

Building Resilient Communities

Good Practices in Disaster Risk Management in the Philippines


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Kristina Caerlan
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**A Permanent Disaster
Risk Management Office:
Visible, Measurable
Impact over the Years**

Albany Provincial Government

by Segundo E. Romero

The case study demonstrates the value of establishing a full-fledged office with its own budget, personnel and facilities instead of just a task force or an ad hoc committee. A permanent disaster risk management office (DRMO) signals the people's preparedness for what it takes to prevent the loss of life and property in times of calamity.

The retelling of how the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office (APSEMO) came into being seeks to inspire local chief executives, local councils, and local staff involved in planning and development and disaster and emergency management to set up their own disaster risk management offices (DRMOs) as permanent mechanisms within their local governments. The APSEMO now has 12 years worth of experience and lessons in disaster risk management that other local government units (LGUs) can learn from. Through the institutionalization of the function of disaster risk management, the Province of Albay has achieved a remarkable record in reducing the loss of lives and property.

This case study is an effort to share good practices in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, which emphasizes the importance of a strong local-level setup that will implement disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures.

Background

The province of Albay lies between the provinces of Camarines Sur on the north and Sorsogon on the South. On the east is the Pacific Ocean, on the northeast, the Lagonoy Gulf, and on the west and southwest, the Burias Pass. Albay sits squarely along the pathway of three to five typhoons that visit upon the Bicol Region each year. These typhoons accounted for the loss of 214 lives in 1981, some 420 lives in 1988 and 58 in 1989.

Agriculture is the main livelihood in Albay, which produces coconut, rice, sugar and abaca. The manufacture of abaca products such as hats, bags, mats, and slippers is also a major source of income in the rural areas, together with fishing. The population's livelihood sources are affected when disasters hit the province, making it difficult for the people to bounce back to their normal lives.

To begin with, the Bicol region has the second highest number of poor families and individuals, after Western Visayas. In Albay, at least 42% of the population live below the poverty line. This proportion consists primarily of the disadvantaged sectors of small farm operators, fishers, landless laborers and upland farmers. About half of them go hungry and live below subsistence level.

The province is also well-known for Mayon Volcano. Known for its almost-perfect conical shape, the Mayon is the country's most active volcano. Its eruptions—the first record of which was in February 1616—have cost the province billions of pesos in damage to property.

The vulnerability of Albay to various calamities led to the creation of the province's DRMO in 1995. Key to the establishment of a DRMO was the leadership and commitment of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (Provincial Council) and provincial governors over the past decade who recognized the importance of a body to take the lead in disaster response and rehabilitation activities in the province. After the approval in principle of the institutionalization of a DRMO, a project team was formed to conduct multi-stakeholder consultations and complete a feasibility study. From this study, a project plan was developed and later presented by the provincial government to key national government agencies including the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Budget and Management. Favorable endorsement by these agencies led to the formal constitution of the DRMO.



Damaged houses located at Barangay Padang, Legazpi City. One of the hardest hit areas when typhoon Reming hit Albay province last December 2006 where at least 100 persons were killed.

institutional-capacity programs (first cluster) contribute to the mobilization-capacity programs (second cluster) as well as to the strategic planning programs (fourth cluster). The mobilization programs, in turn, feed the response-capacity programs (third cluster). The APSEMO strategy is two-pronged—to develop strategic provincial and regional plans while enhancing response capacity.

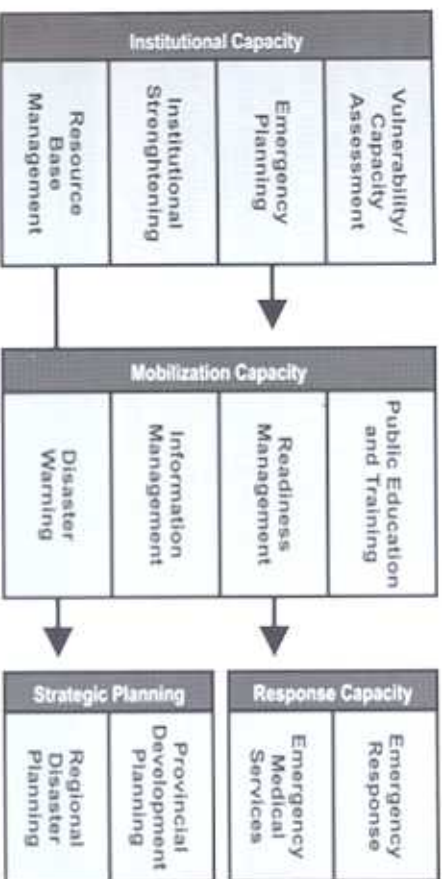


Figure 3. Strategic Linkage Diagram of APSEMO Programs

Vulnerability and capability assessment includes community risk and resource mapping while emergency planning included policy making, mitigation works and resource stockpiling. Institutional strengthening and resource base management support another cluster of programs relating to the province's mobilization capacity through public education and training (education and information campaigns, disaster risk management training courses, human resource development programs and skills training); readiness management; information management (radio broadcasting, advisory releases) and disaster warnings (arrangements for timely and wide communication of warning). The Mobilization Capacity program cluster, in turn, supports the group of programs dealing with emergency response (deployment and operations of the entire relief distribution network) and emergency medical services (search, rescue, and recovery operations, pre-hospital management, ambulance services and clinical services). The mobilization cluster also supports the cluster of programs concerned with provincial development planning and regional disaster planning.

2. Establishment of a permanent office responsible for coordination with other agencies and sectors involved in DRR

APSEMO does not reinvent the wheel as it follows existing disaster risk management frameworks and facilities to link with government, the private sector, constituent local governments and communities, donor agencies, and NGOs to enhance the disaster response system in Albay. These include: (1) Presidential Decree No. 1566 (12 June 1978) that created DCCs at different levels, and (2) the Local Government Code of 1991, as amended by Republic Act No. 8185, which provides for the appropriation of 5% of the LGUs' budgets to a local calamity fund to be disbursed for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work and services upon the declaration of a state of calamity in an area.

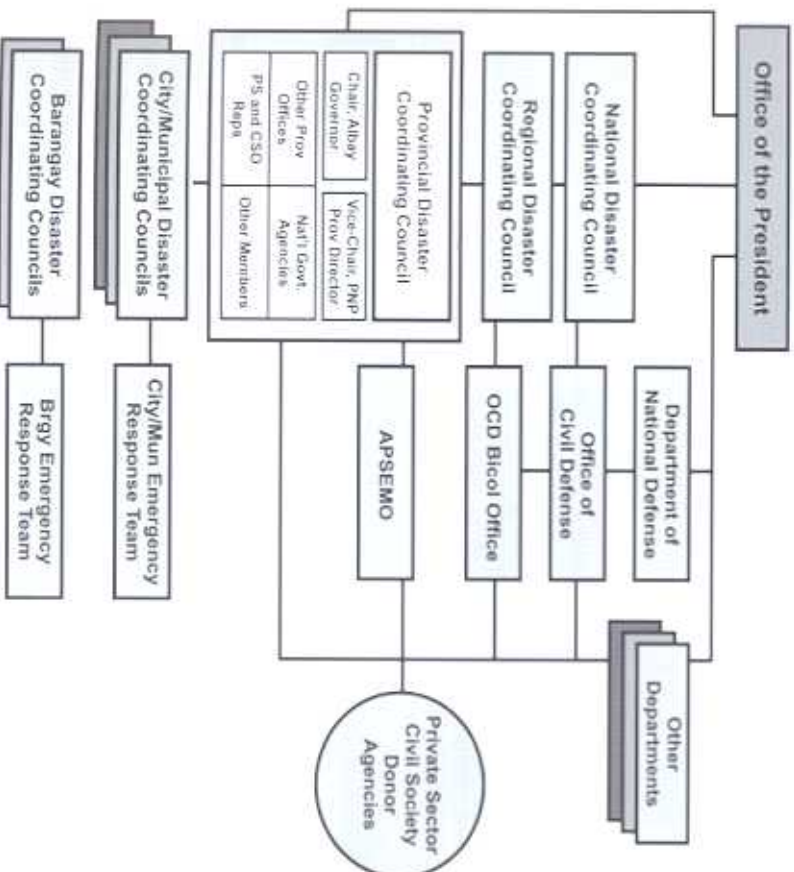


Figure 4. APSEMO in the Philippine Disaster Management System.

The existence of a permanent DRMO is credited for the zero casualties during the super typhoons in 1995 (Rosing) and 1998 (Loleng), and the three consecutive eruptions of Mayon Volcano in 2000, 2001 and 2006. The DRMO facilitated disaster preparedness activities such as emergency research that produced risks and resource maps that in turn played a critical role in contingency planning. Also, the DRMO promoted public awareness and information campaigns through information caravans. Coordination between stakeholders institutionalized the activities in evacuation, transportation, relief, communication, information and media relations, search, rescue and recovery, psycho-social care, health and sanitation, and fire control. Disaster coordinating councils (DCCs) were organized at the municipal and barangay levels with redefined roles and responsibilities. Community awareness and disaster management skills were introduced to community volunteer teams through seminars and workshops on disaster preparedness and response.

The case study suggests that a permanent DRMO would be applicable and helpful to local government units that are:

1. Disaster-prone but do not yet have disaster preparedness and response capacity to avoid disaster fatalities and losses
2. Not particularly disaster-prone but whose constituents have in fact suffered fatalities and losses due to the disastrous effects of natural or human-made hazards, or
3. Not currently disaster-prone but whose constituents believe their area is vulnerable to various risks and hazards

Creation of the DRMO

The Impetus

The creation of the APSEMO can be traced to a pilot project on disaster preparedness that the Italian government supported from 1989 to 1992. Before then, Albay's disaster risk management strategy was mainly after-the-fact disaster response. In November 1987, typhoon Sisang ravaged the Bicol Region, leaving behind 660 people dead (mostly by drowning), 395 injured and 153 missing. The damage to both infrastructure and crops was severe, amounting to over PHP700 million. The provincial government was prompted to initiate, with Italian government funding support, community-based disaster preparedness methodologies and response activities that would

ultimately reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters. This effort included programs on:

1. The institutional set-up and disaster management education
2. The establishment of a disaster operations center, installation of radio communication equipment, provision of rescue and relief facilities and the construction of embankments and evacuation facilities in 11 barangays and
3. The launch of income generation projects for prospective volunteers to encourage their participation in disaster management activities

The project's effectiveness was put to the test when in the afternoon of 2 February 1993, Mayon erupted, spewing voluminous pyroclastic materials. While this disaster claimed the lives of 80 people and forced the evacuation of 66,000 others, the government and people of Albay immediately realized that the casualties and losses could have been significantly higher were it not for the community-based disaster preparedness project initiated by the province. At once, the provincial government was convinced of the need for an institutionalized capacity for disaster risk management.

Buildup Process

Subsequently, the government set in motion the conversion of the Italy-assisted disaster operations center, which held office within the tourism building near the Albay provincial capitol, into a provincial DRMO. The idea was a provincial DRMO that would be a constituent department of the provincial capitol. The main basis of the provincial council's idea of a provincial DRMO was the Local Government Code of 1991 that mandates the creation of DCCs from the barangay to the provincial, regional and national levels.

The Department of Budget and Management and the Civil Service Commission approved and endorsed the proposal, paving the way for the creation of the office.

The proposal was submitted to the Sangguniang Pantlalawigan of Albay in 1994 and approved the following year. The systems and procedures developed by the provincial DRMO were built upon (and have remained functional up to the present). The fast pace of the establishment of the DRMO is all the more remarkable because four governors were involved in the process.

Table 1. The Establishment of a Permanent DRMO: Issues and Answers

Question:	Answer
Is the proposed department to be created justifiable considering it is neither a mandatory nor an optional office under the Local Government Code of 1991?	The creation of the office is part of the local government's corporate powers.
Does the Provincial Government of Albay have the financial capacity to sustain the personnel and operational expenses of the proposed new office?	The proposal has the necessary legislative support. In addition, personnel from the other offices can be seconded.
Is the department not duplicating the functions of existing offices such as the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO)?	The proposed new department's defined functions are distinct from the functions of the PSWDO.

The council's swift approval may partly be explained by the impact of the declaration of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) Yokohama Message. The IDNDR introduced the paradigm shift from disaster response to DRR—that is, the realization that loss and damage from disasters can be prevented or minimized if people and governments are prepared, well-informed, and have the capacity to bounce back after a disaster strikes.

The factors that contributed to the successful institutionalization of Albay's DRMO were:

1. There was wide awareness in government and among the people of the urgency of increasing provincial capacity in disaster risk management
2. The Constitution and Local Government Code encouraged decentralization and local self-reliance
3. The Italy-assisted pilot project created a disaster operations center and demonstrated the feasibility and usefulness of a provincial DRMO
4. The participation of 'champions' of the cause, responsible in formalizing the idea in writing that then gave rise to the creation of the provincial DRMO
5. The provincial executive and legislative leaders showed 'political will'
6. There was inter-agency cooperation that led to the completion of

- the proposal for review by the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Budget and Management
7. The main ideas behind the IDNDR Yokohama Message were gaining acceptance

Table 2. Steps in the Creation of APSEMO

Date	Activity	Key Person
February to May 1994	Preparation and submission of the proposal for the institutionalization of APSEMO	Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer (PSWDO) or Provincial Planning and Development Officer (PPDO)
8 June 1994	Approval by the Sanggunian through Resolution No. 155-94 entitled "Institutionalizing and Elevating the Albay Provincial Disaster Management Office to a Department Effective 1995"	Provincial Board
	Approval of the provincial resolution by the Local Chief Executive	Governor
August 1994 to March 1995	Review and approval by the regional offices of the Civil Service Commission and Department of Budget and Management in terms of qualification standards, organizational and functional structure and budget implications	Regional Directors of Civil Service Commission and Department of Budget and Management
September 1994	Integration of the proposed budget of the Provincial Disaster Management Office to the provincial budget during the budget hearing	PSWDO or PPDO, Provincial Budget Officer, Governor's Office
April 1995	Approval of the provincial budget by the Department of Budget and Management	Governor's Office
May 1995	Publication of the proposed Provincial Disaster Management Office planilla	Provincial Human Resource Management Office and Civil Service Commission
June 1995	Start of hiring and staffing	Provincial Human Resource Management Office, Governor's Office Selection Committee
August 1995	Appointment of the department head with the concurrence of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan ng Albay	Governor's Office, Office of the Vice Governor, Provincial Human Resource Management Office
	Start of operations	

Functions and Structure

Upon its creation, APSEMO assumed the following functions:

1. Delineate the roles of PDCC members and volunteers before, during and after the impact of the calamity
2. Enhance communication linkages within the organization and between the sectors involved in public safety as anchored on disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery, and
3. Maintain active coordination between and among the LGUs, government active coordinations (GOs), non-government organizations (NGOs) and PDCC member agencies to ensure timely and appropriate action on disaster related activities

As a department of the provincial government, the APSEMO was designated the permanent secretariat and technical arm of Albay's PDCC. This strengthened the operations of the PDCC that, as a coordinating body, was hamstrung in the past by administrative, logistical and coordinative challenges. Likewise, APSEMO became the secretariat of the Provincial Peace and Order Council.

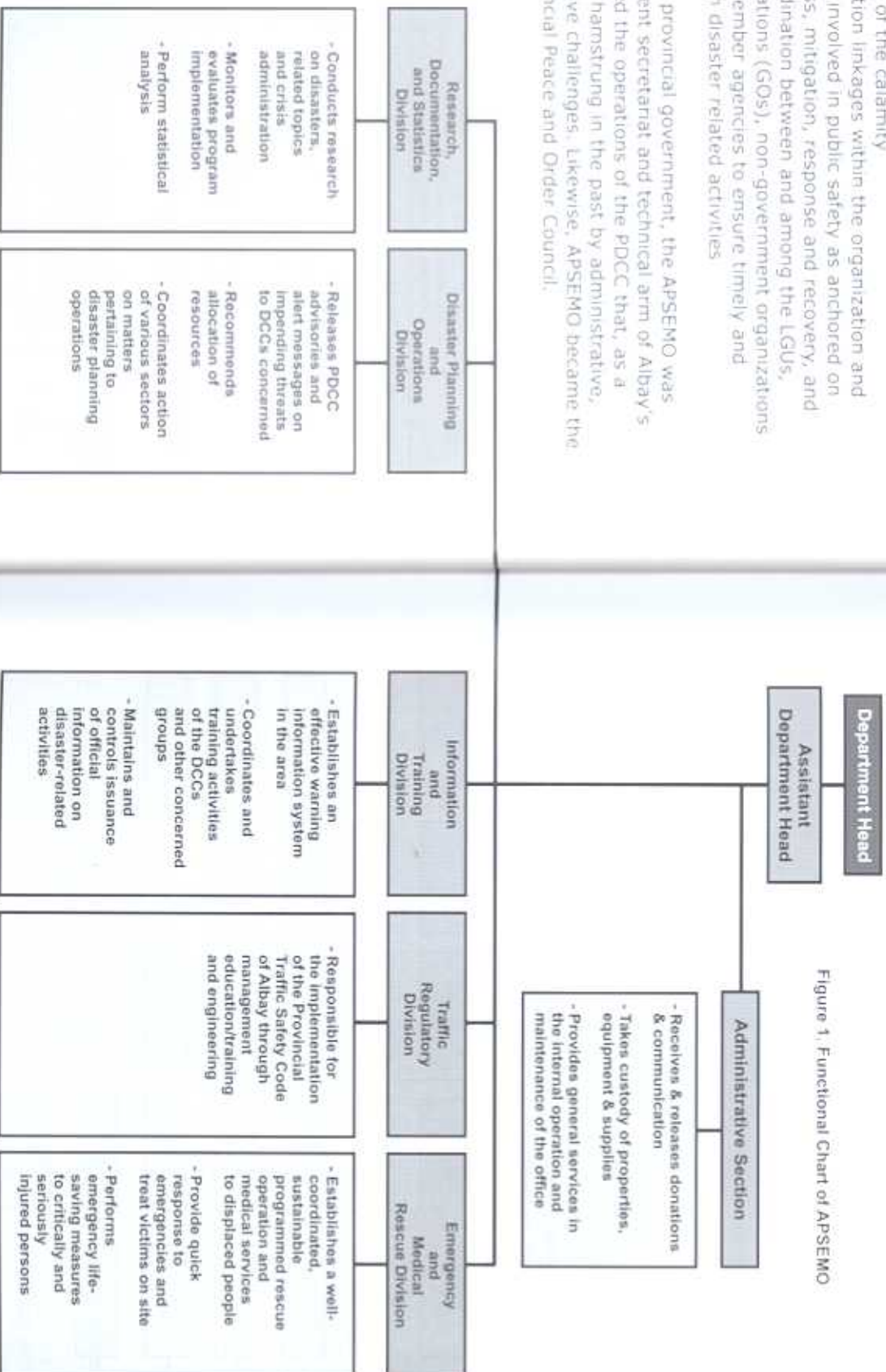


Figure 1. Functional Chart of APSEMO

In 1995, a Traffic Regulatory Division was added to APSEMO's functions and structure to take charge of traffic management, education and training and engineering. The functions of all five divisions and one section of the APSEMO are shown below.

APSEMO began operations in 1995 with only three full-time personnel, although the approved structure allowed for 34 plantilla items. Its annual budget, which is approved by the provincial board, has grown from Php700,000 in 1995 to Php5.8 million in 2007.

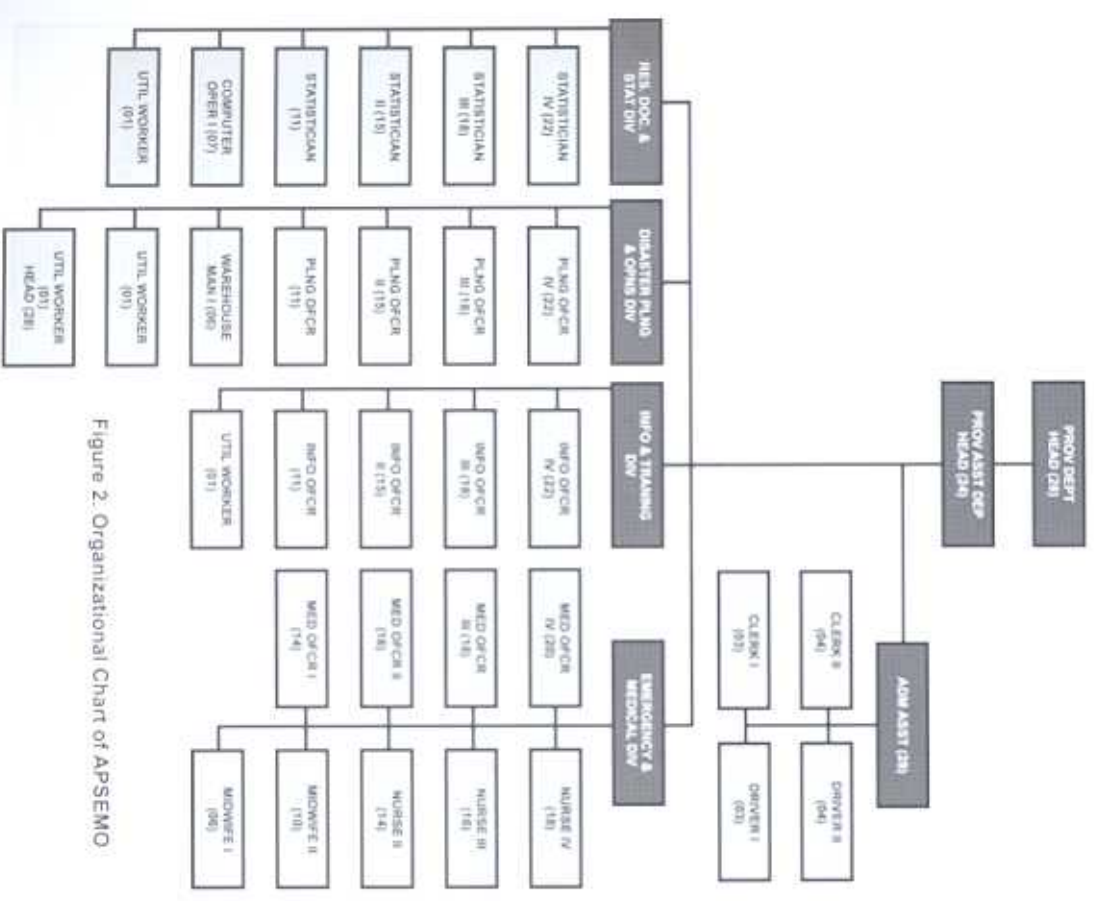


Figure 2. Organizational Chart of APSEMO

Specific Tasks

Disaster Preparedness

1. Conducts risk and hazard assessment based on information obtained from two warning agencies: the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. Relevant information from international agencies is also monitored, as in the case of typhoons and tsunamis outside the Philippine area of responsibility.
 2. Ensures that the PDCC Chairman (the Governor) is informed accordingly.
 3. Activates the local-level DCCs per the recommendation of PAGASA and other warning agencies.
 4. Initiates contact with the various agencies and mechanisms of the PDCC member agencies, and reviews and updates the list of resource agencies and organizations available for disaster operations.
 5. Starts up the Disaster Operations Center as the hub of coordination, communication and emergency response:
 - a. The specific risk areas are mapped and documented, preparatory to information dissemination
 - b. Procedures for crisis management are checked and, where necessary, augmented or modified. The affected local governments and communities are informed of the impending disaster, and training and drill activities are undertaken to increase readiness in case of evacuation and other actions
 - c. Local DCCs, private sector and civil society organizations including schools and media are brought into the overall disaster preparation network, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated, understood, and accepted
- #### Disaster Response Operations
1. At the onset of a disaster risk equivalent to Typhoon Signal No. 2, all PDCC member agencies are represented in the center, which begins to operate 24 hours a day
 2. APSEMO manages and coordinates provincial-level disaster response activities
 3. APSEMO and the PDCC contingent execute disaster and emergency response plans to alleviate the crisis, managing communication and

information and monitoring the disaster situation and overall response

4. When an emergency situation is declared, the head of the APSEMO automatically becomes head of the provincial government's economic and social departmental clusters otherwise headed by the Provincial Planning and Development Officer and the Provincial



Mr. Cedric D. Daop, APSEMO Department Head and PDCC Executive Officer together with Dr. Luis Domingo B. Mendoza, Albay Provincial Health Officer and Dr. Julian Salazar, Assistant Provincial Health Officer.

5. APSEMO monitors the situation, constantly updating the PDCC chair and other officials
6. Transportation facilities and other emergency support services are pre-positioned at the provincial disaster operations center and other strategic places in the three districts of Albay when any threat is detected

7. APSEMO personnel may also be directly dispatched to respond to distress victims

Recovery

1. A comprehensive damage assessment is conducted based on the reports of all other government agencies (national government agency offices as well as LGUs and local DCCs), private, and civil society actors
2. Multi-sector rehabilitation plans are formulated in coordination with relevant departments including the PSWDO, Department of Health, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, the LGUs and NGOs
3. The rehabilitation activities undertaken by local DCCs are monitored. The APSEMO plays a pivotal role in communicating the rehabilitation plan and securing funding at the provincial, national and even international levels

Other APSEMO Tasks

Apart from operations directly related to disaster risk management, APSEMO undertakes a host of other public safety and administrative functions, namely:

- Peace and order
- Traffic safety
- Secretariat work for the Provincial Peace and Order Council
- Certification of danger zones and hazard areas
- Disaster risk management resource development and education, including training, consultancy and other technical assistance to national government agencies, NGOs, LGUs, and state universities and colleges
- Support to research on disaster risk management and other emergency-related works

Project Results

1. Contribution to the provincial and regional strategic development plans

APSEMO conducts several programs that feed into the provincial and regional strategic development plans. As Figure 3 suggests, the

At the provincial level, APSEMO coordinates disaster operations. Upon the declaration of Signal No. 2, PDCC members automatically meet at the disaster operations center where APSEMO gives a situation briefing and operations are subsequently planned.

The Sangguniang Panlalawigan legislates disaster-related policies and programs—mitigation and preparation, relief and rehabilitation—also based on inputs from APSEMO. It may declare a state of calamity based on APSEMO's assessment.

APSEMO complies and monitors all reports on relief operations, including those undertaken by NGOs. The PSWDO undertakes relief operations while the health office makes available the health facilities and resources in disaster operations; the provincial police office, security and safety services; and the provincial engineering office, heavy and other engineering equipment and facilities. All these offices report their operations to the APSEMO for coordination.

At the regional level, APSEMO coordinates with the Office of Civil Defense as well as the National Economic and Development Authority regional office for the preparation of a rehabilitation plans and the Commission on Elections on the continuance of public works related to safety that are crucial to disaster preparedness during election periods.

APSEMO coordinates with civil society organizations, the Philippine National Red Cross, and disaster management donor agencies to augment its resources. GO-NGO partnerships complement the capabilities of APSEMO.

APSEMO also maintains a close working relationship with the print and broadcast media.

3. Enhanced local disaster management capacity

Because there is a provincial DRMDO to coordinate disaster operations for the province, interagency cooperation has increased. Cooperation among member-agencies of the PDCC has reached a level where there is a higher awareness of the importance of DRR and the use of the province's limited resources is optimized. In addition, the synergy that has developed among the various departments of the provincial government has created a culture of professional dedication and responsibility.

Two years after its establishment, APSEMO initiated the creation of City and Municipal Emergency Response Intervention Teams (C/MERITs) in various municipalities of Albay. The C/MERITs serve as emergency response units. Each team is headed by the municipal health officer and staffed by at least seven personnel, including a representative from the Bureau of Fire, the engineering department and the Philippine National Police, as well as the ambulance driver. The heads of the C/MERITs become the ground commander in the event of emergency rescue. Among the areas where C/MERITs have been organized are Guinobatan and Polangui (1997), Ligao (1998), and Sto Domingo, Daraga, and Camalig and Legazpi City (1999).



Earthquake and Fire Drill held last 13 February 2008 at the Bagumbayan Elementary School, Barangay 8, Legazpi City.

4. Development and standardization of an operations manual on the different phases of disaster

APSEMO, as the PDCC Secretariat, drafted the disaster risk management manual that was adopted by the council in July 1998. The completion of a manual that responds to the peculiar needs and resources of an LGU is perhaps the most important task of a DRMDO

next decade, the provincial DRMO should help identify and catalyze the necessary measures to avoid a repeat of the interactive destruction of different hazards.

Key Implementation Steps towards an Institutional DRMO

1. Recognition of Need

Before a permanent DRMO can be institutionalized, all key stakeholders, especially the local chief executive and the members of the local council, must acknowledge the need for such an office and agree on its importance in DR. The need may be based on scientific information on the disaster-proneness of the province, past experiences or related facts and figures. In the case of Albay, the province's proneness to disaster and the tremendous loss of life, property and livelihood accounted for the easy approval and unprecedented commitment of local officials to establish a permanent DRMO.

2. Approval in Principle

The institutionalization of a DRMO should be clearly stated in the LGU's executive and legislative agenda and related planning documents. With a firm and clear pronouncement from the local executive and legislators, commitment to the establishment of said office is ensured.

3. Formation of Project Team and Plan

For a complete assessment of the need for a DRMO and to enroll the key stakeholders in the process, a project team is necessary. This could be composed of representatives from the different departments that will be affected by the new office. The team should consult with the various departments and agencies involved, as well as people's organizations, NGOs and other private-sector groups in the area, for the preparation of a proposal for the DRMO. This proposal should include all the necessary plans (i.e., Strategic Plan, Transition Plan, Workforce Plan, Budget and Financing Plan) stipulated in the requirements of the Department of Interior and Local Government, Civil Service Commission and Department of Budget and Management.

4. Formal Endorsement of the Project Plan by National Government Agencies

Before the local council approves the creation of a new office, endorsements from the regional offices of key national government agencies such as the Department of Interior and Local Government, Civil Service Commission and Department of Budget and Management should be obtained. The endorsements will ensure that no government rules or regulations are violated in the process of setting up a DRMO.

5. Formal LGU Approval of Project Plan

After the presentation of the feasibility study and upon endorsement of the project plan, formal approval of the LGU should be obtained through a local resolution or an executive order. Since the concept was initially approved in principle early in the process, a resolution indicating full approval can be easily secured. In the case of APSEMO, Sanggunian Resolution No. 155-94 issued in July 1994 indicated formal approval of the institutionalization of a DRMO in Albay. The provincial governor signed the resolution into local law in the same year. Part of the LGU's formal approval is the integration of the proposed budget of the provincial DRMO with the provincial budget and the formulation, evaluation and approval of plantilla items.

6. Formal Establishment and Organization of the DRMO

Upon the establishment of the DRMO through local legislation, the project team is disbanded. An acting DRMO action officer that meets the minimum qualifications set by the guidelines is appointed by the local chief executive. Recruitment, the hiring of staff and the establishment of the DRMO proceed and when completed, operations begin. In APSEMO's case, there were three staff when this was newly established in 1995; by 2007, the DRMO was maintaining 20 staff.

7. Development of the Operations Manual and Network Building

Once the core staff have been recruited, the first important task is to develop a manual of operations that will guide the province, municipalities and cities in dealing with disasters. The mandated and recommended activities of member agencies of the PDCC as well as the list of capabilities and areas threatened by various hazards are defined according to the different phases of a disaster. The DRMO then proceeds to build a working relationship with the local constituents,

people's organizations and agencies that will be its partners in disaster operations.

Benefits of an Institutional DRMO

1. Saves Lives and Property

The establishment of a DRMO that will conduct mitigation and preparedness programs can dramatically reduce the number of fatalities, injuries, and destruction to property caused by disasters.

2. Builds Confidence and Empowers the Constituents

The DRMO's conduct of information, communication, education, organization and mobilization programs improves the communities' sense of security and confidence, relieves them of fear in the face of an impending or ongoing disaster, and allows them to engage in productive and effective endeavors. Such activities enhance the level of capacity of the local communities to help themselves significantly and inspire the development of community-based early warning systems (EWS).

3. Generates Resources

The presence of a permanent DRMO allows for easier resource generation for activities relating to DRR from local and international donor agencies. Continued support to the conduct of disaster preparedness activities is thereby ensured.

4. Challenges and Motivates Leadership

The DRMO reinforces the importance of DRR initiatives and how these contribute to local development plans. The continuance of APSEMO illustrates the importance of a coherent and complementary executive-legislative agenda within the LGU.

5. Enhances Local Bureaucracy

The establishment of APSEMO is an argument for the clarification of relationships (authority, responsibility, accountability, roles, resources) between local government departments and officials involved in disaster risk management, social welfare and development, public

safety, emergency management, transportation and communication, infrastructure and highways, and planning and development. The DRMO could also help enhance the working relationship of the LGU with national government agencies involved in disaster risk management.

6. Facilitates Learning and Builds Capacity

The DRMO serves as a disaster risk management resource and learning institution, providing training, consultancy and other technical assistance to national government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), LGUs, and state universities and colleges. It increases the capacity of local government units to prepare for disasters through research, education and information, early warning systems (EWS), etc. It could support research on disaster risk management and emergency management.

7. Enhances Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation

The LGU could initiate the generation of support for the establishment of a local DRMO to further improve the capacity and readiness of government, private sector, NGOs and target beneficiary communities for coordinated and sustained disaster risk management.

8. Promotes Excellence in Public Service

The DRMO serves as a model in professionalism and public management to the political leadership, bureaucracy and people. It is a potent instrument for good local governance by fostering transparency, accountability, greater participation and increased public services. It also supports government efforts to promote performance management, including the Local Government Performance Management System and local government good practice programs such as the Galing Pook Awards and Gawad Kalasag.

9. Promotes Knowledge Management

The presence of a DRMO helps in the documentation of performance and lessons in times of disasters. It analyzes, evaluates, and improves disaster management policies, strategies, processes, tools and practices within the LGU. As the Secretariat of the PDCC, the DRMO becomes the repository of reports, researches, press releases, and other materials that help document good practices in disaster management within the province. Knowledge management is enhanced

through the creation of a disaster manual that standardizes procedures, techniques and processes before, during and after a disaster strikes.

10. Coordinates and Prioritizes Resources

The DRMO manages the available local and external resources for disaster management. It selects beneficiaries based on need, thereby saving on resources and using these primarily on the most vulnerable sectors.

11. Professionalizes and Sustains Disaster Management

A permanent DRMO ensures continuity and incremental improvement in disaster risk management. The permanency of roles, functions and plantilla facilitates the development of professional disaster managers whose main functions are to ensure DRR activities before, during and after a disaster. It leads to the establishment of parallel structures (C/MERT, local DCCs) that complement the DRMO's role. The implementation of a disaster preparedness and response program becomes a regular activity funded by regular allocations for personnel services and regular annual appropriations from the provincial government.

Lessons and Challenges

1. Organizational Adjustments within the LGU

The new department will require structural and functional changes within the LGU, and the LGU with its partners and stakeholders.

2. Political Motivation and Commitment

The decision to institutionalize a DRMO should be based on a consensus and transcend political rivalries.

3. Acceptance and Prioritization of DRR Needs

The understanding that DRR is an essential component of sustainable development, and as such needs to be prioritized, is still being developed among LGUs. The inclusion of DRR strategies in the executive and legislative agenda is a continuing challenge among local chief executives, especially when budgets are limited. However, with

the growing emphasis on disaster risk management at both the national and local levels, an increasing number of LGUs are recognizing that disaster management, and especially disaster preparedness, needs to be incorporated into all local development planning.

4. Budgetary Constraints

The creation of a new department necessitates a separate budget for salaries, operational expenses and other office programs. Where budget limitations exist, the LGU needs to be more creative in finding financing.

5. Effective Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the DRMO's continued effectiveness, feedback and evaluation from local partners (i.e., communities, civil society organizations, state colleges and universities, NGOs, etc.) should be institutionalized. APSEMO has to conduct a tracer study as a tool to measure impact and relevance. Only through constant monitoring of performance can the DRMO learn from its activities and provide better community service.

6. Investments in Learning and Research

Crucial to an office like APSEMO is the conduct of scientific and experience-based research that will continuously help validate the relevance of some activities. With the changing face of environmental hazards and related problems, a DRMO should always be pro-active in measuring the risks and preparing the community. As recent experience in Albay indicates, and with the looming threats presented by climate change, there is a need to engage in more intensive study for disaster preparedness including multi-hazard mapping.

Conclusion

The zero-fatality performance of the APSEMO in the past years demonstrates the effectiveness of a permanent DRMO. The institutionalization of disaster preparedness and disaster management through the establishment of a DRMO is premised, however, on the LGU's readiness to invest time, resources and personnel to such a project.



Ms. Rosie Agnes, Assistant Provincial Budget Officer of Sorsogon province sharing her insights during the Replication Inception Workshop (RIW) held last February 12-13, 2008 at the Albay PDOC

As Albay Governor Joey Salceda noted, the province is both a center for innovation and a laboratory in disaster risk management. Disaster risk reduction, he added, is in itself a worldview:

- It is behavioral in that it is based on the community of people's values
- It is institutional in that the way DRR is carried out reflects the management styles of local chief executives
- It is about the systems or institutions that have been installed to respond to the communities' needs in times of disaster
- It is about people and the enhancement of their knowledge, attitudes and skills in coping with disaster

The success of APSEMO may be replicated at the provincial and municipal/city levels of government. The preparation for such a permanent DRMO includes the requisite networking with all the stakeholders—from the communities to the different agencies and departments involved in disaster mitigation and operations. The costs

and benefits of a DRMO should be articulated in a coherent strategy that rewards innovativeness, commitment and partnerships between the local chief executives, community and national government agencies. Equally important is a plan that covers resource generation, physical infrastructure and capacity building.

Meantime, the upturn in fatalities and losses that Albay experienced following the series of typhoons in late 2006 confirms the projections of experts of more and more virulent weather-related disasters that accompany climate change. The continuation of existing environmental risks and challenges, as well as the emergence of new ones, should alert APSEMO to the need to ensure the continuous enhancement of its response capacity and relevance to the people's needs at all times.

Segundo E. Romero is a freelance consultant on performance management. He served as Executive Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School of the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), Vice President for Research and Special Studies at the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) and was a long-time faculty of Political Science at the University of the Philippines.



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Across the Philippines, communities, NGOs and governments are exploring various approaches to reduce their vulnerabilities to different hazards. This manual is an initial collection of good practices in disaster risk management, put together by Oxfam Great Britain in collaboration with its partners. Oxfam works with others to address inequality, social exclusion and vulnerability.

Building Resilient Communities



Funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), one of the world's largest providers of financing for humanitarian operations. Through its disaster preparedness programme (DIPECHO) it assists vulnerable people living in the main disaster-prone regions of the world in reducing the impact of natural disaster on their lives and livelihoods.

Good Practices in Disaster Risk Management in the Philippines