



Republic Act 10121: An Approach in Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in the Philippines¹

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Introduction

The Philippines as an archipelago is highly exposed to natural hazards because of its geographic and climatological location. It is situated along the Pacific Typhoon Belt and is within the Pacific Ring of Fire. As such, the country is susceptible to multiple recurrence of natural hazards such as typhoons and storm surges, earthquakes, floods and landslides. In fact, the country is ranked third among 173 countries in terms of disaster risk (World Risk Report, 2012 as cited in Disaster Management Practices in the Philippines: An Assessment, 2013). This natural situation of the country is compounded by the uncontrolled human settlement in hazard-prone and marginal areas, high poverty rate, failure to implement building codes and construction standards, and degradation of forests and coastal resources, among others (UNICEF Philippines, 2014).

For the period 1970 to 2009, the country's annual average direct cost of damages related to disasters ranged from Php 5 billion to Php 15 billion (US\$100 million to US\$300 million). This is equivalent to more than 0.5% of the national gross domestic product (GDP) which did not even include other indirect damages and secondary impacts due to disasters (Commission on Audit, 2014).

The brunt of these natural hazards, especially flooding occurrences, is felt the most by 27.6 million Filipinos who are among the poorest and marginalized. They are often trapped in a seemingly never ending cycle of disaster, displacement and rebuilding (UNICEF Philippines, 2014). However, while natural disasters are detrimental to properties and livelihood activities that caused grave economic impacts especially to the poor, their occurrence are among the major causes of casualties in the country. Annually, it was estimated that natural calamities claim about 1,002 lives.

For a country like the Philippines, a proactive disaster risk management approach is imperative with the end view of increasing people's resilience and decreasing their vulnerabilities to natural disasters.

¹A short policy paper submitted to the Food and Fertilizer Technology Center (FFTC) for the project titled "Asia-Pacific Information Platform in Agricultural Policy". Short policy papers, as corollary outputs of the project, describe pertinent Philippine laws and regulations on agriculture, aquatic and natural resources.

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Approach to disaster risk management

Since 2009, the Philippine Government has put in place a robust national legal and policy framework that aims to strengthen the country's disaster risk reduction (DRR) system. Hence, Republic Act No. 10121 otherwise known as the "The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (PDRRM) Act of 2010" was passed into law in May 2010. It acknowledges among other things, the need to adopt a disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) approach that is holistic, comprehensive, integrated, and proactive in lessening the socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters including climate change. It aims to promote the involvement and participation of all sectors and all stakeholders concerned, at all levels, especially the local community (Section 2, RA No. 10121). This law replaced Presidential Decree No. 1566 of 1978 "Strengthening the Philippine Disaster Control Capability and Establishing the National Program of Community Disaster Prevention", which no longer reflect the current social realities and circumstances and effects on development and growth of disasters and climate change (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2014).

RA 10121 provides a strong legal and institutional basis for DRRM in the country and provided basis for the development of policies and plans, implementation of actions and measures pertaining to all aspects of DRRM, including good governance, risk assessment and early warning, knowledge building and awareness raising, reducing underlying risk factor, and preparedness for effective response and early recovery (Section 4, RA No. 10121).

With the extent of natural disasters that recently occurred, the PDRRM Act shifted its focus from disaster response and recovery towards disaster risk reduction, preparedness and mitigation. As an integral part of development programs, the Act provided for more emphasis on strengthening the communities' and people's capacity to anticipate, cope with and recover from disasters. It adopts and adheres to principles and strategies consistent with the international standards set by the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) which is a comprehensive, action-oriented response to international concern about the growing impacts of disasters on individuals, communities, and national development (DRR Knowledge Centre, 2014).

Under the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (PDRRM) Act of 2010, the following are its declaration of policy:

- Strengthening institutional capacity of DRRM (includes LGUs, communities, vulnerable and marginalized groups);
- Building the resilience of local communities to disasters;
- Adherence to universal norms, principles and standards/incorporation of internationally accepted principles of DRM;
- Participation of all sectors and all stakeholders at all level/engage participation of civil society organizations;
- Adoption and implementation of a comprehensive DRR program incorporated in the development plan;
- Mainstreaming DRR and climate change in the development processes and peace process/conflict resolution approach;
- Institutionalizing the policies, structures, coordination mechanisms and programs; and
- Provide maximum care, assistance and services to individuals and families affected by disaster, implement emergency rehabilitation projects to lessen the impact of disaster, and facilitate resumption of normal social and economic activities.

National organizations working on DRRM

The PDRRM Act transforms the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) into the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) (Section 5, RA No. 10121). The National Council, being empowered with policy-making, coordination, integration, supervision, monitoring and evaluation functions, oversees the Philippine disaster management system composed of large numbers of diverse interacting agencies. Table 1 showcases the various DRRM national institutions in the country as enunciated in RA 10121.

Table 1. Key stakeholders and institutions on DRRM in the Philippines

Disaster Management Coordination Office of the Civil Defense (OCD)	The OCD is entrusted to ensure the protection and public welfare during disasters or emergencies. The OCD serves as the operating arm of the National Council supporting discharge of its functions.
NDRRMC; Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC); and Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO)	The highest policy-making body on matters of disasters in the country. NDRRMC advises the President on efforts in disaster management undertaken by the government and the private sector, thereby serving as the highest policy-making body on disaster management. The NDRRMC is replicated at the regional and local levels, and these bodies function substantially like the NDRRMC, operating and utilizing resources at their respective levels.
Sectoral Government Agencies (e.g. Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), etc.)	Responsible for carrying out their respective tasks and responsibilities in disaster management including preparedness, mitigation, response and rehabilitation.

Source: Assessment of DRRM at the Local Level

Institutionalizing disaster risk reduction and management

RA 10121 recognized the need to institutionalize DRRM both at the national and local levels. It calls for the need to develop a National Disaster Reduction and Management Framework (NDRRMF) that provides for a comprehensive, all hazards, multi-sectoral, inter-agency and community-based approach to DRRM. It is envisaged that NDRRMF shall serve as principal guide to DRRM efforts to the country and provide a framework to achieve a safer, adaptive and disaster resilient Filipino communities (NDRRMF, 2011-2018). In order to ensure relevance, NDRRMF shall be reviewed on a five-year interval, or as may be deemed necessary (Section 6, RA No. 10121).

In June 2011, the national government integrated NDRRMF into the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) as well as the sectoral DRRM plans of national line and government agencies. DRRM has four priority areas that covers: a) prevention and mitigation, b) preparedness, c) response and d) rehabilitation and recovery. Under the PDP 2011-2016, DRRM was identified as one of the main cross-cutting concerns. Various strategies to address and reduce people's vulnerabilities and risks to disasters were integrated in different sectors and sub-sectors. PDP's approaches to incorporate DRRM included among others, mainstreaming of DRRM in policies, plans and programs; assessment of high-risk areas; integrating DRRM in all education levels and in specialized technical training and research programs; heighten public awareness through formulation and implementation of communication plan; increase local government unit (LGU) and community participation; and intensify development and utilization of alternative and environmentally friendly energy sources and technologies.

On the other hand, at the local level, to streamline activities of DRRM, the law supported the modified use and appropriation of the Local Calamity Fund that established the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF).

Section 21 of RA 10121 provides that the LDRRMF amounting to not less than five percent (5%) of the estimated revenue from regular sources shall be set aside to support disaster risk management activities such as, but not limited to the pre-disaster preparedness programs including training, purchase of disaster response and rescue equipment, supplies and medicines, for post-disaster activities, and payment of premiums on calamity insurance.

Further, the LDRRMF shall cover the thirty percent (30%) lump-sum allocation for Quick Response Fund (QRF) and the seventy percent (70%) allocation for disaster prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation and recovery.

Conclusion

Disasters contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty, preventing individuals, families and communities from exercising their rights and realizing their development potential. Given that typhoons, floods, landslides, drought, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis and the like will continue to hit the country, the government and the general public have to establish and strengthen mechanisms to increase their abilities to prevent, adapt, mitigate and prepare for potential impacts of disasters and risks. Climate change will bring about more, recurrent and destructive calamities, hence, RA 10121 is a timely and relevant policy that would prepare the country for effects and impacts of climate change. It has taken disaster risk reduction and management at the forefront of national and local development plans and policies.

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