Local NGOs respond to emergencies and build community resilience in Mindanao

**Humanitarians at home in coalition**

Local NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), as part of their own communities, work to reduce poverty and drive sustainable development. When disasters or conflict strike, they are the first to respond with relief assistance and stay to support recovery and build community resilience long after other organizations have left. Mindanao is home to diverse groups of Muslims, Christians and indigenous peoples who suffer recurrent displacement due to tropical cyclones, seasonal flooding and armed clashes. Here, local organizations have engaged in an array of programmes encompassing humanitarian response, development assistance and peacebuilding. The Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE) is one of the largest NGO coalitions in the Philippines composed of 11 CSO networks with some 700 organizations, a few of which will be introduced below.

**Building flood resilience in indigenous villages of Agusan Marsh**

The Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) is a network of 52 NGOs that run agrarian reform and rural development programmes across the country. PhilDHRRA’s Mindanao chapter recently completed a three-year disaster preparedness project that covered eight municipalities in Agusan del Sur province.

Monobo tribes form the majority of indigenous people who reside in the Agusan Marsh, which floods annually between November and February. The communities rely on fishing during the wet season and farming rice and vegetables during the drier months. They have also adapted to living in floating villages, complete with schools, daycare centres and health stations, and using pump boats for transportation.

Increasingly severe flooding in recent years has forced the Manobos to elevate their homes and infrastructure. Disaster risk reduction and preparedness have become their priorities, according to Glenn Bais, Mindanao Regional Coordinator of PhilDHRRA. The group provided these communities with pump boats, a spiral tube water wheel for power-free irrigation, and flood- and pest-resistant rice seeds. It also set up a seed bank to maintain local seed availability and diversity.
Preparing for the new rainy season

Above-normal rainfall and strong typhoons expected in late 2016

As the rainy season approaches in the Philippines, United Nations and local agencies are preparing to address the potential impacts of increased rainfall and typhoons. The Philippines is known to be one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, with frequent typhoons and strong rainfall affecting the country during the rainy season.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is working with local agencies to ensure that they are well-equipped to respond to any potential emergencies. This includes providing training for local staff, ensuring that they have access to the necessary resources, and developing contingency plans.

Given the potential impact of the rainy season, it is crucial for local agencies to be proactive in their preparations. This includes identifying areas at risk, developing evacuation plans, and ensuring that there are sufficient resources available to respond to any emergencies.

In addition to local agencies, international organizations are also involved in the preparation efforts. The United Nations is providing support through its humanitarian aid programs, which include providing financial assistance, technical support, and training.

Overall, the goal is to ensure that the Philippines is well-prepared to respond to any potential disasters during the rainy season. This includes ensuring that local agencies have the necessary resources and training to respond effectively, as well as working with international organizations to provide additional support when needed.
Between 8 and 17 tropical cyclones are expected to affect the Philippines before the end of October.

The highest densities of people affected by hydro-meteorological hazards were found in regions along the eastern seaboard hit by incoming tropical storms and typhoons.

The Philippines from late May to October. Meanwhile, dry conditions are expected to persist in parts of Mindanao and the western Philippines until July as El Niño weakens.

PAGASA forecasts between 8 and 17 tropical cyclones to develop in or enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility during the coming five months, while stronger typhoons are expected in the last quarter of the year. The country is affected by an average of 20 tropical cyclones annually.

The state weather bureau also warned of an anticipated La Niña phenomenon, which will begin developing in August with its effects peaking between November 2016 and February 2017. La Niña will likely bring above-normal rainfall and thus increase the potential for floods and landslides, particularly in the eastern parts of the country.

Tropical cyclones pose the highest disaster risk to the Philippines

Since 2011, the Philippines has consistently ranked as the world's second or third most disaster-prone country in the World Risk Report. This is mainly due to the country's high exposure to natural hazards.

Tropical cyclones were the leading cause of natural disasters in the Philippines between 1980 and 2015, according to the EM-DAT International Disaster Database of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. This was followed by floods, drought, earthquakes and volcanic activities. The highest number of disaster victims was recorded in 2013 due to Super Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) that devastated the Visayas in November and a magnitude-7.2 earthquake in Bohol in October.

Between 2010 and 2014, Central Luzon (Region III) was home to both the highest numbers of hydro-meteorological incidents and of people cumulatively affected by these incidents, according to the Office of Civil Defense. Typhoon-related incidents were more common in Luzon (Regions II, III, V and the Cordillera Administrative Region) while Mindanao regions suffered seasonal flooding.

The concentration of the people affected by hydro-meteorological disasters among the total population was the highest in regions along the eastern seaboard of the country hit by strong tropical storms and typhoons. Spikes in Figure 2 generally correspond to the occurrences of strong tropical cyclones that affected these regions e.g. Typhoons Nesat (Pedring) and Nalgae (Quiel) in 2011, Typhoon Bopha (Pablo) in 2012, Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and Typhoon Hagupit (Ruby) in 2014.

Humanitarian partners gear up emergency response preparedness

The year 2015 saw an increased capacity of the Philippine government to manage disaster response and relief operations, to which international aid agencies provided targeted support with local capacity and in-country resources. Ahead of the 2016 rainy season, the Philippines Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) – composed of UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross movements – has worked to further strengthen the national
response preparedness in the areas of civil-military coordination, data preparedness, sectoral response planning and operational capacity building. At the same time, HCT is readying itself for the next disaster to be able to complement the government-led response with speed and at an appropriate scale.

As part of the continuous roll-out of IASC’s Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) guidance in the Philippines, HCT’s Emergency Response Preparedness Working Group held a contingency planning workshop on 5 May with the cluster coordinators and the emergency relief focal points of aid agencies and private sector partners. The workshop informed a subsequent extended meeting of HCT, which agreed on priority actions: continuous engagement with the Government to establish common tools and procedures for needs assessment; development of a document outlining HCT’s readiness to support the government-led coordination structure; enhanced cluster preparedness and institutionalization of recovery planning across clusters; creation of an HCT business continuity plan; and more strategic resource mobilization for emergency response.

Philippines at the World Humanitarian Summit

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, marked by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as “a turning point” for the international aid system, brought together 173 Member States, 350 private sector representatives, and over 2,000 people from CSOs and crisis-affected communities. Together, they made some 1,500 commitments to transform the global wealth, knowledge and awareness into actions based on the Five Core Responsibilities of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Humanity.

At the summit, Filipinos championed discussions and initiatives to better address the vulnerabilities of crisis-affected people and to enhance national disaster preparedness and resilience through partnerships across sectors and borders. Secretary Corazon “Dinky” Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, who headed the Philippine delegation to the summit, delivered the country’s commitments to actions including the passage of the Internally Displaced Persons Bill and the full implementation of the newly-signed Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act.

The Philippines, as the Chair of the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) Group of Ministers of Finance of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, led the launch of the New Global Partnership for Preparedness. The partnership seeks to support the disaster-prone countries with the development of risk analysis and early warning mechanisms, contingency plans, and shock-resilient social protection, basic services and response delivery systems through collaborations with UN agencies and the World Bank.

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, together with private sector networks of five other countries and the East Africa region, launched the Connecting Business Initiative. This multi-stakeholder initiative, spearheaded by OCHA, UNDP and UNISDR, will provide a framework for strategic business engagement and public-private partnerships in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery.

On the newly-forged Regional Organizations Humanitarian Action Network, the Philippines through a joint statement of ASEAN advocated nationally led, regionally supported disaster response and committed to enhancing cooperation among ASEAN members to strengthen regional resilience.

Sixteen-year-old Chloe Reynaldo took part in a side event on prioritizing sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian assistance, as well as a special session on transforming humanitarian action with and for youth. She recounted her experience here.

Richard Gordon, Chairman of the Philippine Red Cross advocated putting crisis-affected people at the centre of the humanitarian agenda and investing in local actors to build community resilience at the side event on inclusive leadership in humanitarian action.

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