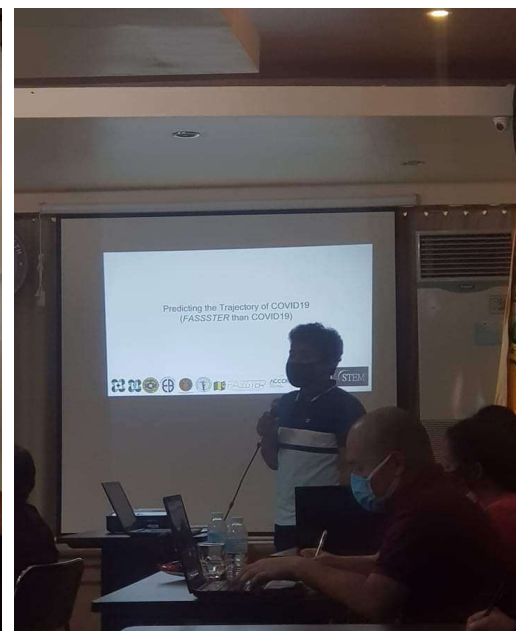
Another unit was deployed at the Schistosomiasis Hospital. Peter Daniel Merida of DOH-VIII and Engrs. Granada and Uy turned-over one SCB to Dr. Lyn L. Verona, chief of hospital, and Clarissa D. Moderazo, Palo municipal administrator. Dr. Verona expressed her thanks that the hospital was considered as one of the recipients of the SCBs.

The last two SCBs were forwarded to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center, which was recently certified by the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine-Department of Health as an accredited COVID-19 testing center. The units were received by Dr. Salvador B. Evardone, medical center chief. He likewise expressed his gratitude to DOST-VIII and said, "This is for the long term, and will be useful even on other very contagious diseases."

The overall coordinator of the SCBs regional deployment is the office of the DOST Undersecretary for Regional Operations of Usec. Brenda Nazareth-Manzano.

By: Carlyn Rosada and Kent Mavric Macariola





DOST-VIII scholars volunteer for COVID-19 surveillance

Palo Leyte - Along with the government's efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Eastern Visayas, DOST-VIII through the initiative of the DOST Secretary Fortunato de la Peña in collaboration with the Office of the Undersecretary for Regional Operations of Usec. Brenda Nazareth-Manzano and DOST-Science Education Institute (SEI) headed by Dir. Josette T. Biyo deployed three volunteer scholars to assist in the data collection and interpretation for the Feasibility Analysis of Syndromic Surveillance using Spatio-Temporal Epidemiological Modeler or FASSTER, a web-based disease surveillance platform used for creating predictive models of possible cases and scenarios on the spread of COVID-19.

Milbert Flores, BS Education Major in Mathematics, and Rhino C. Balintong, BS Education Major in Physical Science, both from Leyte Normal University; and Zedrikke Cliphorde R. Fabella, MS in Animal Science from Visayas State University were assigned at the Department of Health Region VIII (DOH 8) in Candahug, Palo, Leyte Last May 14, 2020.

Engr. Ernesto M. Granada, OIC – Regional Director of DOST-VIII oriented the volunteer scholars online. The three scholars were also trained on FASSTER last May 13, 2020 prior to their deployment and lately to TanodCOVID last May 20, 2020.

TanodCOVID is a self-reporting application feature of FASSTER which enables constituents to report COVID-19 related symptoms to their local health authorities.

The three scholars coordinated with DOST-VIII to serve as volunteers despite the risks and fear of contracting the corona virus disease (COVID-19). Since classes were suspended due to quarantine measures, they considered helping in such activities to contribute to the community.

According to Balintong, since the start of the ECQ, he has been joining various relief operations in their community. When he came across the Facebook post of DOST-VII seeking volunteers for FASSTER, he didn't hesitate to join in.



Balintong and Fabella are assigned as data encoders; as such they encode and validate data on probable, suspected, and confirmed COVID-19 cases gathered by the LGUs. They also scan RT-PCR test results forwarded by the COVID-19 testing centers.

Flores, on the other hand, is assigned as data interpreter at the Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (RESU). He assists in the data analysis and generation of reports based on the data collected in the FASSTER database.

Last May 27, 2020, Flores presented the FASSTER system to the officials of DOH-VIII during their weekly ICS meeting. He discussed how FASSTER works and how it could help the LGUs in making their decisions on the COVID-19 crisis.

Meanwhile, the three volunteer scholars will serve as additional personnel for the DOH-VIII workforce. Their individual expertise in data processing can help intensify the efforts in using FASSTER in Region 8.

Interpreted data through FASSTER will allow policymakers to understand the COVID-19 pandemic on a national, regional, and local level and help assess the effects of the interventions and precautionary measures (i.e., community quarantine, social distancing, and optimal testing) currently being implemented in various areas and communities.

By: Engr. Fernando D. Buzon III



DOST-Northern Samar gives veggie seedlings, seed packs to poor families

Simultaneous with the declaration of Enhanced Community Quarantine in the province of Northern Samar was the imposition of strict home quarantine in all households, directly affecting the vulnerable sectors of the community. Many people lost their livelihood following the closure of all private establishments, except for those providing essential goods and services, and business process outsourcing establishments. Hence, families who are financially incapable of providing their daily needs are struggling to make ends meet.

As part of DOST-Northern Samar's initiative to help alleviate the situation in the province, the S&T Center, through a joint effort with its CY 2020 DOST-SETUP beneficiary Mar-mar's Integrated Farm, distributed high value vegetable seedlings and seed packs to 200 underprivileged households in Brgy. Lawaan and Brgy. Cangcahipos, Laoang, Northern Samar. DOST-Northern Samar also gave three trays of vegetable seedlings to Philippine Army personnel stationed at Catubig, Northern Samar on April 4, 2020.

By: Veronica A. Laguitan



DOST-assisted enterprises make PPEs for frontliners

With the dwindling supply for wearable Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) such as face masks, face shield, and gown or coverall amidst threats of being infected from the dreaded Corona Virus Disease- 2019 or COVID19, two DOST Leyte-assisted entrepreneurs heeded the call for local PPE producers to pitch in for help. A SETUP beneficiary, the Tanauan, Leyte-based Taps Handmade Products, was tapped to produce washable face masks that are in accordance to DOH standards. The firm can produce 200-250 units per day since they started production last week of February 2020. Its major customers are private individuals donating PPEs to NGOs and hospitals.

Aside from washable face masks, the firm also produces medical gowns or coveralls. It is currently promoted by DTI 8 as producer of said products. In normal times, TAPS Handmade Products produces functional products fashioned from “*ticog*” mats woven by more 200 women in Leyte. *Ticog* is a local variety of grass that abounds in the province.

The other SETUP-assisted firm producing washable face masks is Tacloban City-based MS Tailoring which produces customized sports garments and souvenir items. Aside from selling the face masks, the firm has donated 200 pieces of the masks to Tacloban City frontliners such as the police, fire officers, pedicab drivers, and government employees).



By: John Glenn Ocaña



DOST-PSTC BILIRAN SPEARHEADS NUTRITION PROJECT

"A healthy Nation is a Nation of PROGRESS"

-(Anonymous).

That health is a primary factor for nation's development, Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-Biliran believes that every child is the country's hope. This is what encouraged the provincial office to embark on a project that will ensure the children's healthy well-being.

The office aims to carry this out through the DOST's Grants-In-Aid Project entitled "Malnutrition Reduction Program: A CEST (Community Empowerment through Science and Technology)-Based Intervention Towards Well Nourished Children." The project is designed to prevent children, especially those aged 6 months to 2 years, from falling into malnutrition.

CEST is a DOST program that assist communities in various entry points such as health and nutrition and livelihood development among many others.

The project is actively implemented with the support of Naval Mayor

Gerard Roger Espina. DOST-8 GIA funded the training of the health workers and the procurement of the supplies for six-month feeding. Managing the funds are Smo. Rosario (Naval) officials headed by Hon. Chairman Jonnel Quilaneta. Meanwhile, the Naval Municipal Health Office and the Provincial Nutrition Council fully supported the project activities.

Primary screening for the target beneficiaries of this program has been completed with the help of Naval's Nurse on Deployment Program, along with Barangay Nutrition Scholars and Barangay Health Workers from the 12 identified BLGUs.

When the CoViD-19 pandemic will be under control, a 120-day feeding program shall start using the DOST-Food and Nutrition Research Institute-formulated nutrition blend of rice-sesame-mongo beans. These food products are produced by WORD-KALIPI at the Complementary Food Production Center in Calumpang, Naval, Biliran, another DOST-GIA funded project.

By: Ace York Aguilar



DOST 8-SEI Scholar of NwSSU, Mr. Clemente Ace Burce Macorol, handover a foodpack to a recipient in Calbayog City, Samar

DOST VIII – SEI Scholars display “Bayanihan” to help needy communities amid health crisis

With the country's current battle against the daunting effects brought by the COVID-19 outbreak, Filipinos across the nation respond through the manifestation of the so called "bayanihan spirit" in several volunteer activities. Such act of volunteerism brings out a huge impact to the society by encouraging other individuals to take their part in helping the country on its fight against the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the display of patriotism.

At the height of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Eastern Visayas, DOST-SEI Scholars of Northwest Samar State University (NwSSU) took the initiative to help the community by distributing food packs to families affected by the enhanced community quarantine. The food package was acquired through donations of the scholars in the said university including donations from former scholars in the city. The amount of money that were collected came from the stipend of the scholars which was released when the community quarantine was imposed all over the country. This effort was led by their Scholars Association President, Mr. Alvin Canoy under thier COVID 19 pandemic we heal as one response "Balos ni Isko" (Scholar's giving back). A total of 120 packs produced by the scholars.

In their post over FB, these young patriots of NwSSU simply said it's their way of helping the government and giving back to the filipinos as Scholars para sa Bayan.

By: Engr. Ramil T. Uy

DOST-VIII: Fair Share This Pandemic

The global crisis of COVID-19 has been battled worldwide for over 9 months now – in the Philippines, 7 months. In Eastern Visayas, it has peaked last June 2020 and currently on its second wave. The virus has infected many, targeting the vulnerable population and also infected those you are at high risk due to their “call of duty” – the healthcare workers and other frontliners. The huge challenge is how to break the chain of infection.

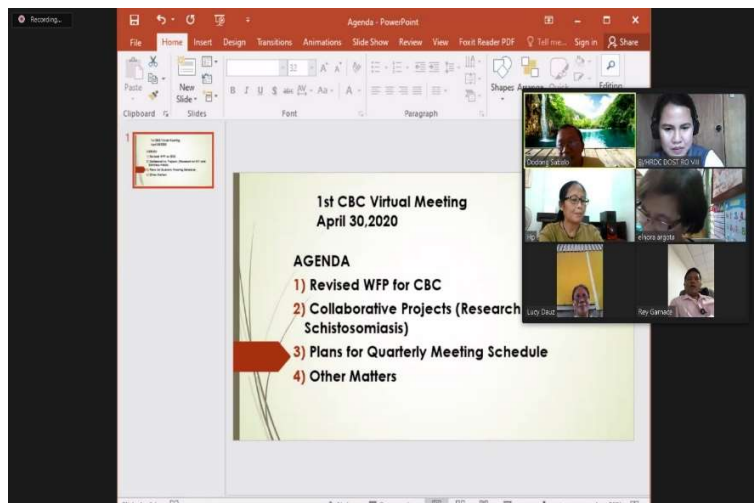
With the battling of this unseen enemy, the Department of Science and Technology RO-VIII impart the agency's fair share during this pandemic. Last April 22, 2020, the DOST-8 Metrology and Calibration Laboratory headed by



Engr. Marcelino M. Nicer, Jr. and staff Engr. Niño Mercader, were deployed to Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center in Magsaysay Boulevard, Tacloban City, to do calibration of equipments of the now Eastern Visayas COVID-19 Testing Center, upon request of the Department of Health. Prior to the opening of the molecular and virology laboratory last May 11, 2020, all equipments were calibrated to standard which is vital in the now fully operational testing center of the region.

As the DOST-8 mission to maximize economic and social benefits of the people, the agency takes part in fighting the challenges of this pandemic for it is their vision to be productive to somehow attain a better quality of life of the people of Eastern Visayas especially during these trying times. DOST-8 supports the war against COVID-19 to whatever purpose they can serve.

By: Engr. Marcelino Nicer Jr.



Eastern Visayas Consortium holds virtual meetings to ensure program implementation

TACLOBAN CITY– To ensure continuity of programs and services amid Covid-19 pandemic, the Eastern Visayas Health Research and Development Consortium (EVHRDC) held regular meetings in April and May among its member institutions.

The activities are part of the consortium's commitment in producing research outputs and other related concerns that would help improve the health conditions of the region's populace.

The consortium is composed of different committees whose members come from various institutions all over the region, so they held virtual meetings to have regular sharing of insights, plans, and other concerns.

Holding meetings online is one of the precautionary measures imposed to avoid transmission of the disease while the country has an ongoing health crisis. As such, community quarantines are being implemented in the different localities.

The EVHRDC, spearheaded by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), is a consortium that serves as a venue for inter-agency efforts geared towards health advancement and stability.

The consortium is composed of five working committees, namely: Ethics Review Committee (ERC); Research Management Committee (RMC); Capacity Building Committee (CBC); Research Utilization Committee (RUC); and Structure, Organization, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (SOME).

The ERC meeting focused on the five new and continuing research protocols that require ethical clearance for the conduct of the study. The committee has also revisited the Work and Financial Plan for the year and identified activities that either need to be pushed through or be cancelled based on the current COVID-19 situation, among others.

ERC virtual and physical meeting for the second full review of protocols in the Conference Room and via Zoom conference. The committee members wore face masks.

The RMC, on the other hand, tackled possible strategies in conducting the identified activities in view of the current pandemic. It has also reviewed three capsule proposals and seven terminal reports on completed funded projects.

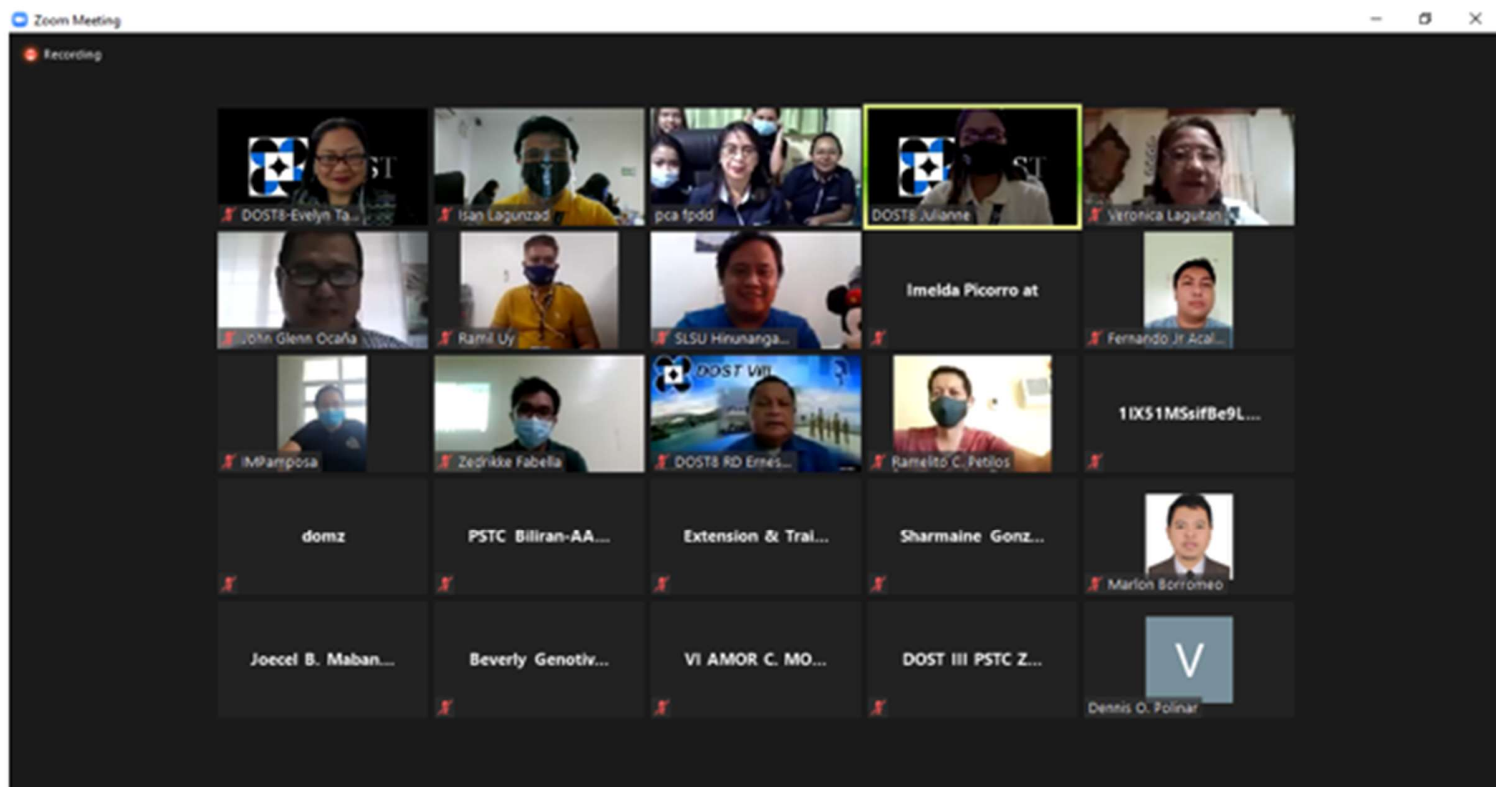
Meanwhile, the CBC not only discussed the revised Work and Financial Plan, it also dealt with the list of collaborative projects for submission to the DOST-Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD). These include the trainings on Critiquing of Proposals for Trainer on Basic Research Methods, Basic Research Methods Training (Phase 2), and the Writeshop on the Finalization of Terminal Reports for completed research projects.

Further, the use and possible subscription of the webinar platform for the conduct of identified activities was decided during the virtual meeting of the RUC. Said activities include the dissemination of completed researches, orientation on the HERDIN Plus database system, and the conduct of the regular Regional Health Research Symposium where some researchers regionwide compete on the Oral Research Paper Presentation and Exhibit of Posters.

The SOMEC meeting, meanwhile, focused on the revision of the work and financial plan as well as the plans for the mid-year and year-end assessments, among the urgent concerns.

Other important discussions were held at the DOST-VIII while strictly observing mandated health protocols. (GTT/PIA-Leyte).

By: EVHRDC



DOST VIII Provides Online Learning Opportunities amid Pandemic

Palo, Leyte - The COVID-19 pandemic has brought most of our daily activities to a near standstill by imposing tight restrictions on movements to halt the spread of the virus. With this situation, online activities became prominent as businesses shift to video conferencing platforms in order to meet the economic demand.

In the recent months, the Department of Science and Technology Regional Office VIII (DOST8) had been seeking several ways and means to continue the conduct of the training services amidst the ravaging effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

One of which was sharing online training links and inviting participants from all over the region to join national webinars hosted by DOST attached agencies, together with the series of online trainings for the region.

Following the declaration of the Enhanced Community Quarantine in Eastern Visayas, DOST-VIII has been actively collaborating with various DOST attached agencies to reach out more participants from all around the region through the dissemination of online trainings and webinar information.

In addition, DOST VIII also took the initiative in considering areas with poor internet connectivity by sending training manuals through emails to the requesting parties with the assistance of DOST Provincial S&T Centers.

In this trying times, DOST continues its course in bringing science to the people and overcoming the challenges in order to create more opportunities for Filipinos all over the country.

By: Ms. Julianne D. Contapay

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