

Have we institutionalized DRRM in the Philippines?

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The Philippine archipelago is one of the riskiest places to live in given the natural geological and hydro-meteorological occurrences, aggravated by man-induced disaster situations (Figure 1). The frequency and magnitude of disaster events it encounters every year make it one of the countries with the highest disaster risk and exposure scores based on the *World Risk Report 2014* (UNU-EHS 2014) (Table 1). The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2016) likewise placed the Philippines as the fourth most disaster-affected country in the world with a total of 130 million affected people over the past 20 years. Moreover, the *World Disaster Report 2014* and the *Global Climate Risk Index 2014 Report*, respectively, identified the Philippines as 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

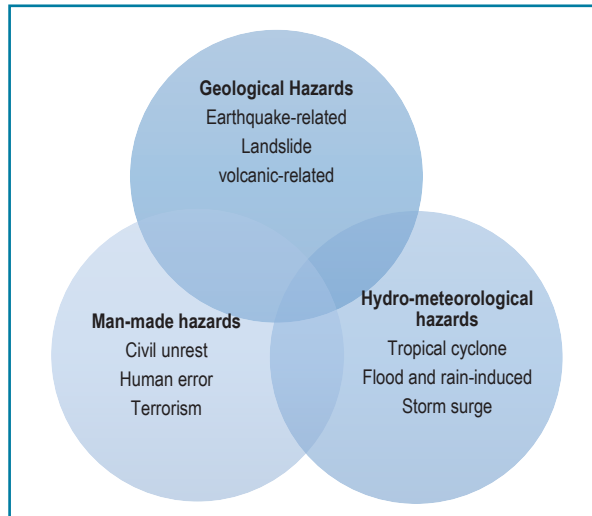
USD 1.6 billion every year (CRED n.d.). The World Economic Forum (2016) indicated vulnerability to natural disasters as among the leading obstacles to doing business and investing in the country.

Slow economic development, wealth distribution disparities, high population growth, and rapid urbanization are some of the factors that increase the country's vulnerability to disasters. As such, an effective disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) scheme requires action on several fronts: good governance and institution building, social protection and antipoverty effort, investment on augmented capacity and resilient infrastructure, and sustainable resource management. The government must embed it in development planning and institute appropriate development policy to lessen vulnerability to a multitude of hazards and promote national resiliency.

This *Policy Note* assesses the extent of DRRM institutionalization in the country.

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Figure 1. Hazards in the Philippines

Source: Authors

Table 1. World risk ranking of the Philippines

Rank	Country	Risk (%)
1	Vanuatu	36.50
2	Philippines	28.25
3	Tonga	28.23
4	Guatemala	20.68
5	Bangladesh	19.37
6	Solomon Islands	19.18
7	Costa Rica	17.33
8	EL Salvador	17.12
9	Cambodia	17.12
10	Papua New Guinea	16.74
11	Timor-Leste	16.41
12	Brunei Darussalam	16.23
13	Nicaragua	14.87
14	Mauritius	14.78
15	Guinea-Bissau	13.75

Source: UNU-EHS (2014)

Brief history of DRRM in the Philippines

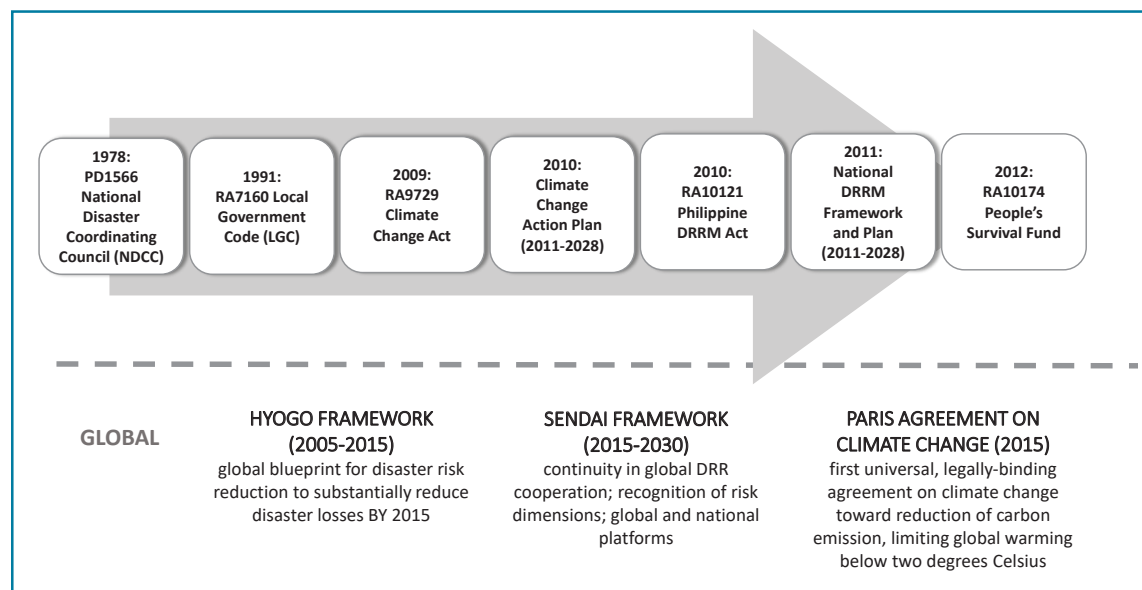
The DRRM policy in the Philippines has evolved slowly over the years, picking up in pace only during the second half of the last decade.

In 1978, Presidential Decree (PD) 1566 established the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) as the highest policymaking body on disaster-related concerns. Republic Act (RA) 7160 or the Local Government Code (LGC) complemented this in 1991 by espousing decentralization and local autonomy. It gave local government units (LGUs) more powers, authority, responsibilities, and resources, enabling the political subdivisions of the state to develop and become self-reliant and more effective partners in the attainment of national goals.

PD 1566, together with certain provisions in the LGC, became the default policy on DRRM until the ratification of RA 10121 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 and RA 9729 or the Climate Change Act of 2009. These laws established proactive national framework strategies and plans and made available the necessary institutional structures and resources required for DRRM and climate change mitigation and adaptation in the country. In 2012, RA 10174 further established the People's Survival Fund as a special resource for financing climate change adaptation programs and projects.

In the global scene, the Philippines became a signatory to the Hyogo Framework of Action, a United Nations initiative that provided the global blueprint for DRRM to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015. This was succeeded by the Sendai Framework that runs from 2016 to 2030 and aims to provide continuity in global disaster risk reduction cooperation while recognizing the complex dimensions of risk and the presence of global and national platforms. Most recently, the national government ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which frames

Figure 2. Evolution of disaster risk management policy in the Philippines



Source: Authors

the goal of 196 countries to cap the increase in global temperature (Figure 2).

The Philippine DRRM Act (RA 10121) and the National DRRM Plan

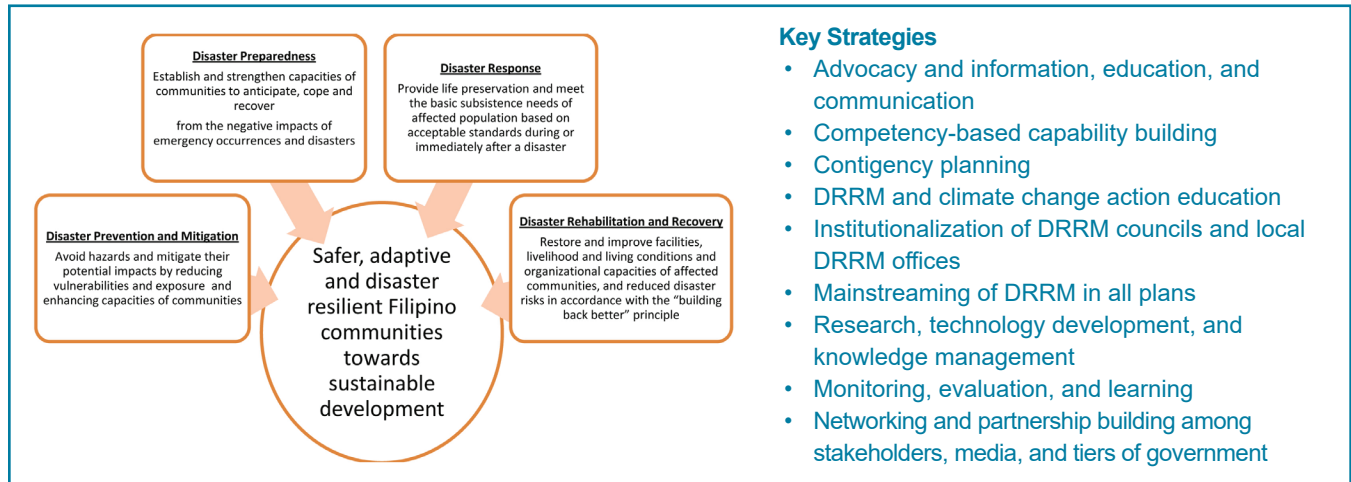
The Philippine DRRM Act provides a comprehensive, all-hazard, multisectoral, interagency, and community-based approach to DRRM. It replaced the NDCC with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), a coordinating body which was imbued with policymaking, integration, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation functions. It also mandated the establishment of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management offices in every province, city, and municipality, and a Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee in barangays. As the oversight body for disaster risk management, the NDRRMC is chaired by the secretary of the Department of National Defense and backstopped by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD).

RA 10121 mandated the crafting and implementation of the National Disaster Risk Management Framework and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Plan (NDRRMP). Under the core value of safer, adaptive, and disaster-resilient communities, the NDRRMP defines applicable initiatives under four thematic areas: (1) disaster prevention and mitigation, (2) disaster preparedness, (3) disaster response, and (4) disaster rehabilitation and recovery (Figure 3). The four priority pillars are essayed in 14 objectives, 24 outcomes, 56 outputs, and 93 activities. Most targets and activities indicated in the NDRRMP do not have separate funding sources by design and are intended to be mainstreamed into the regular activities of the relevant agencies and offices.

Sectoral and institutional implementation of the NDRRMP

This section looks into institutional arrangements and platforms, knowledge and science application,

Figure 3. NDRRMP thematic pillars and key strategies



Source: NDRRMC (2011)

regional and local cooperation, human capital and capacity building, accounting and administrative processes, and monitoring and evaluation options.

Institutional arrangements and responsibilities

NDRRMP identifies agency leads and implementing partner institutions and/or groups in each of the activities. It likewise designates the overall lead agencies for each of the four thematic pillars as vice-chairs: the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for mitigation and prevention, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for preparedness, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for response, and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) for rehabilitation and recovery (Figure 4).

While the NDRRMP also covers climate change issues, it significantly differs from the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) of the Climate Change Act. The NDRRMP focuses on operational grounding under the four pillars, while the CCAP prioritizes strategic initiatives on food security,

water sufficiency, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate-smart industries and services, sustainable energy, and capacity development. The government needs to harmonize this apparent institutional divide, although defined in two separate legislations, consistent with a whole-of-government approach.

As one of the DRRM pillar vice-chairs, the DOST seems to transcend this divide as it proves to be a key player in both DRRM and climate change initiatives. This may be because the line between climate change interventions and DRRM when it comes to prevention and mitigation and adaptation and preparedness is indistinct. Mitigation and adaptation initiatives in climate change can also be considered as mitigation, prevention, and preparedness activities in DRRM.

At the local level, translation of the provisions of RA 10121 and the NDRRMP is very crucial. Although local autonomy has to be respected following the LGC, the national government should ensure compliance from the LGUs especially in the face of impending disasters. It

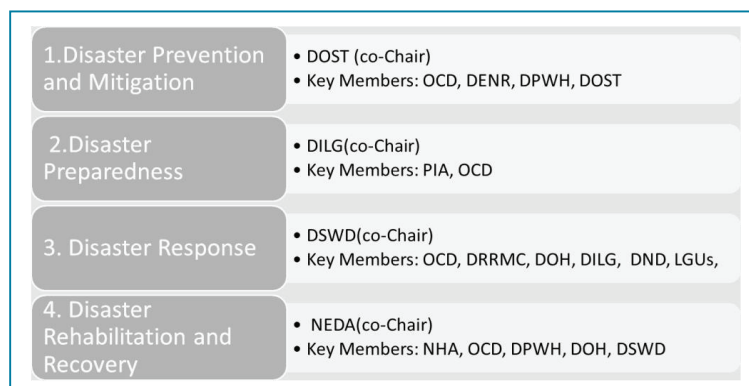
can likewise use RA 10121 to elicit compliance as local officials can be removed from the office due to gross negligence.

Taking advantage of counterparts and partners at the regional and local levels is likewise recommended to strengthen networks and institutional presence. Frontline institutions, including LGUs, and their personnel should be able to function proficiently and with minimal supervision, consistent with the spirit of local autonomy espoused by the LGC. Accountability and ownership of action should be the norm. More so, limitation in resources should not hinder apt disaster risk management.

It was apparent that the tenets of DRRM, as espoused under RA 10121 and the NDRRMP, had influenced development processes and institutional initiatives within the country since the passing of the law. However, the institution-led initiatives under the four thematic pillars were identified and implemented with relative independence from the NDRRMP. Although the aforementioned initiatives still largely conformed with the wide thematic priorities of the law, the disconnection happened because the national government failed to fully empower the OCD as secretariat of the NDRRMC. By law, the NDRRMC secretariat is mandated with coordinative roles in the identification, implementation, and monitoring of DRRM programs, projects, and activities.

Moreover, NEDA observed that the NDRRMP has not received the same treatment as the Philippine Development Plan, where translation to projects and programs can be funded and implemented. Given its supposed central function, the NDRRMP should be contextualized within the broader

Figure 4. Lead agencies under the four thematic pillars



Source: NDRRMC (2011)

perspective of DRRM and its defined thematic pillars. Still, issues on institutional authority, facilitative arrangements, and applicable platforms need to be addressed and clarified.

Resources, human capital, and capacity building

While funding sources under RA 10121, particularly the NDRRMP, are substantive, a more equitable distribution of DRRM resources should be looked into. LGU prioritization should be examined as the current Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund is skewed against poor LGUs. Financing schemes for preparedness and mitigation should further be explored.

The same tagging arrangement for climate change expenses between the Climate Change Commission and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) can be adopted by the NDRRMC/OCD and the DBM for DRRM-related spending. Similarly, DRRM may benefit from available climate change funding, and vice versa, as both funds are driven by the same core values.

In terms of human capital, LGUs had difficulty complying with the human resource provisions



According to the UNU-EHS (2014), the Philippines is one of the most exposed countries to disasters. This fact presents the country's need for an effective disaster risk reduction and management scheme. (Photo by Australian Agency for International Development)

under RA 10121 leading to a dearth of DRRM workers stationed at the municipal level. While provinces have full-time officers, staffing problems persist particularly in the fourth- to sixth-class municipalities. The lack of permanent personnel makes capacity building within LGUs more difficult.

Avenues for productive discourses, institutional collaboration, and capacity augmentation need to be instituted. A culture of cooperation among DRRM-relevant institutions will encourage the sharing of expertise, experiences, and even resources, and promote collective progression. Apt expertise is on the ground: The Local Government Academy conducts training on

governance and DRRM; the Philippine Public Safety College has a master's course on crisis and disaster risk management; the DILG has been partnering with the academe for technical augmentation; and the OCD and other institutions have been sending people abroad to attend trainings.

Grounding science and promoting monitoring and evaluation

The practical grounding of scientific information needs to be enhanced. Data and scientific know-how have to 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 multistakeholder approach involving the private sector, civil society, nongovernmental organizations, and other community-based interest groups.

RA 10121 assigns the task of monitoring, evaluation, and coordination to the OCD. However, some institutions are simply in a better strategic and resource position 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. Tapping local partners, particularly the universities, may be a good option in augmenting capacity for monitoring and evaluation.

The implementation of any monitoring and evaluation mechanism should follow the

checklist of NDRRMP activities and outputs. Strict reporting of DRRM resources, including the status of calamity funds, quick response funds, and institutional funding, has to be instituted to facilitate action, planning, and possible resource augmentation.

The mandated sunset review of RA 10121 must look into the translation and grounding of the NDRRMP as well as the institutional mechanisms for its delivery. The DRRM leadership must convene more often and capitalize on the mainstreaming opportunities that Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils afford. This also covers the regional meetings the OCD spearheads where DRRM plans are presented and approved.

Institutional platform

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. 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 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). There

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are good examples of countries with separate offices on disaster management.

Institutional transition during administration changes is always a critical concern. The OCD has had four administrators over the past four years. Whoever sits at its helm can benefit from a sense of operational continuity and institutional history. Prior to the approval of plantilla positions, staffing issues also hounded the OCD with many of its staff members appointed as contractuels and project-based personnel. Such are causes for concern because the OCD plays a critical role as secretariat and executive arm of the NDRRMC.

Conclusion

The NDRRMP, as crafted under RA 10121, outlined the way toward mainstreaming of DRRM and climate change action at various levels of policy formulation, development planning, budgeting, and governance.

It was evident that the tenets of DRRM, as espoused under RA10121 and the NDRRMP, had influenced development processes and institutional initiatives within the country since the passing of the law. But fully directing institutional DRRM initiatives based on the NDRRMP requires clear leadership from the NDRRMC and OCD at the top, and the thematic pillar leads from the wings. The DRRM leadership must actively promote institutional consciousness on the principles and advocacies

embodied within the NDRRMP rather than just rely on institutional convenience for agency-initiated deliverables.

Institutional leadership and initiative are key not only for the current level of accomplishment but also for future successes in DRRM. Although the current institutional arrangements are convenient and workable, the NDRRMC, through the OCD, has to assume its leadership mandate as expressed in the law. Notwithstanding palpable weaknesses in grounding and institutional translation, the policy support and departmental creativity exhibited by the thematic leaders give testament to the competence of local executives.

The greatest returns would come from the greatest institutional fit. Institutional assignments and arrangements should be reviewed, anchoring on current and future DRRM demands, institutional niches, and bureaucratic realities. It may also be necessary to assess whether the OCD can function as a high-level institution that can lead, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of RA 10121 and the NDRRMP, or if there is a need for the creation of a new institutional platform.

Have we succeeded in institutionalizing DRRM in the country? We have primed the institutional

backbone embodied under the law, but the spirit of coordination and cooperation still needs to be strengthened. Ultimately, the full realization of RA 10121 and the NDRRMP requires appropriate sectoral and institutional translation of the national agenda, reflecting more refined institutional arrangements, policy support, feedback, and evaluation mechanisms. 📄

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