



Unified disaster management body proposed

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Given its high exposure to disaster risk, the Philippines cannot continue to have a lead agency on disaster management with coordinative functions only, a study published by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) said.

The discussion paper titled “Have we institutionalized DRRM in the Philippines?”, urged the government to review the existing structure and functions of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), a coordinating body authorized to craft policies as well as integrate, supervise, monitor, and evaluate DRRM operations in the country.

“The NDRRMC, given its structure and composition, perennially suffers from competition with other departmental missions,” the study said, adding that the national government should consider the creation of a unified disaster management agency that will be responsible for all DRRM-related matters.

The paper proposed for the assessment of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) which serves as secretariat and executive arm of the NDRRMC.

The paper cited the need to assess if OCD can function as a high-level institution that will lead, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of Republic Act (RA) 10121 or the Philippine DRRM Act of 2010, as well as the country’s National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (NDRRMP).

RA 10121 assigns the tasks of monitoring, evaluation, and coordination of DRRM programs, projects, and activities to OCD. But the study said that other government institutions are in a better position to assume these responsibilities.

An example of this, the publication said, is the institutional arrangement between the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the OCD on the review and recommendation of appropriate plans for local government units when it comes to hazards.

“While the OCD has the mandate under the law, the task requires work and resources which the DILG has the capacity,” the paper said. The same realities, it explained, exist with other DRRM partners.

Another function that can be delegated to other partners and line agencies is the monitoring and evaluation of DRRM initiatives. According to the report, data and scientific know how should be processed and translated into appropriate behaviors on the ground.

“Advisories from science and service organizations, knowledge products from the academe, and other appropriate technological interventions and novel approaches can be disseminated through a multi-stakeholder approach involving the private sector, civil society, nongovernment organizations, and other community-based interest groups,” it said.

Specifically, the report recommended the tapping of local partners like universities as a good option in augmenting OCD’s capacity in monitoring and evaluating DRRM efforts.

The paper said as an entity at the helm of the council, OCD should be able to actively promote cooperation and coordination among member-agencies of the NDRRMC in order to mitigate the impact of disasters in the country.

Based on the World Disaster Report 2014 and the Global Climate Risk Index 2014 Report, respectively, the Philippines is the second most affected by weather-related losses and the second most disaster-prone among 171 countries.

“Aside from the cost on human lives, the Philippines incurs massive economic losses from disasters. From 2005 to 2014, it had lost an average of \$1.6 billion every year, equivalent to P79.5 billion,” the report said.