



Gov't urged to create unified disaster management agency

by Amierielle Anne Bulan, June 6, 2017

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MANILA, Philippines — A state-run think tank urged the government to establish a unified disaster management agency to monitor the functions of partner institutions in institutionalizing the disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) policy.

In a discussion paper, Philippine Institute for Development Studies senior research fellow Sonny Domingo and research assistant Ma. Divina Olaguera said that the national government failed to empower partner institutions as National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council secretariats.

Although Republic Act 10121 or the Philippine DRRM Act of 2010 had initiated development processes in the country, the NDRRMC faced difficulties in coordinating with the institutions and local government units.

“The NDRRMC, given its structure and composition, perennially suffers from competition with other departmental missions. It may be timely to look at other institutional arrangements for dealing more committedly with DRRM,” the authors wrote.

The authors stressed that although executive departments such as the Interior and Local Government, Science and Technology, Social Welfare and Development and National Economic and Development Authority performed coordinative DRRM functions, the institutions would still have to concentrate on their agency’s main functions.

“The national government should likewise consider the creation of a unified disaster management agency responsible for all phases of DRRM, although institutional niches would still necessitate interagency involvement (i.e., the DOST will always be better equipped to do science research, the Department of Public Works and Highways to manage infrastructure, the DSWD to engage in social work, etc),” said the paper.

“Given its exposure to disaster risk, the Philippines cannot continue to have a focal disaster organization that only has coordinative functions. DRRM-related tasks and responsibilities are passed on to council members that are occupied with different primary mandates,” it added.

PIDS also pushed for the assessment of the Office of the Civil Defense which supports the defense secretary as chair of the NDRRMC.

While the OCD has the mandate to monitor, evaluate and coordinate with RA 10121, the current tasks of the office still needs to rely on some institutions to assume certain responsibilities.

“An example is the issue between the DILG and the OCD on the review and recommendation of appropriate plans for LGUs 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 same realities exist with other DRRM partners,” the authors said.

Passed into law on May 2010, RA 10121 requires a strong legal and institutional basis for DRRM. It provides a comprehensive framework for the development of policies, plans and measures pertaining to all aspect of DRRM which includes good governance, risk assessment, early warning, awareness rising, reducing underlying risk factor and preparedness for effective response and early recovery.