Country Perspective:

Philippines

Agnes Palacio
I. Background

The promulgation of PD 1566 in 1978 created the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) which provided for the “Strengthening of the Philippine Disaster Control Capability and Establishing a Community Disaster Preparedness Program Nationwide.” The NDCC is the highest policy-making and coordinating body for disaster management in the country. It is chaired by the Secretary of National Defense with 14 Department Secretaries, the Chief of Staff, AFP, and the Director-General of the Philippine Information Agency as members. The Administrator of the Office of Civil Defense is the NDCC Executive Officer and the OCD serves as the secretariat and executive arm of the NDCC. As further provided for by PD 1566, a National Calamities and Disaster Preparedness Plan (NCDPP) has been developed by the OCD which defines the functions of each NDCC member agency and provides the planning guidance for disaster management activities in the country. The NDCC does not have an annual budget allocation but it operates through the member-agencies and the local disaster coordinating councils (DCCs). The membership of the local DCCs (17 regional, 80 provincial, 117 city and 1496 municipal DCCs) replicates that of the NDCC at the national level. The NDCC Technical Working Group chaired by the OCD Administrator and NDCC Executive Officer meets regularly to discuss and resolve disaster management issues which include policy review and formulation.

II. Current Emergency Preparedness Policies and Practices

In 2002, a comprehensive disaster management framework was developed by the NDCC to serve as a guide of all DCCs in pursuing disaster management activities in the four phases of disaster management - Mitigation and Preparedness phases in the pre-disaster stage, and Response and Recovery and Rehabilitation phases in the post-disaster stage. To make this framework functionally operational, the NDCC Technical Working Group was organized into national committees on preparedness, response, and recovery and rehabilitation. Each committee is organization-led: Preparedness by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); Response by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Rehabilitation by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH); and, Mitigation by the Department Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The overarching objectives of these committees are to review existing policies, plans and activities and come up with operational strategies that will cover the country’s needs in each disaster phase. The operational strategies that will be formulated in each of the disaster phase shall serve as the national strategy for preparedness, response, rehabilitation and mitigation. The formulation of functional national strategies remains a challenge for the National Committees.

In December 2004, flashfloods swept into three towns of Quezon province in mid-eastern Luzon Island. Close to three weeks after, the Indian Ocean Tsunami happened. Following these spate of disasters, President Arroyo approved the implementation by the NDCC of the Four Point Plan of Action for Preparedness (4PPAP) which covers the following:
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- **Upgrading of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geo-physical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) Forecasting Capability** - The capability upgrade focused on improving forecasting capability of natural hazards such as typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis through the acquisition of equipment and personnel development. The capability upgrade is geared towards strengthening linkages with foreign forecasting institutions to make forecasting, not only a domestic, but a regional concern. Geo-hazard mapping in identified areas is designed to serve as scientific reference for land-use planning, formulation of disaster management plans, and establishment of an effective early warning system to include real-time information dissemination.

- **Public Information Campaign on Disaster Preparedness** - Development and implementation of a strategic communications plan to increase awareness of the public on natural hazards and communicate effectively preparedness measures that can be undertaken by the community in case these hazards translate into emergencies.

- **Capacity Building for Local Government Units in Identified Vulnerable Areas** - Provide technical assistance to local government units of identified vulnerable communities in formulating and developing programs particularly in the area of mitigation and preparedness.

- **Mechanisms for Government and Private Sector Partnership in Relief and Rehabilitation** - To come up with a mechanism that will promote government-private sector-community participation synergy, and improve coordination to achieve a seamless interface of local and national interventions through effective logistics management, information management and redundant communications systems.

The implementation of the 4PPAP is still ongoing. Some activities are yet to be completed by the first half of 2010. The following, however, have been achieved since the plan was implemented in early 2005:

- Rainfall and water level gauges have been installed in the provinces of Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur in eastern Mindanao; Quezon and Aurora provinces in mid-eastern Luzon; and, Southern Leyte in eastern Visayas. These provinces are some of the 27 identified disaster-prone provinces lying along the country’s eastern seaboard. The installation of these rain gauges significantly boosted local capacities in monitoring rainfall and providing accurate early warning information to threatened communities.

- The regular conduct of nationwide synchronized Building Emergency Evacuation Plan (B.E.E.P.) drills, Tsunami Drills, and Earthquake Drills has substantially increased awareness of communities, including the various sectors of society.

- The airing of “Safe Ka Ba?” (are you safe?) public awareness program and the Disaster Management School-on-Air has reached the consciousness of the general public. The increasing trend and momentum on awareness needs to be sustained and complemented by other programs focusing on other aspects of preparedness. The organization of the Private Sector Disaster Management Network (PSDMN) composed of private organizations, INGOs and NGOs was a positive step forward. This network can make
available rapid technical assessment capacities when the need arises utilizing expertise of the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers, the Philippine Mines Safety and Environmental Association, and the PHK9 SAR, among others.

Vulnerability Assessment remains an ongoing concern. While initiatives, in partnership with the UNDP and AusAid, have been started to undertake comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessments of priority areas, a lot of work remains to be done to comprehensively cover the entire country. This would require substantial resources to complete.

As an initial step to address these issues, the NDCC is implementing a five-year (2006-2010) Hazards Mapping and Assessment for Effective Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (dubbed as READY) in partnership with UNDP and AusAid. This project aims to institutionalize and standardize DRM measures and processes at the national level as well empower the most vulnerable local municipalities and cities in the country. This project is an offshoot of the REINA Project in Quezon province which covered three municipalities (Real, Infanta and Nakar) that were affected by a destructive flashflood.

The READY Project targets 27 high risk provinces and has three main components, namely;
- Multi-hazard Identification and Disaster Risk Assessment: Development of multi-hazard mapping for landslide, flood, earthquake, storm surge, and other related hazards
- Community-based Disaster Preparedness: Development of Information and Education Campaign strategies and materials for specific target groups and Installation of Community-Based Early Warning Systems (rain/tide/water level gauges and landslide/tsunami signages)
- Mainstreaming/Institutionalization of Risk Reduction into the Local Development Planning Process: Building a platform for efficient donor coordination to facilitate mobilization of resources (financial, capability upgrade, and technical expertise).

The READY Project has initially accomplished the installation of community based early warning system (CBEWS), rain gauges, water level gauges, tide gauges; improvised bells made from empty LPG tanks (“batingaws”) and tsunami and landslide signages. The CBEWS dry-run for floods and tsunami was also conducted in Surigao del Sur. Multi-hazards mapping are ongoing.

Planning has always been a work-in-progress kind of activity. Efforts are now underway in mainstreaming disaster management into the development planning processes at different levels of governance. Capacity-building in the area of contingency planning is an ongoing process. The key challenge that remains is in coming up with functional contingency plans at the lower levels of governance where ownership of the process have been clearly established on the part of the communities.

The institutional framework has been in place through the DCC network as provided for by the country’s disaster management law, PD1566. Most recent disasters such as the last quarter typhoons of 2006 indicated that horizontal coordination at various levels is in place and applied most of the time. Vertical coordination however
needs to be improved in both pre- and post-disaster situations.

On the resource base, stockpiling in particular, the DSWD\(^1\) maintains a stockpile of 5,000 and 1,000 family packs at the national and regional levels, respectively. Each family pack consists of food and non-food items worth P300. Non-food commodities include clothing for a family of 5-6 members, blanket, toiletries, sleeping mats, kitchen wares and utensils. DSWD support mechanisms include, among others, a MOA with NFA for the withdrawal of rice during emergency relief operations and standby funds amounting to P300,000 at the Regional Offices subject for replenishment should the need arises. Stockpiling of relief commodities is mandated at barangay, municipal, city and provincial levels. Evacuation of residents, opening of evacuation centers and LGUs’ request for augmentation of relief supplies are the triggers for emergency distribution of relief supplies.

The NDCC, being a collegial body, does not have a regular budget to disburse. However, a portion of the annual national budget is set aside as National Calamity Fund (NCF) which is appropriated for aid, relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and other works and services in connection with calamities which may occur during the budget year or those that occurred within the past two years from the budget year. To support the initial phase of disaster response operations of NDCC response agencies, a Quick Response Fund is appropriated from the NCF. In addition to the NCF, Republic Act 8185 mandates local government units to set aside 5% of its Internal Revenue Allotment as Local Calamity Fund (LCF), which can be tapped for disaster-management related programs and activities.

However, during emergency relief operations, emergency procurement, warehousing and transport of relief supplies become a challenge. These reflect the need to improve institutional arrangements at the regional and provincial level in establishing common warehouse facilities for bulk deliveries and transport of much needed supplies to remote areas such as island provinces and municipalities.

Getting the right package of assistance to the right people at the right time is also a key issue. This has been recognized in past major disasters such as the 2004 Flashfloods in Quezon and the last quarter typhoons of 2006. This may be due to the lack of a functional database at the provincial and municipal level that will reflect the most vulnerable groups or listing of poorest of the poor families that would need assistance the most. Tracking and monitoring donations is even a greater challenge. Some donations go straight to the communities while some donations go straight to the LGUs or NGOs without any getting through the DCC channel.

One of the main challenges in alerting and disseminating information to the right audience at the right time using multiple channels of communication lies on spurring communities into action as a result of an early warning information such as alerts or advisories. In some instances, advisories issued are ignored by communities for a variety of reasons-information are not well-understood because of technical terms;

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\(^1\) Department of Social Welfare and Development
people disseminating it are perceived as not credible; and, messages are not culturally sensitive. To ensure that people act accordingly following an advisory, the concept of risk communication needs to be integrated into the early warning systems at all levels. There is likewise a parallel need to orient local officials and the community in identifying existing risks in their localities, develop early warning systems to redundant channels of information dissemination and how to respond effectively.

On response mechanisms, the Office of Civil Defense operates and maintains the NDCC Operations Center (NDCC OPCEN). It is a 24/7 facility that provides and disseminates disaster response and population preparedness guidelines and facilitates effective management of the consequences of potential, ongoing and past disasters or emergency situations that require interventions of national agencies in order to minimize adverse effects of disasters on lives and properties by employing adequately supported, continuously trained and highly-motivated competent people backed-up by adequate equipment, stable systems and sound procedures. It is also the facility that links with international response systems like the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) System, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), the virtual onsite operations and coordination center (OSOCC), and other arrangements within the ASEAN region during situations where international response has been requested.

During disaster situations, the NDCC OPCEN is activated into an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) - which requires all NDCC member agencies with disaster response mandates to send focal persons to the facility for the duration of the activation to speed up coordination and information management functions. This NDCC facility is the center for coordination, resource mobilization and main information hub during emergencies.

The core functions of the NDCC OPCEN are: 1) alert and monitoring; 2) multi-agency operational coordination, 3) response resource mobilization, 4) information management; and, 5) program coordination for operations centers’ capability upgrade. The main challenge for an EOC especially at the regional and provincial level is to maintain its 24/7 operations after the impact of disasters.

On public education and training, the ADPC\textsuperscript{2}, in partnership with concerned NDCC member-agencies and with the support from the DIPECHO, is spearheading the Priority Implementation Project on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into the Education Sector. The objectives of the project are to develop DRM modules for integration into the secondary school curriculum and to undertake research on the impact of disasters to the education sector. The Department of Education (DepEd) takes the lead in implementing the said project. Parallel to this, a Memorandum of Agreement was also signed by DepEd and nine partner agencies and private organizations to formalize their involvement in the five-year project Disaster Preparedness through Educational Multi-Media which is aimed at instilling in the minds of the youth, parents and community a culture of preparedness. Through this project, DepEd shall distribute copies of educational multi-media disaster preparedness instructional materials covering both human-made and natural hazards.

\textsuperscript{2} Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
Since October 1998, the ADPC, in collaboration with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department (MDFRD) and the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) of USAID, implemented a 5-year agenda called Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) Phase 1 to improve the performance of Medical First Responders (MFR) and Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) personnel and agencies in the countries of India, Nepal, Indonesia and Philippines.

PEER Phase 2 implements activities in Philippines under the coordinating authority of the NDCC which has a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Society for Earthquake Technology - Nepal. All NDCC member-agencies with search and rescue and medical first response mandates are de facto partner agencies of PEER. The designated training institutions for MFR and CSSR Courses are the Fire National Training Institute (FNTI) and Amity Public Safety Academy (APSA). On the other hand, the designated training institution for Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE) is the Department of Health. The NDCC oversees the implementation of activities of these institutions.

Apart from earthquake drills, fire drills and evacuation drills, the NDCC has carried out communication preparedness exercises involving its 17 regional centers. An Asia-Pacific earthquake simulation exercise was held in January 2004 in the country jointly organized by the NDCC and the INSARAG where about eight international USAR teams and 10 local response teams participated.

### III. Issues, Gaps and Priorities in Current Emergency Preparedness Planning

Mobilizing needed resources and bringing them to the most-in-need in the most expeditious manner is the key challenge in emergency preparedness planning in terms of resource mobilization. Mobilization procedures, protocols, standards and SOPs are being reviewed, tested and updated.

In the event that the country’s resources are overwhelmed by the evolving needs of the post-disaster situation, or should the President approves the acceptance of offers of assistance from international humanitarian community and foreign governments, the NDCC follows the International Humanitarian Assistance Network (IHAN) procedures which define the responsibilities of government agencies concerned aimed at establishing an efficient system, with clearly defined procedures and arrangements for the entry and processing of international relief teams. Complementing this is the draft Standard Operating Procedures for Regional Standby Arrangements (SASOP), a mechanism under the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The SASOP provides the guide for deploying and mobilizing assets from the assisting entity to the points of borders of the requesting party in the ASEAN Region.

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3 Urban Search and Rescue
At the country level, the NDCC is pushing for the creation of the NDCC Preparedness Center that will cater to the capacity-building needs of the country, including systems that ensure these capacities cascade to the community level.

IV. Way Forward

Much remains to be done but the growing awareness of the population and various sectors of society on the need to invest more on mitigation and preparedness than on response is gaining ground. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) has provided a clear framework of what countries need to focus on to achieve the HFA’s objective of making communities resilient to disasters by 2015.

Looking at the future, a lot of cross-fertilization of experiences, best practices, and capacity-building approaches will take place. Many actors will jump into the bandwagon and additional challenges will emerge, including preserving national standards for capacity-building priorities. Nevertheless, the road ahead has been paved and the direction has been set.