

PHILIPPINES COUNTRY REPORT ON DISASTER RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Millions of people are affected every year by natural disasters like typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and their resultant effects like floods, flash floods, landslides and tsunamis. Global warming, environmental degradation, high population density and poverty make the impact of natural disasters worse. The past years have shown us that natural disasters can affect anyone and anywhere.

The Philippines, because of its geographical location, is vulnerable to many types of natural disasters. It is located at the western part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, a most active part of the earth characterized by an ocean encircling belt of active volcanoes and earthquake generators. The country has 220 volcanoes, of which more than 20 are known to be currently active. It is also in the path of turbulent typhoons, with about an average of 20 crossing annually the Philippine area of responsibility. The archipelagic nature of the Philippine coastal areas increases susceptibility to storm surges, tsunamis and sea level changes. Floods are also common due to rains brought by typhoons and the monsoon.

The Philippines is also vulnerable to the El Niño phenomenon that induces drought and delays the onset of monsoon, which results to scarcity in drinking water in urban areas and shortfalls in hydro-electricity generation because of reduced water levels in major dams.

As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the Philippines had long before established an institutional structure for responding to disasters. As early as 1941, during the Philippine Commonwealth days, the late President Manuel L. Quezon issued Executive Order No. 335 creating the Civilian Emergency Administration (CEA), tasked to formulate and execute policies and plans for the protection and welfare of the civilian population under extraordinary and emergency conditions. The numerous other laws and executive issuances issued thereafter found codification in PD 1566. Presidential Decree No. 1566 was issued on June 11, 1978 to strengthen the Philippine disaster control capability and to establish a national program for community disaster preparedness. PD 1566 provided for the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) as the highest policy-making body on matters of disasters in the country. Disaster coordination was established from the lowest governmental units, the barangays, to the national level.

Through the years, the country has recognized the need to improve PD 1566 as new developments arise and inherent weaknesses of the national disaster coping mechanism were becoming apparent. In January 2005, the Philippines

concluded to the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The framework served as the guideline of member countries to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability to natural hazards. Philippine Congress has been particularly guided by the “Framework’s” Priorities for Action when it enacted Republic Act No. 10121.

Republic Act No. 10121 or the “Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010” was signed into law last May 27, 2010. The law acknowledges the need to adopt a disaster risk reduction and management approach that is holistic, comprehensive, integrated, and proactive in lessening the socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters including climate change, and to promote the involvement and participation of all sectors and all stakeholders concerned, at all levels, especially the local community.

Aside from the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act, Philippine Congress has also passed Republic Act No. 9729 or “The Climate Change Act of 2009”. Republic Act No. 9729 aims to mainstream climate change into the formulation of government policy by setting up a National Framework Strategy and Program on Climate Change. It created the Climate Change Commission that presently coordinates, monitors and evaluates the government’s programs and actions to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction are closely linked and the two laws would enable the country to better respond to disasters spawned by climate change.

II. LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

(1) Republic Act No. 10121 – “Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010”

Disaster risk reduction management gained legal and institutional foundation with the passage of Republic Act No. 10121. The law provided for the development of policies, plans and the implementation of actions and measures pertaining to all aspects of disaster risk reduction and management, including good governance, risk assessment and early warning, knowledge building and awareness raising, reducing underlying risk factors, and preparedness for effective response and early recovery.

The law seeks to develop resiliency in the face of natural and man-made disasters and to lessen the vulnerability of the grassroots by establishing a full range of programs in disaster preparedness, including education, training and organizing. It shifted the focus from disaster response and recovery towards disaster risk reduction, preparedness and mitigation.

With the enactment of the RA 10121, the then National Disaster Coordinating Council is now known as the National Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC). One of the responsibilities of the NDRRMC is the development of a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework (NDRRMF). The NDRRMF serves as the principal guide in the formulation of a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan. The NDRRMF shall be reviewed every five years or as may be deemed necessary in order to ensure its relevance to the times.

Decentralization to local government units (LGUs) of responsibilities and authority for implementing disaster risk reduction measures is one of the important features of Republic Act No. 10121. The law has empowered LGUs to enforce disaster risk reduction measures to effectively address their respective risks. It has mandated the LGUs to create Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (LDRRMO). Based on recent inventory, 45 of 80 provinces have LDRRMO and 23 of 80 provinces have permanent staff.

Another noteworthy provision of the law is the allocation of not less than five percent (5%) of the estimated revenue from regular sources to the Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (LDRRMF) to support disaster risk management activities such as pre-disaster preparedness programs, including training, purchasing life-saving equipment, supply and equipment for post disaster activities and for payment of premium on calamity insurance. Thirty percent (30%) of the LDRRMF shall be allocated for Quick Response Fund or Stand-by Fund for relief and recovery programs. This strengthens the legal and institutional capacities of local government units for self-determination through devolution and decentralization of responsibilities and authority that have been bestowed upon them by the Local Government Code of 1991.

(2) Republic Act No. 9729 – “Climate Change Act of 2009”

Republic Act No. 9729 was passed to ensure that national and local government policies, plans, programs and projects are founded upon sound environmental considerations and the principle of sustainable development. The Climate Change Act systematically integrates the concept of climate change in policy formulation, development plans, poverty reduction strategies, among others by all government agencies.

The law recognizes that climate change and disaster risk reduction are closely interrelated and effective disaster risk reduction will enhance climate change adaptive capacity, and the government shall integrate disaster risk reduction into climate change programs and initiatives.

Republic Act 9729 establishes a Climate Change Commission which is now the sole policy-making body of the government tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government relating to climate change. The law mandates the Commission to coordinate and establish a close partnership with the National Disaster Coordinating Council in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness in reducing the people's vulnerability to climate-related disasters.

The Commission is also mandated to formulate a framework strategy on Climate Change to serve as the basis for a program for climate change planning, research and development, extension, and monitoring of activities on climate change. Last year, the Climate Change Commission submitted the National Framework Strategy on Climate Change 2010 – 2022. The National Framework Strategy is committed towards ensuring and strengthening the adaptation of our natural ecosystems and human communities to climate change. In the process, the framework aspires to chart a cleaner development path for the Philippines highlighting the mutually beneficial relationship between climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Climate Change Act of 2009 also provides for the formulation of Local Climate Change Action Plan by the local government units.

(3) Ratification of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)

The Philippine Senate ratified the AADMER last September 14, 2009. AADMER is a regional agreement that binds ASEAN Member States together to promote regional cooperation and collaboration in reducing disaster losses and intensifying joint emergency response to disasters in the ASEAN region. AADMER is also ASEAN's affirmation of its commitment to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

AADMER contains provisions on disaster risk identification, monitoring and early warning, prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response, rehabilitation, technical cooperation and research, mechanisms for coordination, simplified customs and immigration.

The Philippines is an active member of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). At present the regional cooperation is underway to fully establish an operational ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management (AHA Centre) as mandated by AADMER. Simultaneously, under the AADMER Work Programme 2010-2015, regional systems for risk identification and assessment, early warning, and monitoring are in the process of being

established by the ACDM. The intention is to connect national early warning and monitory systems with the regional so that regional hazards could be taken into account at the national level.

Early warning agencies have long been a member of regional and international networks such as the World Area Forecast System (WAFS) which is a system for the world wide broadcast of aviation related weather information via satellite. There is PAGASA collaboration with Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early warning System (RIMES) in the South China Sea as well as with neighboring countries on typhoon monitoring. Specifically for tsunami, PHIVOLCS is already a part of the tsunami warning system for the Pacific region.

III. NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Hereunder identified are executive initiatives on disaster risk reduction management:

(1) Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Management

Executive Order No. 888, signed on June 7, 2010, adopted SNAP on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for the years 2009 to 2019. The SNAP serves as the country's road map to strategically implement disaster risk reduction programs and projects both at the national and local level, and its 18 priority programmes/projects, which includes:

- a) The disaster risk management (DRM) act;
- b) Multi-stakeholder dialogues on DRR;
- c) Institutionalization of disaster management office (DMO);
- d) Enhancing capacity development for Local Disaster Coordinating Councils (LDCCs);
- e) Mainstreaming DRR into the peace process;
- f) Mainstreaming DRR in various government plans and programs;
- g) Public-Private Partnership (PPP);
- h) Resource mobilization;
- i) Information and database generation;
- j) Knowledge management;
- k) Supporting DRR: Mainstreaming through sectoral approach;
- l) Preparedness for effective disaster response;
- m) Information, education and communication (IEC) campaign;
- n) Institutional and technical capacity building;
- o) Education and research;
- p) Forecasting and early warning;
- q) Risk evaluation;

- r) Development of tools for assessment and monitoring of DRR measures.

The Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for DRR, which is now being reviewed in light of RA 10121 and RA 9729, contains a strategy that focuses on safety and well-being enhancement that aims to increase capacity, reduce vulnerability and achieve improved public safety and well-being and build resilience to disasters.

(2) Administrative Order No. 1, series of 2010

President Benigno S. Aquino III issued Administrative Order No. 1 which directed the local government units (LGUs), particularly the provinces, to adopt and use the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Guidelines to enhance natural disaster risk reduction efforts in the local development planning process. The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) was directed to conduct capacity-building activities for planning offices at local, regional and national levels towards DRR Guidelines.

(3) Memorandum of Understanding between the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) and the Climate Change Commission (CCC)

The NDRRMC and the CCC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to harmonize the Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP) and the Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Plans (LDRRMP) by LGUs. The agreement supports the implementation of disaster and climate risk reduction measures identified by LGUs through joint disaster and climate risk information coordination and knowledge management.

Under the MOU, the two organizations will jointly support the formulation and implementation of disaster risk reduction and climate change action strategies by local government units and improve the provision of climate risk information to local authorities. They will also work to encourage local governments to coordinate the review and monitoring of their disaster risk reduction and climate change action plans.

The MOU also promotes joint review and progress monitoring in coordinated local action plans with goal in identifying institutional, knowledge and financial gaps, obstacles, and challenges to improve local action plans.

(4) Other NDRRMC Initiatives

While the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and Plan are still for finalization and in process, the NDRRMC with the support and cooperation of different concerned agencies at the national and local levels

has continuously been implementing the different initiatives and activities on disaster risk reduction such as the following:

- Contingency planning for local government units
- Community-based disaster risk management
- Conduct of disaster preparedness drills for earthquake and tsunami
- Enhancement of Tsunami early warning system
- Installation of signage for Tsunami
- Capability building for emergency response
- Development of information, education and communication materials
- Forging partnership agreements with private sectors for public-private sector partnership for disaster mitigation, adaptation and preparedness
- Sectoral mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction:
- Infrastructure: planning and design of roads and bridges
- Education: "Safe Schools" (Curriculum development and resilient school facilities)
- Land use and physical planning
- Local governance
- Environment
- Health: "Safe Hospitals"
- Safe cities campaign

(5) Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS)

PHIVOLCS is the government agency principally mandated to mitigate disasters that may arise from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunami and other related geotectonic phenomena. PHIVOLCS has the following programs and capabilities:

- 66 digital seismic stations all over the Philippines; half of this are via satellite
- 7 dedicated sensors all over Metro Manila just to monitor the valley fault system.
- uses two systems to locate earthquakes all over the world
- continues to improve network and add more monitoring stations
- a tool for monitoring tsunami, including height of waves
- has formulated and distributed to various entities guidelines and information materials on disaster response and preparedness
- conducts simulation test or relevant drills
- Disaster Risk Mapping all over the country in partnership with the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences.

President Benigno S. Aquino III has announced a plan for a three-dimensional mapping of the country to improve interpretation of data on Risk Maps.

(6) Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA)

PAGASA is the national agency in charge in the observation and forecasting of climatological conditions and weather occurrences affecting the country. Currently, PAGASA has an existing program for upgrading of monitoring facilities and system. It has a program of 10 Doppler radars and by 2012, almost all will be operational.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

National agencies involved in weather and calamity forecasting are continuously being upgraded and improved in order to provide our people with accurate and reliable information. Principally, we have the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

With these policies and programs on disaster response management, our government has shown that it is very much committed to taking action to reduce disaster risk and vulnerability of our community to natural hazards. We have come to learn that disaster do happen, but their destructive force can be mitigated with good planning, prompt action and constant preparation.

References:

1. Bildan, Lolita, “Disaster Management in Southeast Asia: An Overview”, <http://www.unisdr.org/asiapacific/ap-publications/docs/adpc-dm-southeastasia.pdf>.
2. Duque, Atty. Priscila P., Disaster Management and Critical Issues on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines, <http://www.ncdr.nat.gov.tw/iwerr/doc/pdf/S10%20PDF/s10-4%20ATTY..pdf>.
3. Philippines: National progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2009-2011) – interim, http://www.preventionweb.net/files/18619_phl_NationalHFProgress_2009-11.pdf
4. Republic Act No. 10121, “An Act Strengthening The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management System, Providing For The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and Institutionalizing The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan, Appropriating Funds Therefore and For Other Purposes”, May 7, 2010.
5. Republic Act No. 9729, “An Act Mainstreaming Climate Change into Government Policy Formulations, Establishing the Framework Strategy and Program on Climate Change, Creating for the Purpose The Climate Change Commission, And For Other Purposes”, October 23, 2009.