



PAPER 9

Reinforcing local government partnership and building resilience through the local DRR Plan: The Tearfund experience in the Philippines

1 Introduction

As the third most at-risk country in the world (World Risk Index 2016), the Philippines has gone through major disasters, especially in recent years. Typhoon Haiyan (Local name Yolanda) hit Cadiz City, Negros Province in November 2013 and at the time, it was the largest typhoon to have ever made landfall in the country. While it left no casualties in Cadiz city, it affected more than 22,000 families and destroyed an estimated Php 162,581,310 (USD 3,251,626) worth of properties and livelihood.

Tearfund, an international non-profit organization, initially supported the shelter and livelihood needs of affected families in 10 barangays in Cadiz City as they recovered from the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan. They were also underwent DRR trainings and capacity building activities. As a coastal city, half of its 22 barangays located in coastal areas are vulnerable to flooding, storm surge, and other effects of typhoons.

In the course of Tearfund's intervention and through consultation with various stakeholders, particularly the local government unit, it was identified that there was an urgent need for a comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation plan. Tearfund consulted various stakeholders particularly the Mayor, Vice Mayor and city council members of Cadiz city, oriented them on the usefulness of an integrated DRRM plan and facilitated developing the political will and commitment for the plan.

In this regard, to strengthen the capacity of Cadiz City in addressing its exposure to natural hazards and climate change, Tearfund provided technical support for the development of a comprehensive, medium-term Local DRR-CCA plan. This is in adherence to the Republic Act 10121 or DRRM Act of the Philippines which mandates the local government units to "Formulate and implement a comprehensive and integrated LDRRMP in accordance with the national, regional and provincial framework, and policies on disaster risk reduction in close coordination with the local councils (LDCs) (sec 6)."

The creation of the DRR-CCA plan also supports the four priority actions of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "build back better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

2 Body

2.1 The Local DRR Plan

In adherence to the Hyogo and Sendai Frameworks, the Disaster Risk Reduction Act of 2010 or the DRRM Law of the Philippines mandates the local government units to formulate Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (LDRRMP) to be more responsive and proactive in addressing disasters caused by natural hazards.

The Philippines is divided into geopolitical units of 18 regions, 81 provinces, 145 cities, 1,489 municipalities, and 42,036 barangays¹. With more than 7,000 islands at risk from multiple hazards, the task of local government units to protect their constituents from the impact of economic loss and massive loss of life seems difficult.

According to the Commission on Audit consolidated report on Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) Fund in 2015², the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has mainstreamed disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) to 653 provincial, city, and municipal plans; including the comprehensive land use plan and comprehensive development plan, policies, and ordinances.

Lack of technical skills in hazards exposure analysis and cross-sectoral effects of disasters has been the main challenge for the local government units in developing the plan. This challenge can be addressed when non-profit or development organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector are willing to provide technical support and resources.

An assessment conducted by Tearfund in partnership with the Ateneo de Manila School of Development Studies on the implementation of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act in Cadiz³ identified the challenges of the city in terms of governance. In particular, the lack of a functioning City DRR Office known by the community; the inability to understand hazards and translate the knowledge in to actionable measures at the household level; and limited or no community-based activities.

These challenges prompted Tearfund to support Cadiz City to strengthen the local DRR Office and build the capacity of its officers, introduce inclusive community-based DRR at the barangay level, and integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the development of the city – the main objectives of the creation of the Local DRR-CCA plan.

Another significant component in the local DRR-CCA plan is the proper utilisation of the DRR fund. As per RA 10121, LGUs can set aside 5% of its internal revenue allotment to fund DRR-CCA programs and activities; 70% can be used for preparedness activities and 30% should be set aside as a quick response fund for the city's immediate needs following a disaster event after it has declared a state of calamity. The proper allocation and usage of funds is also a major concern of the 2015 Commission on Audit Report. Many cities and municipalities failed to follow the guidelines in setting timeframes, sources of funds, and expected outputs. According to COA, 112 LGUs fail to prepare or submit the local DRR fund investment plan for the projects and activities for disaster mitigation, prevention, and preparedness as required under Section 5.1.2 of COA Circular 2012-002⁴.

These challenges and problems can be addressed if the LGUs have a comprehensive DRR-CCA plan.

2.2 The Tearfund Framework and Planning Process

The Philippine's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework⁴ (2011-28) envisions safe, adaptive, and disaster-resilient Filipino communities moving towards sustainable development. This can be achieved through meaningful engagement among various stakeholders that foster cooperation, coordination, and partnership.

Tearfund initially implemented immediate relief projects when Typhoon Haiyan devastated northern Negros where Cadiz is located. The experience taught the local government units and the people of Cadiz that preparedness to disasters should be brought down to the community and household level. This is not an easy task considering that disaster risk reduction is more than just conducting drills and providing training, but also a change of attitude from response to preparedness.

At the institutional level, cities and municipalities are mandated to establish a Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO) which shall be responsible for setting the direction, development, implementation, and coordination of disaster risk management programs within their territorial jurisdiction. The local DRR Officer is usually appointed by the city mayor. When the mayor's term is over, the LDRR officer is usually replaced. In some cases, the city planning officer or city agriculturist also serves dual roles as the LDRR officer for lack of competent and technically trained candidates for the post.

DRR planning is a combination of local knowledge of development issues and challenges; technical expertise in hazards, exposure, and risk assessment; and project management skills. An LGU is considered fortunate to appoint a DRR officer or staff with these competencies.

In this regard, in Tearfund’s decision to support the LGU to develop the City’s DRR-CCA plan it was essential to empower the LGU and other stakeholders to lead the process, make informed decisions and reinforce LGU ownership of the plan to ensure its implementation and sustainability.

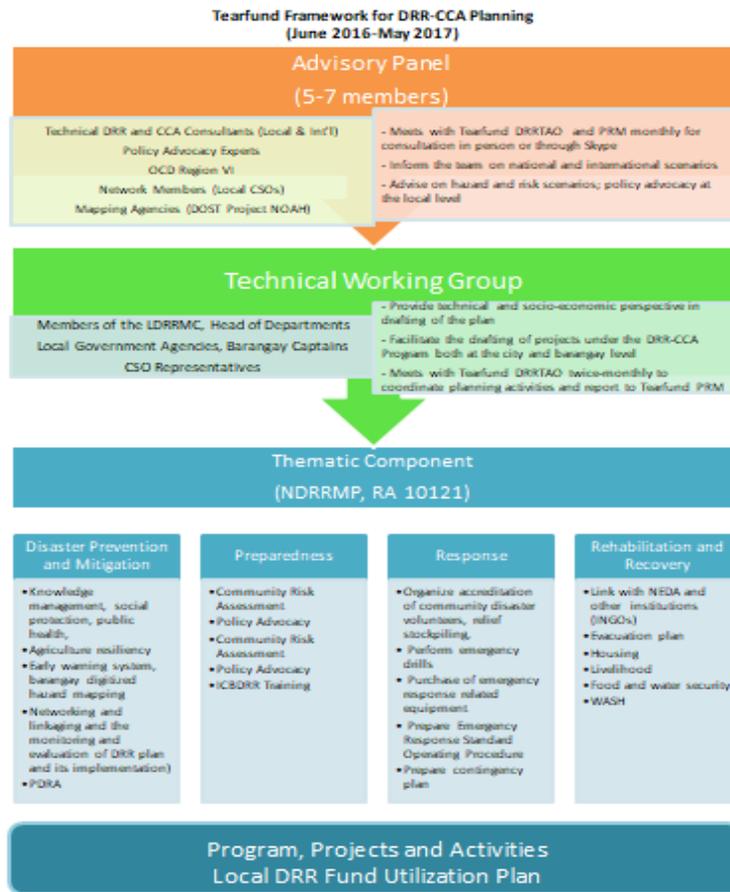


Figure 1: The Tearfund Philippines Framework for DRR-CCA Planning

This process follows the mechanism of a rationalized planning system in national and local development that employs a multi-sectoral, consultative, and participatory approach by integrating representatives from key departments, civil society organizations, and community leaders as the technical working group of this DRR-CCA plan. The five-year DRR-CCA plan shall inform the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and the City Development Plan by integrating risk exposure data and sectoral analysis to address the challenges posed by disasters and climate change.

Various national government agencies provided manuals, guidelines, memorandums, and circulars that were used for reference in the development of the plan. This also includes the National DRR and Management Plan, National Disaster Preparedness Plan, and the National Disaster Response Plan.

Information, analysis, and guidelines for the Local DRR-CCA Plan were provided by the Advisory Panel which guided the Technical Working Group (TWG) that facilitated the planning process. The Advisory Panel was composed of technical experts from relevant government agencies and organizations, Tearfund, and policy and planning experts. The TWG was composed of representatives of departments, offices, and civil society organizations of Cadiz City.

Key national government agencies such as the Office of Civil Defense Negros Island Region, Department of Science and Technology - Project NOAH, and the Center for Disaster Preparedness also provided technical support in the development of the Local DRR-CCA Plan.

The DRR Training and Advocacy Officer of Tearfund Philippines supported the entire process and provided technical guidance for the development of DRR-CCA plan.

Prior to the development of the plan, members of the TWG went on a learning visit to Legazpi City, Albay Province, a United Nations Model for Disaster Preparedness, to conduct benchmarking activities. The experience provided the group with learning and ideas to overcome challenges through various strategies in DRR-CCA planning and implementation.

The programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) identified in the plan are in accordance with the four thematic areas in DRRM: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation, consistent with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Plan (NDRRMP). The risk exposure, vulnerability, and capacity of the communities and the city are the main considerations in the development of the PPAs and the contingency plan for strong typhoons. Various departments and government agencies such as the City Planning Office, City Engineering Office, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development Office will take the lead in implementing the PPAs supervised by the City or Local DRRM Office.

The five-year, medium term plan is not co-terminus with the current local officials. The Local DRR plan was approved in the local city council prior to implementation. All data and information derived in the process of planning were presented to barangay representatives and community leaders for validation.

3 Summary and Conclusion

Recognizing the limitations of humanitarian aid, Tearfund supported the development planning process of Cadiz City to encourage long-term resilience and mitigate the impact of disasters and climate change. In the process, various issues and concerns surfaced as expected in the sectoral analysis, especially from the vulnerable sectors and those who have experienced the devastating effects of Typhoon Haiyan. To help ensure that the City has a roadmap towards resilience long after the organization ceases its operation in the area, Tearfund has helped prevent dependency by supporting and complementing the City's long-term development objectives and working through the LGU structure.

The TWG presented the DRR-CCA plan before the city council Cadiz and the council approved the plan on 18 June 2017. The development of the plan would not have been possible if it were not for the good relationship maintained over the period of project implementation between Tearfund and the Cadiz City Government. It was relatively easy to reach agreement with the Local DRR Council to support the development of the plan because the LGU acknowledged their need for it, not just to comply with the law. The commitment to the partnership has remained strong on both sides, enough to influence the development framework of the City.

This occasion was also the first time that various offices and departments of the City have come together to develop a medium-term plan together. The process was appreciated by the representatives in addition to fostering understanding of each sector's needs which each office or department seeks to address.

However, the existence of the Local DRR-CCA plan does not guarantee success in implementation. It also takes more than the political will and good leadership of the city officials and departments involved, but require the coming together of all actors and stakeholders towards the common goal of keeping their communities safe.

Endnotes

¹Provincial Summary: Number of Provinces, Cities, Municipalities and Barangays by Region as of September 30, 2016 (PDF). Philippine Statistics Authority. Retrieved July 10, 2017

²Consolidated Report on the Audit of the Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) Fund as December 31, 2016 (PDF). Commission on Audit. Retrieved May 1, 2017

³Assessing the Implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act in Cadiz and Roxas Cities (PDF). Atene de Manila Development Studies Program. Retrieved March 6, 2017

⁴Accounting and Reporting Guidelines of LDRRMF and NDRRMF, released September 12, 2012 (PDF). Commission on Audit Circular No. 2012-002. Retrieved July 10, 2017