

# **A REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DECEMBER 2006 TYPHOON DISASTER: A “LESSONS LEARNED” WORKSHOP**



**A joint undertaking of the National Disaster  
Coordinating Council, the United Nations  
and its Partners**



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## FOREWORD

This report is a useful reference in looking at the array of issues that confronted responding organizations from the government, UN agencies, the NGO community and international humanitarian organizations following the December 2006 typhoon disaster. Challenges in the course of responding to the needs of the affected communities have been recounted; needs have been identified; best practices were shared; and, recommendations to address identified needs were made.

Unless these “lessons” are truly learned, responding agencies will encounter the same issues all over again as natural hazards, by virtue of the country’s geographic location, will co-exist with communities in the different parts of the country. This overarching issue and reality reflect the urgency that we need to collectively address – that of harmonizing our approaches; synchronizing our preparedness priorities; and, ensuring streamlined and efficient delivery of emergency services. It is imperative that we aim for synergy in our activities in pre- and post disaster situations by institutionalizing disaster risk reduction initiatives down to the community level, optimizing use of resources to cover urgent humanitarian requirements should the need arise, and identifying early recovery requirements at the earliest possible opportunity that will have adequate resources to address them. Towards this end, “lessons learned” exercises need to be institutionalized in the interest of continuously improving our systems, processes and procedures. As the Total Quality Management dictum says *“there is no best way of doing things because there is always a better way.”*

As we collectively move towards disaster risk management in pursuit of the Hyogo Framework for Action to achieve disaster resilient communities by 2015, the NDCC and the United Nations family stand firm in their commitment to actively pursue collaborative activities aimed at strengthening mitigation measures, disaster preparedness, emergency response to disasters that may beset the country, and building-back-better approaches for sustainable recovery.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

The Philippines was hit by three typhoons, two of which were super typhoons, in a span of 10 weeks from September 25 to December 1, 2006. Another typhoon hit the country on 9 December. These events triggered landslides, flashfloods, mudslides, widespread flooding and together with the associated high winds, caused destruction and damage to homes, community buildings, communications facilities, roads, bridges, agricultural crops and fishing farms. Most of the severely affected areas are coastal and farming municipalities and towns located around the periphery of Mt. Mayon Volcano. It can be recalled that a massive evacuation of threatened communities around the periphery of Mt. Mayon was done in August of 2006 when the alert level was heightened. Succeeding typhoons hit the same area after the eruption. Communities have been continuously battered even before they could start recovering from the impact of the previous disasters. Over a thousand lives have perished, and over 180,000 houses have been totally destroyed by Reming alone. While not scientifically verified, it is clear that the cumulative impact of these events has contributed to the scale of devastation inflicted by Typhoon Reming.

### Rationale

Close to six months after the December 2006 disaster, there has yet to be a formal closure or termination of the organizational responses to the disaster, without prejudice to ongoing residual relief and early recovery activities in the Bicol Region. Part of this closure is the documentation of the event and the corresponding actions taken to cope with the effects of the disaster.

### Objectives

The December 2006 disaster offers distinct lessons that can very well serve the purpose of continuously improving disaster management practices, systems, and procedures. The two-day activity had the following objectives:

- Revisit the December 2006 disaster and assess how government, non-government organizations and other partners responded to the emergency, taking into consideration the provincial, regional, national, and international perspectives;
- Identify the challenges encountered by the different players in the conduct of response operations and the needs identified out of these challenges;
- Identify best practices and facilitating factors; and,

- Derive possible lessons learned from these identified problems and formulate recommendations on how these problems will be avoided in similar situations in the future.

### Methodology

The workshop covered the major issues of **Preparedness and Contingency Planning, Monitoring and Early Warning, Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations, Coordination Mechanisms, Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management, Emergency Operations Center and Communications, and Stockpiling and Management of Aid**. For each session, the 98 participants were divided into breakout groups which recounted the challenges recounted, identified organizational needs, identified the best practices, and formulated recommendations out of the challenges and needs identified. It should be noted, however, that the documentation of the two-day proceedings only reflected a snapshot of the overall response and not a detailed analysis of the entire response. Be that as it may, the workshop outputs provide first-hand accounts of the challenges encountered from which needs have been identified.

### “Lessons Learned” Recommendations

The need for an institutionalized lessons learned workshop (LLW) following a major disaster was recognized. Among others, LLWs serve as a venue for debriefing - unloading traumatic experiences by sharing them. Lessons were derived from various experiences in the seven areas covered and recommendations were formulated to build on the strengths and address identified needs. The recommendations are discussed in greater detail in Section IV-C of the report:

#### 1. Preparedness and Contingency Plans

- Undertake vulnerability assessment of all barangays (communities) that will identify vulnerable groups, high risk and safe areas, and define specific preparedness activities that need to be undertaken at the barangay level.
- Regional and local DCC Chairpersons should be compelled to lead CP formulation in their respective areas with the support of regional government agencies.
- Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) should be developed based on potential hazards that may affect the municipality or city.
- The RDCC, through the OCD Regional Centers, should do a survey-cum-assessment of the utilization of the Contingency Planning Manual and capacity of the PDCCs

to undertake and lead CP exercises covering the LGUs under them.

- A legislative option should be pursued to strengthen the country's disaster preparedness posture that will clearly define the deliverables of each DCC and other government agencies, and provide sanctions to officials who fall short in carrying out their mandated tasks.
- Contingency plans for places where people converge like churches, marketplaces, malls, hospitals, bus terminals, ports, etc be pursued by LGUs to ensure that adequate measures are in place for any eventuality like fire, earthquake, power outage, stampede, and the like.
- Stronger vulnerability reduction efforts should be pursued by offices providing basic services, education, including alternative livelihoods that are integrated in LGU plans for continuity and sustainability.
- Orientation seminars and refreshers be given to key officials and staffs from the national to the community level on the Sphere's Standard and UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- It is recommended that transport arrangements be developed with commercial shipping companies, in the absence of government resources for inter-island transport of relief supplies, giving priority berthing space to vehicles used for delivery of urgent relief supplies to isolated island provinces.
- The concept of "land banking" should be pursued by LGUs, especially for areas with high susceptibility to risks posed by hazards endemic to the area.
- A government agency or office should be designated to spearhead the coordination and implementation of post-disaster shelter construction that clearly defines the operational framework, standards, protocols and priorities.

## **2. Monitoring and Early Warning**

- Early Warning Systems (EWS) should be improved especially in respect to transmission modes, packaging the message and "laymanizing" the content of the warning, making it easily understandable and provides one single clear message that will spur people into action, if need be.
- Explore the possibility of making transistor radios as a secondary means of relaying messages to every household is also recommended.
- Community-based EWS should be strengthened and cover all conceivable hazards that can affect the communities such as flashfloods, laharslides, mudslides, flooding and tsunami (for coastal communities).
- DCCs should take a more active role in getting the right message to the right people within the period required and get feedback from the communities that they got the

right message at the right time and the actions that have been taken. Along this line, use of media should be optimized to cover as much areas as possible.

- PDCCs should cross-check and validate warnings with existing hazards map of the area, if there are any, for anticipated disaster response operations given possible scenarios.

## **3. Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations**

- A uniform mobilization procedure, including protocols and standards for SAR and ER Teams, should be developed and applied at the regional and provincial level.
- RDCCs and PDCCs should develop and maintain an inventory of SAR and ER teams to have a grip of the resources at hand the would-be-needed resources should something happens.
- A system of determining the deliverables of external organizations coming in be developed and put in place.
- The system of tracing missing persons developed by the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) be disseminated to all stakeholders for awareness of the system and the procedures to be followed, should there be a need to tap it.

## **4. Coordination Mechanisms**

- An orientation for newly-elected LCEs should be prioritized and pursued, following a design/programme that is responsive to the needs of newly elected LCEs.
- The RDCC set-up should be revisited looking into its functions, membership, deliverables, added value to the coordination and information management process, responsibility in harmonizing regional priorities for emergency relief and early recovery interventions, and providing direction to lower DCCs in undertaking activities in the pre- and post-disaster phases.
- Back-to-back meetings of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) should be adopted as a way of aligning regional disaster management priorities into the regional development framework. Towards this end, a national policy will be required to put this arrangement in place. OCD and NEDA are suggested to jointly take the lead on this.
- Vertical coordination in the DCC chain should be strengthened.
- LGUs, particularly PDCCs, should create "Disaster Management Offices" (DMO) with full-time trained staff and minimum equipment to operate.

- A system of distributing/allocating resources should be established, making the RDCC the clearing house for coordination of the distribution/allocation of resources in the affected provinces under it.
- A request to the United Nations should be made in respect of providing technical assistance in coordination aimed at building capacities of RDCCs and PDCCs.
- The cluster approach should be integrated in existing coordination structures at different DCC levels.
- A mechanism for appreciating contributions should be put in place.

## 5. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management

- As a matter of priority, a common assessment methodology for rapid, sectoral, and recovery assessments that can be uniformly applied across the country by the different DCCs should be developed.
- Integral to the formulation of a national methodology is the training of key actors and the provision of basic communications and information management equipment, as well as mobility assets to support various assessment missions when the need arises.
- The clusters, consistent with the provisions of the NDCC Circular, should be made the clearing mechanisms for data gathered in the different sectors.
- Common/uniform databases, containing essential sectoral baseline data, be established at all levels maintained and updated on a regular basis.
- Related to the above is the recommendation to create a national web-based information management system that will be accessible to the general public, incorporating the national database for baseline data among other things, as a value-added service offered by the NDCC network.
- Provincial websites should be created as a ready tool for information dissemination and public awareness.
- To ensure continuity of initiatives, information management capacity should be institutionalized along with the DMOs in the different LGUs.

## 6. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Communications

- OPCENs or EOCs at the different levels should be standardized following the guidelines to be published by the NDCC OPCEN setting minimum acceptable standards in terms of people skills, equipment and procedures (PEP).
- Redundancy in communications should be pursued especially at the RDCC and provincial level.

- Common radio frequency being used during emergency situations be disseminated to all EOCs, affiliated volunteer communications group, and other potential actors to have a common working frequency.
- PDCCs, especially island provinces, should at least have one satellite phone for use during emergencies as a last resort when everything else fails.
- Institutional partnerships with telecommunications companies should be forged for the provision of voice and data communications facility in areas hardest hit by disasters.

## 7. Stockpiling and Management of Aid

- Credit lines with local suppliers should be arranged by local DCCs for emergency purposes.
- Relief distributions should be done equitably and should be based on assessment of actual needs of communities.
- The poorest of the poor should be given access cards even before a disaster strikes.
- INGOs and NGOs share their reports or any information on their donations or forms of assistance extended to their counterpart government agencies or through the cluster for tracking, monitoring, coordination and optimization of resources available.
- Regular consultative meetings at different levels be undertaken to level off expectations on the part of the government and the NGOs/INGOs.

Numerous lessons have been learned in looking at the snapshot of organizational responses to the December 2006 disaster. It is clear that much remains to be done as the country braces for the next typhoon season. Parallel to this is the outstanding challenge of addressing residual relief needs in evacuation centers and in host communities, and the rehabilitation of homes, schools, health facilities and sources of livelihood of the people.

Lessons highlighted in this report can only be truly "learned" if translated into concrete actions that will raise the level of preparedness of communities, ensure well-coordinated response to emergencies, and provide adequate coverage of relief and early recovery issues. This is one challenge that will require the collective efforts of all stakeholders in pursuing a common vision of having "A Prepared Population and A Safe Nation."





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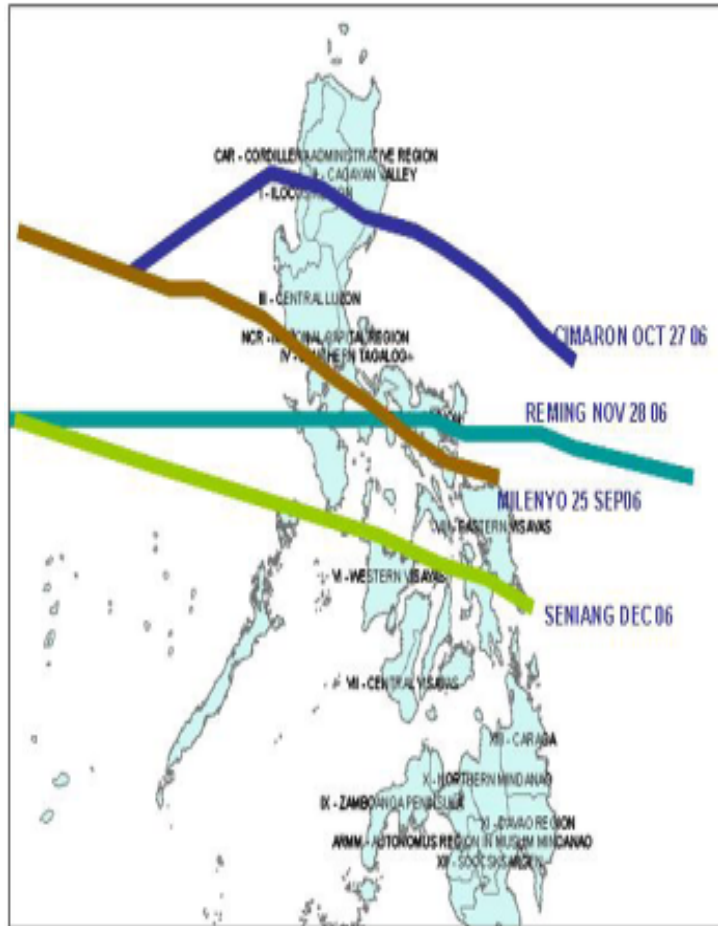


## I. Introduction

The Philippines was hit by three typhoons, two of which were super typhoons, in a span of 10 weeks from September 25 to December 1, 2006. Another typhoon hit the country on 9 December. These events triggered landslides, flashfloods, mudslides, widespread flooding and together with the associated high winds, caused destruction and damage to homes, community buildings, communications facilities, roads, bridges, agricultural crops and fishing farms.

Typhoon Reming was the most destructive, severely affecting the provinces of Albay, Catanduanes, and Camarines Sur in southeastern Luzon Island, although significant damage was also recorded in Camarines Norte, Masbate, Sorsogon, Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Batangas, Laguna, Mindoro Occidental and Romblon provinces. Most of the severely affected areas are coastal and farming municipalities and towns located around the periphery of Mt. Mayon Volcano. Over a thousand lives have perished, and over 180,000 houses have been totally destroyed by Reming alone. While not scientifically verified, it is clear that the cumulative impact of these events has contributed to the scale of devastation inflicted by Typhoon Reming.

Typhoons remain the largest killers in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>, followed by earthquakes, volcanoes and floods. Typhoon deaths alone in the country total 28,812 with US\$5,653 million in damages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It can be recalled that a massive evacuation of threatened communities around the periphery of Mt. Mayon was done in August of 2006 when the alert level was heightened. Succeeding typhoons hit the same area after the eruption. Communities have been continuously battered even before they could start recovering from the impact of the previous disasters.



<sup>1</sup> "Natural Disaster Risk Management in the Philippines: Enhancing Poverty Alleviation Through Disaster Reduction" by the World Bank and National Disaster Coordinating Council, 2004)

According to NDCC figures, the cumulative effects of the last quarter typhoons of 2006 are as follows:

AFFECTED FAMILIES	2.38 Million
AFFECTED PERSONS	11.193 Million
DISPLACED FAMILIES	678,000
DISPLACED PERSONS	3.398 Million
DEAD	1,158
INJURED	3,235
MISSING	891
DAMAGED HOUSES	820,127
DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE	PhP 19.989 Billion

The Government of the Philippines has responded to this series of typhoons efficiently and effectively through the network of Disaster Coordinating Councils, deploying all its resources to manage the impact of the disasters. Having fully exhausted its annual National Calamity Fund of close to US\$20 million by the third quarter of 2006 in responding to previous disasters like the Leyte Landslides, Guimaras Oil Spill and the Mt. Mayon Volcano eruption, the Government has endeavored to explore other sources such as the legislation of a supplemental budget of close to US\$40 million.

However, the magnitude of the impact of the series of typhoons has overwhelmed local and national resources. Faced with this huge challenge, NDCC's immediate priorities included sustaining emergency relief operations, accepting offers of assistance and formulating early recovery plans and their immediate implementation in the affected areas. No less than the President recognized the need to begin the early recovery process as a matter of urgency, concurrent with ongoing humanitarian operations.

The Government also requested the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Philippines to coordinate and facilitate international assistance in response to the emergency. This and other actions have been undertaken as part of the UN's Emergency Response. To facilitate a well-coordinated approach to the crisis, the UN and its partners have applied the

cluster approach<sup>2</sup> as an effective coordination mechanism that clearly identifies leadership responsibility and accountability in the different sectors or areas of activities which complements the existing government coordination structure.

## II. Rationale

Close to six months after the December 2006 disaster, there has yet to be a formal closure or termination of the organizational responses to the disaster, without prejudice to ongoing residual relief and early recovery activities in the Bicol Region. Part of this closure is the documentation of the event and the corresponding actions taken to cope with the effects of the disaster.

The December 2006 disaster offers distinct lessons that can very well serve the purpose of continuously improving disaster management practices, systems, and procedures.

## III. Objectives

The two-day activity had the following objectives:

- Revisit the December 2006 disaster and assess how government, non-government organizations and other partners responded to the emergency, taking into consideration the provincial, regional, national, and international perspectives;
- Identify the challenges encountered by the different players in the conduct of response operations and the needs identified out of these challenges;
- Identify best practices and facilitating factors; and,
- Derive possible lessons learned from these identified problems and formulate recommendations on how these problems will be avoided in similar situations in the future.

## IV. Workshop Outputs

The two-day workshop covered the major issues of **Preparedness and Contingency Planning, Monitoring and Early Warning, Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations, Coordination Mechanisms, Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management, Emergency Operations Center and Communications, and Stockpiling and Management of Aid** in the seven workshop sessions. It should be noted, however, that the documentation of the two-day proceedings only reflected a snapshot of the overall response and not a detailed analysis of the entire response. Be that as it may, the workshop outputs provide first-hand accounts of the challenges encountered from which needs

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<sup>2</sup> The cluster approach is being institutionalized in the Philippine Disaster Management System with the publication of the NDCC Circular on 10 May 2007.

have been identified. Best practices were also derived from actual experiences, mostly articulated by those who actually benefitted from such practices.

## **A. Challenges Encountered and Needs Identified**

### **1. Preparedness and Contingency Plans**

- a. The lack or absence of suitable evacuation centers is always a challenge that further complicates the IDP<sup>3</sup>situation in host communities and in temporary evacuation centers. There is a need to identify alternative structures that are suitable evacuation centers (with adequate facilities) at the provincial and lower levels as far as practicable.
- b. Preparedness to manage evacuation centers and capacity in handling IDPs in accordance with internationally established standards was lacking. There is a need to develop, train and maintain a pool of camp managers coming from communities who, together with other key stakeholders at the local level, will be fully knowledgeable on the SPHERE standards and the UN Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement (UNGPID).
- c. Facilities providing basic services were rendered non-operational by the typhoon which aggravated the impact on the communities. There is a need to put in place stronger vulnerability reduction efforts and preparedness mechanisms in the area of basic services, livelihood, educational facilities, and local government offices to ensure that basic services are made available immediately following a disaster.
- d. Contingency plans, for LGUs which had them, were of little use as these ConPlans were either not updated or not tested-rehearsed-tried. There is a need to adopt a much stronger policy on contingency planning among LGUs which focuses on community-based contingency plans that incorporate vulnerable groups and are maintained and updated by the communities. Contingency planning at the provincial-regional level should be a multi-stakeholder exercise that includes NGOs/INGOs, the business sector, and other humanitarian organizations;
- e. A number of trainings and drills were done prior to the typhoon disaster but these were not systematically driven by updated contingency plans. There is a need to pinpoint accountabilities and responsibilities for the preparation, update and maintenance of contingency plans at the national, regional, provincial, city, municipal and community level.
- f. A functional inventory of all emergency response resources (NFIs, medical items, warehouses, SAR teams, transport assets, etc) available at the provincial and regional level was not present. There is a need to develop provincial and regional databases for emergency response assets to

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<sup>3</sup> Internally displaced people

immediately determine the needed resources (gaps) during the “golden hour<sup>4</sup>.”

- g. The immediate relocation of IDPs in crowded and congested schools serving as temporary evacuation centers was not done due to non-availability of suitable lands that can be used as relocation sites for IDPs - this remains a challenge to date. There is a need to pursue the “land banking” concept by LGUs especially in localities where a significant part of the population could be threatened by endemic hazards.
- h. The evacuation plan in place proved effective during the Mt. Mayon eruption but did not work with the same efficacy during the typhoon. This showed the need to integrate all preparedness plans into one harmonized contingency plan that encompasses all threats and hazards that frequent the area.
- i. There was great difficulty in communicating with municipalities and island provinces from the regional center after the disastrous typhoon left the Bicol Region which hampered urgent planning activities for emergency resource mobilization. There is a need to ensure unhindered communications between regional centers, particularly the RDCC OPCENs, and the provinces, cities and municipalities.
- j. There seemed to be no government focal agency that can lead all other actors in undertaking emergency shelter reconstruction interventions consistent with humanitarian standards and with clear timetables during the emergency relief period. There is a need to have one government agency that will be charged of harmonizing all efforts in undertaking emergency housing interventions as emergency relief and early recovery interfaces.

## **2. Monitoring and Early Warning**

- a. It is always a challenge to get the right information to the right audience at the right time using multiple channels of communications. There is a need to strengthen institutional arrangements with radio, TV and print media at the national and regional level to harmonize and streamline processes and define common protocols for dissemination of information.
- b. Monitoring the water level in flood-prone areas during heavy downpour and other weather disturbances remains a challenge especially on the part of LGUs without sustainable monitoring systems in place. There is a need to put in place rain gauges in strategic areas that can provide critical information of an evolving situation and that can be sustained by the communities.
- c. While mudflows can be monitored with the right equipment, they were not anticipated during the December 2006 typhoon disaster and the JICA-donated equipment did not work due to poor maintenance. There is a need

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<sup>4</sup> That time or period within which lives could still be saved and injuries minimized

to pinpoint responsibility and accountability in the maintenance of EWS placed in the communities where PDCCs are the overseer.

- d. Putting the right information in advisories is a challenge in itself as it should not be subject to multiple interpretations lest advisories could only raise false alarms and loses credibility and reliability in the process. There is a need to ensure that advisories issued are consistent with available hazards map of the locality and should have enough information that will spur people into action.
- e. Sometimes advisories issued are ignored by communities for a variety of reasons – information are not well-understood with too many technical terms used; people disseminating it are perceived as not credible; and, advisories are ignored because they are culturally insensitive. The entire process of sending out advisories needs to be reviewed from the availability of EW information to the processing and packaging of the advisory up to the monitoring of actions taken by the threatened communities and implementation of community contingency plans. City and Municipal DCCs need to step up in monitoring actions taken by threatened communities.
- f. Not all LGUs, especially municipalities, have the capacity to monitor an evolving health emergency. There is a need to strengthen health early warning system at the municipal level to prevent outbreaks of diseases and this needs to be integrated into the local contingency plans.
- g. Spurring threatened population and communities into action – i.e. acting correctly following an alert or advisory - is the main challenge of early warning. To give more importance to this issue of making people act accordingly following an advisory, the concept of “risk communication” has been developed. “Risk Communication” is viewed as one element that is lacking focus in the present set-up where people, including local and community officials, do not fully understand the serious consequences of their actions or inactions. There is a need to orient and train local officials and other key stakeholders in the communication dissemination chain at the national down to the provincial level (initially) of the basic concepts and principles of risk communication. This concept should be integrated into the early warning systems in the country.

### **3. Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations**

- a. Mobilizing SAR and ER Teams during the height of the disaster was quite a challenge as there was no single coherent inventory of all teams and their capacities. There is a need to have a consolidated inventory of all SAR and ER Teams at the regional and provincial level to determine capacities available and potential gaps given possible scenarios – this will also address issues on minimum standards to be observed.
- b. Trigger mechanisms and mobilization procedures for deployment of SAR and ER Teams vary from one LGU/organization to another – there was no single focal point for triggering the mobilization of needed capacities. There is a



need to adopt a common and harmonized mobilization procedure that can be uniformly applied at the provincial level across the country.

- c. Leadership on the ground during search and rescue/search and retrieval operations was not clear - there was no single command channel given the different actors involved. It was also unclear on who should be the incident commander at the community, municipal and provincial level. A National Incident Command System (NICS) needs to be developed ASAP to address issues of command channel and unity of command during SAR/R operations where command and reporting lines are well-defined – an earthquake scenario makes the implementation of a NICS imperative.

#### **4. Coordination Mechanisms**

- a. The NDCC composition and sectoral leads is replicated at the local level. The challenge lies on the capacity of the local level to carry out their mandated tasks as it relates to the entire spectrum of disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. There is a need to fine tune existing support mechanisms of the NDCC-RDCC-PDCC-MDCC/CDCC-BDCC channel and vertical coordination without cultivating a culture of dependency at the local level.
- b. There seemed to have some confusion on what shape and form local DCCs should take – is it a council? An individual duly designated to act in behalf of the DCC chair? Or a coordination mechanism? Unless local DCCs fully understand this basic issue, coordination will remain a challenge. In this respect, there is a need for higher DCCs to look into how lower DCCs function and how DCC coordination capacity could be strengthened.
- c. The RDCC set-up, chaired by the Regional Police Chief, did not seem to add substantial value to the coordination and information management process at the regional level. Inconsistent figures were not resolved at the RDCC level. Provincial reconstruction plans were not evaluated, deliberated and harmonized at the RDCC level. Concern was raised on the diverse priorities of RDCC Chairs whose fast turnover does not seem to give them the chance to get a tight grip of the disaster management issues in his region. There is a need to revisit the RDCC set-up to find ways to strengthen it and ensure that it adds value to the coordination and information management process.
- d. Coordination is always a challenge whenever there is widespread power outage. There is a need to maintain a facility that will provide the venue for emergency coordination meetings 24/7 with uninterrupted power supply and which will also serve as the nerve center for coordination and information management at the regional, provincial and city/municipal level.
- e. Too many meetings add more challenges. Unstructured meetings become a waste of time for people pressed for time to deliver much needed services. Too many actors attending meetings also make coordination complicated and unfocused. In the same vein, non-participation of key agencies in coordination meetings also creates coordination challenges. There is a need

to build local capacities in facilitating structured coordination meetings and in following up coordination objectives.

- f. Media reporting of unverified information posed a challenge to coordination which further adds confusion to the already chaotic environment. There is a need to develop a “clearing house” system where official reports are released only by designated agencies for specific concerns.
- g. External organizations like INGOs and NGOs from other parts of the country, upon hitting the ground, found it unclear as to which level to coordinate with – provincial, city or municipal. While it was later sorted out, there is a need to have a facility that will brief and provide information on the priority areas as the situation evolves and will direct humanitarian organizations to these areas with basic information on who to go to and the prevailing situation in the area.
- h. The seeming inconsistencies in policies and standards of national level offices like the NHA and LGUs (for lot sizes of emergency housing constructions) added further coordination challenges. The difference in policies being observed at different levels resulted to the delay in the construction of much needed houses for the displaced families.
- i. The apolitical integration of communities/beneficiaries in the coordination mechanism has been a challenge. There was a case of an affected municipality not receiving any assistance from the provincial government. The only conceivable reason for which is the different political affiliation of the Municipal Mayor. There is a need to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided to those who need them regardless of religion, gender, age, and other factors as provided for in the UN Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement (UNGPID) and the SPHERE Standards.
- j. The promised rehabilitation funds by the national government was not released as planned thereby setting back earlier coordination agreements reached among key stakeholders in the affected provinces. While issues of this nature are always subject to the availability of funds, there must be scenario-building safety nets in the coordination process so that plans and activities do not come to a standstill. This needs to be done collectively by the PDCCs-RDCCs-NDCC and its partners.

#### **5. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management**

- a. Assessments were carried out by PDCCs immediately after typhoon Reming left Bicol region. There was no clear assessment methodology applied and the design varied from one office to another. Information coming from lower DCCs was often inaccurate and conflicting. Collection of data at the community level is flawed. Use of different assessment formats by different agencies made information analysis and integration a very difficult exercise and was even more prone to errors. These experiences clearly point to the need of having a common assessment methodology for rapid damage and needs assessment cutting across all sectors, and a more specialized

methodology and design for in-depth sectoral needs assessment to guide all PDCCs and lower DCCs,. There should be common assessment templates that will fit into a common reporting format. The integrity of both the sources and the process should be preserved to ensure credibility of data.

- b. Apart from methodology and design of assessments, the support system for such assessments was not present. There was no communications system available, transport and mobility of assessment teams was a problem. There needs to be a system of deployment of rapid assessment teams from the regional or provincial level within 24 hours following a disaster that are supported with stand-alone communication equipment and all terrain vehicles to enable them to rapidly gather critical data.
- c. The lack or absence of functional baseline data from the LGUs made assessments extremely challenging - shelters, disaggregation of sex and age, vulnerable groups like the elderly, the sick , the disabled, the pregnant women, lactating mothers, etc. Rapid assessments required more time to carry out due to this gap. Consistency and accuracy of data gathered is also not guaranteed as cross-checking and validation was needed. It is a must to develop, update and maintain databases of baseline data at the municipal/city-provincial and regional DCCs that can be used by all sectors for planning purposes, preparedness activities, emergency response operations, and urgent early recovery and longer term interventions.
- d. External organizations did their own assessments and there was no system in place to track these assessments and share results at the provincial and regional level. While most assessment results were later on shared in cluster meetings, such arrangements remained adhoc and should only complement existing tracking system of external organizations coming in, doing what, where, and when (duration). Complementary to this, there should be an institutionalized information sharing mechanism for all stakeholders at least at the provincial and regional level. This could be done by designating a 'clearing house' for information at the provincial and regional level.
- e. In view of the challenges encountered in the area of rapid assessment and information management, the need to revisit policies on updating LGU profile and tools used has been highlighted, taking into consideration other factors mentioned.

## **6. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Communications**

- a. The main challenge for EOCs was to maintain the facility after the impact of the disaster. EOCs at the regional and provincial level sustained various degrees of damage and their 24/7 operation was disrupted by the power outage. There is a need to look at the possibility of making EOCs more resistant to impacts of natural hazards especially heavy rains and supertyphoon winds (185kph to 300kph). Along this line, location, design and layout of EOCs should conform to this imperative.

- b. Redundancy in communications was not achieved during the height of the onslaught of the typhoon and immediately after. Landlines were down, cell cites were down, and radio antennas were also down. There was no internet connectivity, no SMS and no other way of communicating from the regional center to the PDCCs and lower DCCs and vice versa. Mobile phones started working on a limited scale days after the typhoon. Volunteer radio groups pitched in and utilized their radio networks in relaying information from isolated areas. Telecommunications companies provided free mobile phone calls and internet connectivity. There is a glaring need to put up redundant communications system that can withstand the impact of supertyphoons and other similar hazards at least at the RDCC level and the provinces under it, as a start. Without which, EOCs will be rendered useless when its services are needed most, at a time where lives could still be saved and injuries minimized.
- c. Supertyphoon Reming rendered everyone a victim in the Bicol Region in one way or another. EOC staffs were not spared of the typhoon’s wrath with homes flooded and damaged, and roofs pulled out and twisted by the powerful winds. It is expected that staffs will attend to the immediate needs of their families before they could even operate and manage their own EOCs. Because of this experience, there is a need to create a “surge capacity” standby mechanism to provide support to government EOCs at the regional and provincial level, as a start. Regional EOCs can be supported by its national offices while provincial offices can be supported by provinces from other least affected regions.

**7. Stockpiling and Management of Aid**

- a. Procurement and warehousing of relief supplies was a challenge, to include making necessary arrangements for the transport of said supplies from procurement point to the destination. There is a need to have an institutional mechanism at the national and regional level that will look into the regulation of prices of relief commodities, common warehousing facilities, regulation of transport cost, and giving priority space in ferry boats to trucks/jeeps transporting needed relief supplies to island provinces and municipalities.
- b. Providing family packs with the same quantity of items to the most in need based on assessment results was a challenge. It is almost expected that the poorest of the poor in an area devastated by a supertyphoon will be the most vulnerable to shelter damage, food insecurity and health problems. The challenge lies in getting the right package of assistance to the right people at the right time. If there is a functional database maintained at the provincial and regional level that includes a listing of families falling under the “poor” category in every barangay, the number and location of this most vulnerable group will be readily available. This strengthens the need, earlier

identified in previous topics, for a functional database that can be used by all agencies working in the different sectors for pre- and post-disaster activities.

- c. Tracking and monitoring donations was a huge challenge. Some donations go straight to the communities, some donations go to NGOs working in a number of LGUs and communities, while some information on donations passes through the DCC channel. For not having a clear process that is known to so many humanitarian organizations, duplications happened and other areas got less than what they urgently need. Some local DCCs were not aware of relief distributions done in the locality but DCC chairpersons are made to account for relief items that came in and where it went. Incidents of this nature did not help create a harmonious and symbiotic working relationship between DCCs and NGOs. To promote transparency and effectively monitor and track incoming aid and their beneficiaries by DCCs, there is a need to put in place a standard monitoring and tracking system that can be applied at all DCC levels.

## **B. Best Practices Identified**

### **1. Preparedness and Contingency Plans**

- a. The Evacuation Plan for Mt. Mayon Eruption was applied to evacuate people to safer areas 24 hours before the super typhoon struck. There could have been more casualties had it not been for an evacuation plan that was in place which the people are familiar with.

### **2. Monitoring and Early Warning**

- a. The use of an ambulance and its public address system in going around the communities to warn people proved to be an effective way of getting the people's attention, getting the message across, emphasizing the urgency of the message being delivered, and in spurring people into action. This warning facilitated the evacuation of families in threatened communities.

### **3. Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations**

- a. The dedication and selfless contributions of the retrieval and recovery teams in carrying out their tasks was exemplary.
- b. Provincial government and NGO partnership for emergency relief operations was very efficient.
- c. Partnership between schools and adopted communities for development purposes proved useful for emergency relief activities.
- d. Government and church partnership also substantially contributed in addressing urgent relief needs of the affected communities.
- e. Resource mobilization efforts of the government, UN, NGOs and the business sector yielded very positive results which brought to bear more resources for the affected communities.

- f. Volunteerism and philanthropic contributions from people of varying economic standing were remarkable.
- g. Spontaneous support of donors/partners to local NGOs was extraordinary and dramatically speeded up the process of delivering much needed assistance to the most-in-need.
- h. The existence of the draft policy of the Management of the Dead and Missing (MDM), which was led by DOH with the support of WHO after the Guinsaunon landslides of Feb 2006, gave the LGUs a ready reference to use in managing the chaotic situation.

#### **4. Coordination Mechanisms**

- a. The decision to set up a joint command post for the Center for Health Development (Regional Health Office) and the Provincial Health Office of Albay Province proved very beneficial in processing information, analyzing and cross-checking reports from different sources, and in recommending priority actions for the health sector. Operational efficiency was achieved.
- b. Ayuda Albay's creation as a coordination mechanism for rehabilitation purposes proved very useful in coordinating activities for relief activities as well.
- c. The "cluster coordination" mechanism at the provincial level cultivated the team spirit among humanitarian actors which synchronized activities by cluster and provided a venue for regular information sharing and joint planning.
- d. The integration of decision-makers from government, NGOs, IOs and UN agencies in the coordination mechanism proved very useful in resolving contentious issues and facilitating decision-making.
- e. International support from UN agencies, IOs and INGOs to Ayuda Albay in strengthening its coordination capacity was instrumental in promoting transparency, building credibility and maintaining integrity of the coordination mechanism.

#### **5. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management**

- a. The unquestionable willingness of GOs, INGOs, UN agencies, NGOs, and CBOs to work together and share information derived from rapid assessments was very encouraging. The speed within which joint plans were crafted and implemented was reflective of the deep sense of cooperation among various actors on the ground.
- b. The deployment of the Social Welfare and Development (SWAD) Teams within 24 hours following the disaster was acknowledged as a best practice having substantially boosted the capacity of the Regional Social Welfare and Development Office.

## 6. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Communications

- a. Setting up of a joint command post to optimize use of available resources and streamline information management functions proved very beneficial.
- b. The augmentation team from the DSWD<sup>5</sup> national office that filled in the shoes of Regional SWD EOC staffs who were victims of the typhoon ensured continuity of operations at the regional level.

## 7. Stockpiling and Management of Aid

- a. Existing arrangements between the DSWD Central Office and National Food Authority (NFA) for the withdrawal of rice supply for emergency relief purposes is in place and has benefited most displaced families in the initial stages following the disaster.
- b. A parallel arrangement between local suppliers and city/municipal governments on the emergency purchase of family packs for 3,000 families good for five days when a state of calamity is declared is also in place.
- c. Stockpiling policies are observed by government agencies as well as INGOs, UN agencies and IOs. These stockpiles sustained initial relief requirements of the affected communities.

## C. “Lessons Learned” Recommendations

### 1. Preparedness and Contingency Plans

- a. Undertake vulnerability assessment of all barangays (communities) that will identify vulnerable groups, high risk and safe areas, and define specific preparedness activities that need to be undertaken at the barangay level. This information will be the scientific basis in coming up with community-based contingency plans where key stakeholders of the community will be involved and ownership of the process established. The REINA<sup>6</sup> Model for community-based contingency planning is a national standard that should be strictly observed in future community-based contingency planning exercises. Contingency planning without scientific basis should be discouraged as this will not address the endemic hazards that threaten communities and the risks that they pose. It is recommended that NDCC issue a circular on the “Guidelines for Community-Based Contingency Planning” benchmarked with the REINA Model for information and reference of various organizations planning to support and/or undertake community-based contingency planning activities in the country. This should be built upon the gains of the READY Project which prioritized 27 provinces in the eastern seaboard. **(Focal Point: OCD Plans Division)**

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Social Welfare and Development

<sup>6</sup> Refers to the Community-based Contingency Planning piloted in the municipalities of Real, Infanta, and General Nakar (REINA) in Quezon Province following the December 2004 flashfloods.

- b. Contingency Plans (CPs) are yet to be done in most DCCs. RDCCs do not have a functional CP covering all the provinces under it; most PDCCs do not have functional CPs while some have untested, unevaluated and un-updated CPs; the same is true at the municipal and city level, and this cascades down to the community level. While CP formulation is the responsibility of the DCC Chair at all levels, relevant government offices at the national and regional level are expected to lend technical assistance to the lower DCCs – this is on the assumption that these offices have the competence and capacity to provide such assistance to LGUs that need it. It is recommended that regional and local DCC Chairpersons be compelled to lead CP formulation in their respective areas with the support of regional government agencies. Part of this recommendation is the involvement and participation of IOs, NGOs, CBOs, and the business sector in the CP exercise at various levels, and the assistance that relevant UN agencies could also provide. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**
- c. Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) should be developed based on potential hazards that may affect the municipality or city. Upon completion of a province-wide vulnerability assessment and hazards mapping exercise, local DCCs and Regional DCC members should jointly develop ERTs whose organization and capability cater to the distinct needs of the locality. It is recommended that OCD Regional Centers take the lead on this. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**
- d. While there were contingency planning workshops/writeshops done in the past that suggested a CP template (Contingency Planning Manual for LGUs), there has been no systematic way of getting feedback from its end users. It is recommended that the RDCC, through the OCD Regional Centers, do a survey-cum-assessment of the utilization of the CP Manual and capacity of the PDCCs to undertake and lead CP exercises covering the LGUs under them. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**
- e. It is recommended that a legislative option be pursued to strengthen the country's disaster preparedness posture that will clearly define the deliverables of each DCC and other government agencies, and provide sanctions to officials who fall short in carrying out their mandated tasks. **(Focal Point: NDCC Technical Management Group/NDCC TMG Secretariat)**
- f. It is also recommended that contingency plans for places where people converge like churches, marketplaces, malls, hospitals, bus terminals, ports, etc be pursued by LGUs to ensure that adequate measures are in place for any eventuality like fire, earthquake, power outage, and stampede. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**
- g. It is recommended that stronger vulnerability reduction efforts be pursued by offices providing basic services, education, including alternative livelihoods. These should be integrated in LGU plans for continuity and sustainability. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**



- h. Good working knowledge on the Sphere<sup>7</sup> Standards and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID) will adequately prepare government offices and its partners on the inherent challenges that population displacements bring to fore. It is recommended that orientation seminars and refreshers be given to key officials and staffs from the national to the community level on the Sphere's Standard and UNGPID. **(Focal Point: DSWD)**
- i. It is recommended that transport arrangements be developed with commercial shipping companies, in the absence of government resources for inter-island transport of relief supplies, giving priority berthing space to vehicles used for delivery of urgent relief supplies to isolated island provinces. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers)**
- j. It is recommended that the concept of "land banking" be pursued by LGUs, especially for areas with high susceptibility to risks posed by hazards endemic to the area. This concept, if aggressively undertaken, will immediately address issues of permanent and temporary relocation at the local DCC level. **(Focal Point: DILG<sup>8</sup>)**
- k. It is recommended that a government agency or office be designated to spearhead the coordination and implementation of post-disaster shelter construction that clearly defines the operational framework, standards, protocols and priorities. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/OCD Operations Division)**

## 2. Monitoring and Early Warning

- a. It is recommended that Early Warning Systems (EWS) be improved especially in respect to transmission modes, packaging the message and "laymanizing" the content of the warning, making it easily understandable and provides one single clear message that will spur people into action, if need be. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- b. Explore the possibility of making transistor radios as a secondary means of relaying messages to every household is also recommended. This is in view of the fact that transistor radios are widely used in the rural areas especially in island villages and municipalities. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- c. It is recommended that community-based EWS be strengthened and should cover all conceivable hazards that can affect the communities such as flashfloods, laharslides, mudslides, flooding and tsunami (for coastal communities). Part of this recommendation is the adoption of both scientific and indigenous approaches to community-based EWS and making this an integral part of community-based contingency planning exercise to ensure

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<sup>7</sup> The Sphere Standards is aimed at starting a common language for the humanitarian community which will increase transparency, accountability and cohesiveness and ultimately increase the quality of assistance to those who need help

<sup>8</sup> Department of the Interior and Local Government

ownership and sustainability of the system. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers and Provincial DCCs)**

- d. It is recommended that DCCs take a more active role in getting the right message to the right people within the period required and get feedback from the communities that they got the right message at the right time and the actions that have been taken. Along this line, use of media should be optimized to cover as much areas as possible. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- e. It is recommended that PDCCs cross-check and validate warnings with existing hazards map of the area, if there are any, for anticipated disaster response operations given possible scenarios. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**

### **3. Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations**

- a. It is recommended that a uniform mobilization procedure, including protocols and standards for SAR and ER Teams, be developed and applied at the regional and provincial level. RDCCs should take the lead on this, with the support from national agencies, as they will principally oversee mobilizations of teams within the region. Part of the standards for SAR and ER teams is the training and immersion of members on the basics of humanitarian standards and protection issues. Standards should include basic equipment for Search and Rescue/Recovery teams that will provide safety to responders and facilitate their work. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/OCD Operations Division)**
- b. It is recommended that RDCCs and PDCCs develop and maintain an inventory of SAR and ER teams to have a grip of the resources at hand the would-be-needed resources should something happens. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers and Provincial DCCs)**
- c. It is recommended that a system of determining the deliverables of external organizations coming in be developed and put in place. This should include the capacity that will be brought to bear, the duration, and the location(s), if pre-arranged. This would facilitate the coordination of deployments of other teams to high priority areas. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/OCD Operations Division)**
- d. It is recommended that the system of tracing missing persons developed by the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) be disseminated to all stakeholders for awareness of the system and the procedures to be followed, should there be a need to tap it. Part of this recommendation is the possible complementation with the soon-to-be finalized Management of the Dead and Missing (MDM) being spearheaded by the DOH with the support of WHO. **(Focal Point: PNRC)**
- e. It is recommended that a community-based incident command structure be developed and applied during emergency situations. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/OCD Operations Division)**

#### 4. Coordination Mechanisms

- a. It is recommended that an orientation for newly-elected LCEs be prioritized, following a design/programme that is responsive to the needs of newly elected LCEs. Consultations with the leagues of provinces, cities and municipalities could yield valuable inputs in designing the orientation programme. **(Focal Point: OCD Training Division)**
- b. It is recommended that the RDCC set-up be revisited looking into its functions, membership, deliverables, added value to the coordination and information management process, responsibility in harmonizing regional priorities for emergency relief and early recovery interventions, and providing direction to lower DCCs in undertaking activities in the pre- and post-disaster phase. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC TMG Secretariat)**
- c. It is recommended that back-to-back meetings of the Regional Development Council (RDC) and the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) be adopted as a way of aligning regional disaster management priorities into the regional development framework. Towards this end, a national policy will be required to put this arrangement in place. OCD and NEDA are suggested to jointly take the lead on this. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC TMG Secretariat)**
- d. It is recommended that vertical coordination in the DCC chain be strengthened. The situation following the December 2006 typhoon disaster showed seeming disconnection between some municipal and city DCCs and the PDCCs; PDCCs and the RDCC; and, the RDCC and the NDCC. Triggers for higher DCC's intervention and assistance and the form of assistance to be extended were not clear. Some PDCCs go direct to the NDCC for assistance. In some instances, the RDCC level agencies were not abreast of the sectoral needs of the PDCCs which resulted to not having enough information to analyze priority needs of the provinces. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC TMG Secretariat)**
- e. Strengthening coordination mechanisms require building the capacities of DCCs. To institutionalize coordination mechanisms, it is recommended that LGUs create "Disaster Management Offices" (DMO) with full-time trained staff and minimum equipment to operate. There are existing models in the country that could serve as benchmarks for this – the Albay PPSEMO, the Southern Leyte DMO, and the Surigao del Sur DMO. These DMOs should also serve as EOCs in the event of potential or evolving emergencies. A national policy towards this end is necessary to have clearly defined guidelines and common basis across the country. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC TMG Secretariat)**
- f. It is recommended that a system of distributing/allocating resources be established, making the RDCC the clearing house for coordination of the distribution/allocation of resources in the affected provinces under it. Guidelines should clearly provide that priorities of actual needs should be

based on assessments undertaken by competent offices/teams employing the prescribed design and methodology. RDCCs should also provide direction in undertaking follow-up assessments or more in-depth assessments to determine future humanitarian needs. **(Focal Point: RDCCs/OCD Regional Centers)**

- g. It is recommended that the United Nations be requested to provide technical assistance in coordination aimed at building capacities of RDCCs and PDCCs. **(Focal Point: UN National Disaster Response Advisor - NDRA)**
- h. The application of the cluster approach in the Philippines has been recognized as a positive step towards ensuring transparency, leadership and accountability in addressing humanitarian needs in the different sectors and other areas of activities. The principle of inclusivity that it promotes proved very useful in bringing onboard CBOs, local NGOs, CSGs and other locally based organizations such as foundations, academic groups and the like. It is recommended that the cluster approach be integrated in existing coordination structures at different DCC levels. The publication of the NDCC Circular on the institutionalization of the cluster approach in the Philippine Disaster Management System has laid down the way ahead for such undertaking. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC Operations Center)**
- i. It is recommended that a mechanism for appreciating contributions be put in place. DCCs at different levels should monitor the contributions coming in from both local and international sources. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- j. It is recommended that during emergency response operations, community coordination centers be established to provide basic information on the impact and needs of the populace to external actors coming in. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**

## **5. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management**

- a. It is recommended, as a matter of priority, to formulate a common assessment methodology for rapid, sectoral, and recovery assessments that can be uniformly applied across the country by the different DCCs. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/UN NDRA)**
- b. Integral to the formulation of a national methodology is the training of key actors and the provision of basic communications and information management equipment, as well as mobility assets to support various assessment missions when the need arises. The suggested approach is to develop and train a pool of assessment team members composed of experienced disaster management practitioners from the national, regional and provincial DCCs level, cluster members, NGOs, PNRG Chapters, and other key stakeholders. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center)**
- c. It is recommended that the clusters, consistent with the provisions of the NDCC Circular, be made the clearing mechanisms for data gathered in the different sectors. Part of this recommendation is the inclusion of this concern in the operational strategies of the different clusters and the

adoption of common sectoral templates for reporting. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/NDCC Operations Center)**

- d. It is highly recommended that common/uniform databases, containing essential sectoral baseline data, be established at all levels maintained and updated on a regular basis. Following a prescribed design, municipal and city databases shall consist of barangay databases; provincial databases will be a consolidation of lower DCC databases: regional databases will come from provincial inputs; and, the national database for baseline data will be a consolidation of all regional databases. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/OCD Operations Division)**
- e. Related to the above is the recommendation to create a national web-based information management system that will be accessible to the general public, incorporating the national database for baseline data among other things, as a value-added service offered by the NDCC network. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center/OCD Operations Division)**
- f. In this era of information technology, it is recommended that provincial websites be created as a ready tool for information dissemination and public awareness. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- g. To ensure continuity of initiatives, it is recommended that information management capacity be institutionalized along with the DMOs in the different LGUs. **(Focal Point: NDCC TMG/ NDCC Operations Center)**

## **6. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Communications**

- a. It is recommended that OPCENs or EOCs at the different levels should be standardized following the guidelines to be published by the NDCC OPCEN setting minimum acceptable standards in terms of people skills, equipment and procedures (PEP). To ensure 24/7 services of EOCs during emergency situations, the following is also recommended: 1) hire full-time people for the DMOs that will serve as EOCs in times of emergencies and train them in managing and running an EOC; and, 2) forge surge capacity arrangements with LGUs from other regions to augment EOC manpower requirements should the regular staff become disaster victims themselves – this is anchored on the assumption that LGUs providing surge capacity augmentation are equally competent and skilled in operating an EOC. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center)**
- b. It has been recommended that redundancy in communications should be pursued especially at the RDCC and provincial level. In times of emergencies, EOCs should be able to operate on a 24/7 basis even with massive power outage. Primary, secondary and tertiary modes of communications should be able to withstand the impact of winds of supertyphoons to ensure uninterrupted voice and data communications between the NDCC-RDCCs-PDCCs. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Centers and PDCCs)**
- c. It is recommended that the common radio frequency being used during emergency situations be disseminated to all EOCs, affiliated volunteer

communications group, and other potential actors to have a common working frequency. This, however, needs to observe certain protocols that will be designed by the RDCC. **(Focal Point: OCD Regional Center)**

- d. It is recommended that PDCCs, especially island provinces, should at least have one satellite phone for use during emergencies as a last resort when everything else fails. RDCC line agencies dealing with humanitarian emergencies should also have their satellite phones to be able to communicate with PDCCs. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs/NGAs<sup>9</sup> with disaster response mandate)**
- e. It is recommended that institutional partnerships with telecommunications companies be forged for the provision of voice and data communications facility in areas hardest hit by disasters. **(Focal Point: NDCC Operations Center)**

## **7. Stockpiling and Management of Aid**

- a. It is recommended that credit lines with local suppliers be arranged by local DCCs for emergency purposes. This also includes the arrangements for warehousing of incoming relief supplies pending distribution and their transport to priority areas. **(Focal Point: Provincial DCCs)**
- b. It is recommended that relief distributions be done equitably and should be based on assessment of actual needs of communities. The practice of dumping relief supplies to different areas affected in varying degrees without the benefit of any assessments has resulted to the most-in-need not getting adequate assistance. Along this line, family packs should be distributed as such – family packs – without any repackaging or modifications as any alteration defeats the very purpose. **(Focal Point: DSWD)**
- c. It is recommended that the poorest of the poor be given access cards even before a disaster strikes. Vulnerability assessments to be conducted in the barangays should cover this information and should form part of the contingency plans for potential relief requirements given evolving scenarios. **(Focal Point: DSWD)**
- d. It is also recommended that INGOs and NGOs share their reports or any information on their donations or forms of assistance extended to their counterpart government agencies or through the cluster for tracking, monitoring, coordination and optimization of resources available. This would also give a clear indicator of potential gaps or surpluses. Part of this recommendation is the close coordination that should be done with DCCs and relevant government agencies in relief distribution without prejudice to impartiality, neutrality and the humanitarian imperative to provide assistance to alleviate human suffering of victims of disasters. **(Focal Point: GoP's Health, Food, Shelter and Protection Cluster Leads)**

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<sup>9</sup> National Government Agencies

- e. It is recommended that regular consultative meetings at different levels be undertaken to level off expectations on the part of the government and the NGOs/INGOs. This is aimed at avoiding misunderstandings between government agencies and other external actors. RDCCs and PDCCs should take the lead on this. **(Focal Point: Regional and Provincial DCCs)**

## V. Conclusion

Numerous lessons have been learned in analyzing the snapshot of the organizational responses to the December 2006 disaster. It is clear that much remains to be done as the country braces for the next typhoon season. Parallel to this is the outstanding challenge of addressing residual relief needs in evacuation centers and in host communities, and the rehabilitation of homes, schools, health facilities and sources of livelihood of the people.

Lessons highlighted in this report can only be truly “learned” if sad experiences of the past do not recur. This is doable but can only be achieved by the collective efforts of all stakeholders in pursuing a common vision of having **“A Prepared Population and A Safe Nation.”**

### Annexes:

- A - Workshop Message of the UN Resident Coordinator
- B - Workshop Design
- C - Workshop Programme of Activities
- D - Workshop Participants

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## **Annex A**

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DECEMBER 2006 TYPHOON  
DISASTER: A "LESSONS LEARNED" WORKSHOP  
Venezia Hotel, Legaspi City, May 29, 2007**

**MESSAGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR  
Delivered by Mr. Bruce Reed, Regional Representative, International Organization for  
Migration (IOM), and Representative of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the  
Philippines**

The Executive Officer of the National Disaster Coordinating Council and Administrator of the Office of Civil Defense, Glenn Rabonza; the Undersecretary for Operations and Capacity Building Group of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Ms. Celia Yangco; representatives of the provincial, regional and national government agencies; civil society organizations and NGOs; colleagues from the Red Cross Society; my colleagues in the United Nations Country Team; ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

May I, at the outset, congratulate the National Disaster Coordinating Council, and the United Nations and its partners for jointly organizing this very important activity. It is very timely as we are holding it before the next rainy season comes in. I view every activity of this nature as a perfect opportunity to look back and objectively assess how organizations collectively fared in responding to the emergency. This is the most collaborative way of looking at the strengths of the overall response as well as the areas that need improvement.

The Philippines, by virtue of its geographic location, will always be prone to natural hazards. This seems to explain why every year, destructive events - triggered by natural hazards - occur somewhere in the country, leaving behind casualties and a significant number of people displaced and rendered homeless.

The year past - 2006 - was an eventful year of disasters. In February, there was the Guinsaugon landslide in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte; there were several destructive typhoons in the first half of the year; containing the impact of the Guimaras Oil Spill was a huge challenge to all actors; Mt. Mayon's eruption required huge logistical requirements to transfer people to safe areas; the threat of Mt. Bulusan's eruption caused the evacuation of thousands of families along threatened areas; and, the cumulative effects of the last quarter typhoons were just overwhelming.

Given this environment we are all working in, we expect to work again with one another in some future events where needs of the affected population will pose huge challenge on our organizations. They say that every disaster is unique and distinct. There are common and generic issues that always emerge but dealing with the impact will always be unique and



distinct as ground dynamics differ from one area to another. Distinct challenges will remain in every disaster situation and we should anticipate this as we prepare for future events.

The objectives of this Lessons Learned Workshop reflect the urgency that we need to collectively address – that of harmonizing our approaches, ensuring structured and efficient delivery of emergency services, and synergy in our activities – optimizing use of resources to cover urgent humanitarian needs and identifying early recovery requirements at the earliest possible opportunity. This exercise of assessing organizational responses needs to be institutionalized in the interest of continuously improving our procedures, systems and processes. As the Total Quality Management dictum says ***“there is no best way of doing things because there is always a better way.”***

Looking at the programme of activities for the next two days and the topics to be covered in the five sessions, I am confident that we can churn out useful recommendations with clearly defined timelines on how to go about them.

In pursuit of improving disaster response mechanisms, the United Nations Country Team in the Philippines, led by the UN Resident Coordinator, stands firm in its commitment to support the Government in its desire to strengthen disaster preparedness, to mitigate and respond to major natural disasters that may beset the country, and in undertaking disaster risk management initiatives in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action. May I also take this opportunity to re-affirm the United Nations family’s strong support to the Government of the Philippines in its commendable efforts in preparing its citizens for future disasters.

In ending, I wish to reiterate my congratulations to the organizers from the NDCC and UN side who jointly put up this activity with very limited time to prepare. I wish all workshop participants good luck as you all put your heart and soul in the discussions.

Good morning and a pleasant day to everyone!

## Annex B

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DECEMBER 2006 TYPHOON  
DISASTER: A “LESSONS LEARNED” WORKSHOP  
Venezia Hotel, Legaspi City, May 29, 2007**

### Workshop Design

Workshop Topics	Discussion Points	Breakout Groups
I. Preparedness and Contingency Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who did what?</li> <li>• Preparedness activities undertaken</li> <li>• Contingency plans in place ?</li> <li>• Tried, Tested and Implemented?</li> </ul>	2
II. Monitoring and Early Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who monitors what?</li> <li>• Dissemination procedure</li> <li>• Processing of EW data for alert</li> <li>• Mass broadcast and alert procedure</li> <li>• Translating alert info into actions</li> </ul>	1
III. Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trigger mechanisms</li> <li>• “Who mobilizes who”</li> <li>• Response procedures</li> <li>• Leadership on the ground</li> <li>• Protocols and standards</li> </ul>	1
IV. Coordination Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination leads</li> <li>• Levels of coordination</li> <li>• Modes of coordination</li> <li>• Barriers to coordination</li> <li>• Deliverables of coordination</li> </ul>	2
V. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unilateral vs Joint</li> <li>• Who, Where, When, Why &amp; How (methodology)</li> <li>• Joint planning and assessment information sharing</li> <li>• Modes of access to assessment information by other actors</li> </ul>	2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing of information into accurate data that aids operations planning and decision making</li> </ul>	
VI. Emergency Operations Centers and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where was the EOC</li> <li>• Which levels had EOCs</li> <li>• Added value of EOCs to actors?</li> <li>• Was there 24/7 communications?</li> <li>• Comms redundancy?</li> </ul>	1
VII. Stockpiling and Management of Aid (relief and medical supplies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockpiles at which levels</li> <li>• Triggers for emergency distribution</li> <li>• Needs management</li> <li>• Resource mobilization</li> <li>• Prioritization system</li> </ul>	1
VIII. Workshop Integration and Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges Encountered</li> <li>• Needs Identified</li> <li>• Best Practices Identified</li> <li>• Workshop Recommendations and Suggested Next Steps</li> </ul>	Plenary

## Annex C

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DECEMBER 2006 TYPHOON  
DISASTER: A “LESSONS LEARNED” WORKSHOP  
Venezia Hotel, Legaspi City, May 29, 2007**

### Programme of Activities

<b>Day 1 (May 29, 2007)</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
0830H-0930H	<b>Opening Ceremony</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome Remarks by NDCC Executive Officer and OCD Administrator Glenn Rabonza</li> <li>• Workshop Message by the Representative of the UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines, Mr. Bruce Reed, IOM Regional Representative</li> <li>• Presentation of “An Overview of the December 2006 Typhoon Disaster” by the OCD Executive Officer Mr. Ronald Flores</li> <li>• Presentation of Workshop Guidelines by the Lead Facilitator – UN National Disaster Response Advisor – Ronaldo Reario</li> </ul>
0930H-1100H	<b>Session 1: Preparedness and Contingency Plans</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session)
1100H-1145H	<b>Plenary for Session 1</b> – Group presentors report group outputs, facilitator moderates the session
1145H-1200H	<b>Wrap-up for Session 1</b>
1200H-1300H	<b>Lunch Break</b>
1300H-1400H	<b>Session 2A: Monitoring and Early Warning</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session) <b>Session 2B: Search and Rescue and Emergency Response Operations</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session)
1400H-1430H	<b>Plenary for Session 2</b> – Group presentors report group outputs, facilitator moderates the session
1430H-1445H	<b>Wrap-up for Session 2</b>
1445H-1600H	<b>Session 3: Coordination Mechanisms</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session)
1600H-1645H	<b>Plenary for Session 3</b> – Group presentors report group outputs, facilitator moderates the session
1645H-1700H	<b>Wrap-up for Session 3</b>
1900H-2100H	<b>Dinner</b>
<b>Day 2 (May 30, 2007)</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
0830H-1000H	<b>Session 4: Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and Information Management</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session)
1000H-1030H	<b>Plenary for Session 4</b> – Group presentors report group outputs, facilitator moderates the session
1030H-1045H	<b>Wrap-up for Session 4</b>
1045H-1145H	<b>Session 5A: Emergency Operations Centers and Communications</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session) <b>Session 5B: Stockpiling and Management of Aid (relief and medical supplies)</b> (5-minute presentation precedes the session)

1145H-1215H	<b>Plenary for Session 5</b> – Group presentors report group outputs, facilitator moderates the session
1215H-1230H	<b>Wrap-up Session 5</b>
1230H-1400H	<b>Lunch Break</b>
1400H onwards	<p><b>Part 1 - Workshop Integration and Synthesis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major challenges encountered</li> <li>• Best practices and needs identified</li> <li>• Workshop Recommendations and suggested next steps</li> </ul> <p><b>Part 2 – Closing Ceremony</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection on the Workshop by NDCC Executive Officer and OCD Administrator Glenn Rabonza</li> <li>• Closing Message by DSWD Undersecretary for Operations and Capacity Building Group Celia Yangco</li> </ul>
- Refreshments follow -	

## Annex D

### Assessment of Organizational Responses to the December 2006 Typhoon Disaster: A "Lessons Learned" Workshop May 29-30, 2007

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