



CBDRRM in the Philippines



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CBDRRM

The Philippines shares with several Asian countries the unwelcome distinction of being one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. According to the 2021 World Risk Index, the Philippines ranks 8th as most at-risk country for disasters. After the experience of successive "mega-disasters" within the last decade and the positive case stories of community mobilization in disaster preparedness and mitigation, there have been more communities, people's organizations and NGOs, government agencies, and local government units which have taken on community-based disaster management.



Community participation has been recognized as the additional element in disaster management necessary to reverse the worldwide trend of increasing frequency and loss from disasters, build a culture of safety and disaster-resilient communities, and ensure sustainable development for all.

In 2002, the Philippine Disaster Management Forum (PDMF), a network involving key disaster management agencies and advocates of CBDM, emerged. Together with the Office of Civil Defense - National Disaster Coordinating Council (OCD-NDCC), PDMF organized the First National Conference on Community Based Disaster Management in January 2003 to promote Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM); highlighting that the disaster is not the one to be managed, but the disaster risk. The event was participated by community partners of the PDMF, national government agencies, and local government units.

Experiences in the Philippines affirm the effectiveness of involving communities in disaster preparedness and mitigation. This was evident in the first People's Organizations' (PO) Conference in August 2004 wherein members of the people's organizations shared their experiences and good practices in community-based disaster management. The second PO Conference followed in September 2008 which enabled the discussion of the need to have a comprehensive DRRM law in the Philippines.

In this light, a national formation of civil society organizations, people's organizations, practitioners, and advocates adhering to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and implementing community-based disaster risk reduction and management (CBDRRM) called the Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines (DRRNetPhils) was formed in 2008. It is composed of 54 CSOs and 11 individual members. With the Philippine Consortium on Good Local Governance (PCGLG) and other organizations, DRRNetPhils actively pushed the passage of the Disaster Risk Reduction Bill and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. The bill was then signed into law by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last 27 May 2010 by virtue of Republic Act 10121 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010.



Case Story

In Times of Affliction, God and Preparedness are our Protection

Sitio South Libis and *Sitio* North Libis are two peripheral, riverine, peri-urban communities in the village of Banaba, San Mateo, Rizal. These two communities experience yearly floods due to the overflow of two adjoining rivers (Marikina and Nangka Rivers) that are part of the topography of the area. This writer recorded a ten-year cycle of big flood in the area - 1978, 1988, 1999, 2009.

The prospect of more and worsening floods was aggravated by an environmentally critical project of one construction company to establish a cement batching plant right in the middle of the two sitios and very proximate to the embankments of the Marikina River. The vulnerable families analyzed the project and its impacts on them during the weekly Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) Buklod (numbering seven cells) meeting. The vulnerable people arrived at the consensus: the project of the construction company should be halted for disaster risk aggravation that would ensue that, would be inimical to children, older persons, women, and persons with disabilities living in South and North Libis.

A non-structural kind of disaster risk mitigation was mapped up by the community of Buklod or Basic Ecclesial communities, such as a signature campaign of community folks addressed to the Mayor; request for a public hearing with the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources of the San Mateo Municipal Council; attend

technical conferences about our complaint against the project with the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), the Regional Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), and finally, lobbying to the Provincial Board Members of Rizal Provincial Council.

The non-structural disaster risk mitigation efforts of the community paid off. The construction company packed up and abandoned its cement batching plant project in the area of vulnerable people in *Sitio* South Libis and North Libis. But the damage has been done by the construction company's initial earthmoving activities and dumping of filling materials. The victory was not enough, we have to think of ways to be less vulnerable in more concrete initiatives and sufficient

funding (because our non-structural disaster risk mitigation was undertaken with "pass the hat" funds; while we (the vulnerable sector of sitios South Libis and North Libis - Basic Ecclesial communities), also forged partnerships for this non-structural disaster risk mitigation pursuits with the lawyers of *Tanggol*



Kalikasan, and at the early stage, the staff of the Ministry of Social and Human Development - Social Action Center, Diocese of Antipolo. The partnership started in September 1995 up to May 1996, when the construction company folded up.

The members of Buklod Tao, Inc. tasked Ka Noli A. Abinales, concurrent President of the organization at that time, to write letters to sympathetic institutions that would help a fledgling organization. A simple project proposal was drafted and was submitted to the Small Embassy Project window of the Royal Netherland Embassy in Manila. The project delineated, for its first component, - the establishment of a community-based disaster management structure of Buklod Tao, Inc, and to be implemented in sitios South Libis and North Libis.

The project proposal submitted to the embassy was approved in May 1997. The first tranche amounting to P25,000.00 was released by the embassy upon the signing of a MOA in mid-June 1997. With this first tranche, Buklod Tao was able to undertake the first component of the Buklod Tao, Inc. project, that is, the establishment of community-based disaster management (that was how it was called then, circa 1997).

Buklod Tao PABATID (system of communication within the organization) was circulated to some 30 to 32 men and women members of Buklod Tao, Inc. It was an invite to them to attend a one-day forum and workshop to be held at the community chapel about community preparedness as the community's counter against flooding. It was held on 20 June 1997, facilitated by Buklod Tao President, Ka Noli.



Manuel Alcantara Abinales/ @facebook.com

The first objective was: community awareness-raising about disasters, hazards, our vulnerabilities, and local capacities. This was aptly met with the output of a hazard map drawn by three sub-groups of the participants. Each grouping was tactical because representations are: those that reside at *Sitio* South Libis belong to one group; those that reside at *Sitio* North Libis belong to the second group; and those that reside in the middle part, between the two sitios should belong to the third group. The second objective was to organize the participants who have undergone awareness-raising. Although we all belong to one umbrella group, Buklod Tao, Inc., the community awareness that was undertaken necessitated the formation of dedicated groups within the organization that is focused on preparedness, safety, and reduction of risks.

The tactical sub-groups during the hazard mapping workshop led the way towards the organizing of Disaster Preparedness Teams of Buklod Tao, Inc.: one in sitio South Libis; the second in Sitio North Libis, and the third group is based in the middle portion between South Libis and North

Libis. Community awareness and community organizing have been realized that same day (20 June 1997), one more element has to be pursued still. Can we already go back home and be content with the day's accomplishments? This writer asked the participants inside the community chapel this question: "We have attained community risk awareness, we have formed three volunteer groups for preparedness, and safety risk reduction, have we missed something?" Within seconds, the leader of our newly formed groups replied: "For our respective teams, we need the provision of a rescue boat, rescue ropes, flashlights, life vests, and a rescue boat, rescue ropes, flashlights, life vests, and megaphones for early warning". This response was the embodiment of our third objective: Capacity building.

Our organization must enable our teams to pursue their role during disasters for the welfare of our community members. With the first tranche from the Royal Netherland Embassy, we were able to capacitate ourselves:

- We fabricated our own three fiberglass rescue boats;
- We purchased three sets of rescue ropes, flashlights, and even megaphones for our early warning system.

It would be recalled that it was in the 1990s when the backdrop in the government relevant to disaster mechanisms was Presidential Decree 1566 where a proactive stance on disaster and disaster risk was still wanting. Hence this writer could not cite any local government role in the above-described community-initiated pursuits. Coordination of the above pursuit of CBDRM was vested on the Buklod Tao officers since, central to the pursuit was Ka Noli A. Abinales, concurrent President

of Buklod Tao, Inc. during the implementation of Small Embassy Project funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy.



The women in the community served as cooks in our community kitchen during disaster events. Still, other women served as in-charge of our designated evacuation center which was the community chapel; the youth helped in the repacking and distribution of relief items.

The Post Ketchana Rehabilitation Programs prompted Buklod Tao CBDRM activities to undertake: 1. Rapid Damage Needs Capacities Assessment in our flood-affected communities; 2. Rapid Livelihood Assessment; 3. Food and non-food relief delivery operations; 4. Housing materials distribution; 5. Social enterprise capital augmentation program; 6. Banaba Disaster Risk Reduction Program

which constitutes the following components: training, organizing, livelihood, advocacy, capacity building, and construction plus stewardship with prospects of ownership of Banaba Livelihood and Evacuation Center. 7. Paralegal (SALIGAN), Psycho-social (Ateneo Psychology Dept), Rapid Response training (Christian Aid) CBDRRM training, organizing and advocacy (CDP).8. Development of Banaba Participatory 3 - Dimensional Map (University of Auckland, New Zealand, University of the Philippines Dept of Geography, CDP). Monitoring mechanisms were: livelihood committee meetings headed by Christian Aid and skills training facilitated by Unlad Kabayan; evaluation meetings with Christian Aid, Unlad Kabayan, and the Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation.

The Impact

Since the CDRM projects in 1997 and 2010, there have been no casualties during flood events in the communities. Families are now aware of the meaning and significance of early warning systems; eight peripheral communities in Banaba appreciate the existence of DRR teams of Buklod Tao equipped with boats, flashlights, ropes, life vests, and megaphones. Sensitized communities emerged in regard to preparedness and safety, evacuation during times of emergencies are already a mindset for all, and to reduce vulnerabilities of homes, families retrofit their houses against floods and earthquakes. Notable was the level of participation of people during training events, flood simulation events, and meetings.



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