

DevPulse

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NEDA prepares for the next big disaster

Linking disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in local development planning



As the country reels from the devastation caused by typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng, more and more people are beginning to realize the benefits of effective planning and disaster risk management. As the country's main socioeconomic planning body, NEDA since 2005 has played a key role in advocating for disaster risk management in physical planning through the National Land Use Committee (NLUC).

OIC-Deputy Director General for regional development Marcelina Bacani said that the NLUC has come up with an action agenda on disaster risk management "to help strengthen disaster risk reduction in physical planning." She pointed out that the NLUC "has developed methodologies and tools under the recently concluded NEDA-UNDP-EU project on mainstreaming disaster risk management in subnational planning, which are now embodied in the Guidelines on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management in Land Use/Physical Planning."

However, NEDA and its partners realized that disaster risk management in physical planning could be even more effective by integrating climate change adaptation as well. As a result, NEDA, UNDP and AUSAID collaborated to improve the capability of local planners, not just to manage the risks posed by natural disasters,

but to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change as well. Thus, a project on Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in Local Development Planning and Decision-Making Processes was born.

Project is "very timely"

Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto B. Santos said that the implementation of the project is "very timely," especially in the wake of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng that wrecked havoc in Metro Manila, as well as in central and northern Luzon. "While our frontline agencies and local government units focus their efforts on early recovery, the project will promote a medium to long-term strategy to rebuild the affected areas into stronger and more resilient communities by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in local land use and physical plans."

To date, damage from Ondoy and Pepeng is pegged at Php20 billion worth of crops and infrastructure. The project, if successful, could help reduce the cost of future natural disasters, both in peso terms and in the number of lives lost. "It is in this context, therefore, that we need to take stock of what went wrong with our

disaster preparedness and mitigation programs," added Santos.

Building on existing tools

With a budget of AUS\$2.5 million, equivalent to roughly PhP108 million, the project hopes to increase the awareness and understanding of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in communities by building up on the methodologies and tools that were outlined in the Guidelines on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management in Land Use/Physical Planning launched in July this year. In addition, it aims to demonstrate practical approaches at the community level, provide an enabling environment, and propose policy directions for reducing risks.

The project hopes to cover the so-called "four pillars" that make disaster risk reduction efforts work, as indicated in the 2009 World Disasters Report: good information, a way of disseminating it, awareness of local context, and the capacity to turn warning into action.

Applying the "four pillars"

The project aims to improve existing information systems for planning and development by building a disaster risk management/climate change adaptation database in each region, as well as providing recommendations for standard data gathering, reporting, dissemination and sharing protocols. Advocacy campaigns will be implemented to increase awareness on disaster risk reduction and climate change, and hopefully convince locals to act.

Meanwhile, Sec. Santos, who also serves as Acting NEDA Director-General emphasized that the tools and methodologies that will be developed through the project shall be based on local conditions. "We recognize the enormous responsibilities of cities and municipalities to their constituencies who bear the brunt of disasters, and so all our actions in this project are focused on building their capacities," he said.

NEDA's major partners for this initiative are the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Climate Change,



Vehicles were washed away due to flashfloods at the height of Ondoy

Environmental Management Bureau, and the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board. The project will also get the support of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, Philippine Institute for Volcanology and Seismology, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration, Department of Interior and Local Government and local government leagues.

Future directions

While the project promises to improve disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at the local level, much more needs to be done. For one, a law on disaster risk management that will complement the recently signed Climate Change Act is yet to be passed. In addition, the passage of a Land Use Act can also help reduce risks and minimize damage caused by future natural disasters.

However, efforts in preparing for upcoming disasters should not only come from the national government. While the project on Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in Local Development Planning and Decision-Making Processes promises to help local governments prepare and respond to natural disasters, community leaders and even citizens themselves also need to plan and organize at their level, whether in their barangay or in their households, so when the next big disaster strikes, the physical damage is minimized and more importantly, more lives are saved.