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Disaster preparedness and management innovations in the Philippines

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Title of practice or experience

The Citizens' Disaster Response Center: Disaster preparedness and management innovations in the Philippines

1.2 Category of practice/experience and brief description

The experience documented here deals with how a Philippine disaster response center focuses its efforts in preparing both "less vulnerable" and "most vulnerable" sectors in coping with and getting over disasters via education. The experience also **shows** the efficiency of relying more on community folk's own talents, skills and resources in disaster preparation, mitigation and rehabilitation. In the process, community folk learn management and organizational skills which benefit them even beyond situations of disaster mitigation and rehabilitation.

1.3 Name of person or institution responsible for the practice or experience

Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC)

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2. THE PROBLEM OR SITUATION BEING ADDRESSED BY THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE

The Philippines is a disaster-prone country. An average of 20 typhoons ravage the country each year, affecting millions of Filipinos and leaving a trail of deaths, injuries and damage to property worth billions of pesos (millions of US dollars). Typhoon casualties and damage are brought about by floods, landslides, and wind-battered homes and farm crops. In 1996, eight typhoons brought heavy rains and destructive winds which adversely affected some 1,669,643 people. Over 3,600 families lost their homes while 35,000 families had partially ruined homes. The typhoons left 94 people dead, 75 injured and 25 reported missing.

The country also lies within the Pacific Ring of Fire where 80% of the world's earthquakes occur. At least 21 of the country's 220 volcanoes are considered active and are scattered all over the archipelago populated by 68 million Filipinos.

The situation is worsened by the wanton degradation of the country's environment and natural resources. The main culprits of such large-scale environmental destruction in the country are factories, mining companies and loggers. The worst fishkill in Manila Bay happened in October 1996, during which an estimated 30,000 kilos of dead fish were found floating in the bay's shallow shores. This prompted the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to probe the disaster. The Bureau's findings: the fish died of low oxygen levels and internal bleeding when their internal organs absorbed toxic

chemicals. The chemicals were traced to the industrial refuse various factories had been dumping in Manila Bay. The fishkill disrupted the livelihood of thousands of fishing families.

The country's worst mining disaster in recent history happened in March 1996 when the Filipino-Canadian Marcopper Mining Corporation's mine tailings spilled into the Boac River in Marinduque in central Philippines. The spill practically killed the river which supplied the local folk's drinking water, farm irrigation and freshwater fish.

Another fact of life in the Philippines is another human-made disaster: militarization. The problem of militarization began under the late Ferdinand Marcos's martial law regime (September 1972 – February 1986). This problem has bred what the Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC) calls "internal refugees". These are villagers, including women and children, forced out of their homes because of militarization.

Also in the countryside, villagers are vulnerable to forced evictions by private firms. Residents of 16 villages in 1996 were displaced in Davao Oriental Province in Mindanao island in southern Philippines, for example, to give way to the tree plantation of a timber company.

Yet another human-made disaster occurs from time to time in the heart of Manila: urban poor dwellers forced out of their shacks to give way to development projects such as condominiums, megamalls, factories and other commercial establishments. In Manila alone in 1996, CDRC documented 72 incidents of demolition, rendering some 193,326 persons homeless.

CDRC also considers as disastrous the economic dislocation resulting from factory lockouts and deadlocks in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) between workers and employers. In 1996, CDRC listed at least 69,789 workers, upon whom some 369,882 family members depend, who lost their jobs because of CBA deadlocks and shutdown or closure of firms.

All these natural and human-made disasters plus the acute poverty among most Filipinos create a magnified disaster situation. This complex situation gave birth to the establishment of CDRC in 1984.

CDRC recognizes that a developing country like the Philippines faces greater difficulty in coping with both natural and human-made disasters. This is because poverty-stricken victims lack the means to cushion the effects of disasters. Recovery is also difficult and tedious.

CDRC has thus focused on developing disaster management programs to help prepare community folk in wrestling and coping with the impact of disasters and to help hasten their recovery. It also ensures that assistance to beneficiaries is geared toward improving their economic condition to make them less vulnerable to disasters. The ~~teach-them-how-to-fish-rather-than-giving-them-fish~~ approach is CDRC's formula. Otherwise, disaster victims would

become dependent on handouts.

CDRC's disaster response and management programs are thus anchored to the following needs of beneficiaries: economic capacity-building and more participation in decision-making.

CDRC's programs also affirm the right of people to a healthy environment and equal access to the country's abundant natural resources.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE AND ITS MAIN FEATURES

The key to CDRC's disaster management program is education. CDRC has thus evolved education modules for disaster preparedness and management in the grassroots. Developed with the help and participation of several disaster response groups and of its provincial networks nationwide, CDRC's disaster education course, or what CDRC calls Disaster Management Orientation (DMO), consists of four modules.

Module 1

Module 1 tackles the physical characteristics and features of the Philippines which render the country vulnerable to disasters. Included here are scientific explanations and the social bases of disasters in the country. The whole module actually offers a comprehensive overview of the Philippines' national disaster situation, on which CDRC's disaster management work is based.

Like one of the rules in Sun Tzu's *Art of War* Module 1 can be summarized thus: Know your enemy and yourself. The "enemy" includes the various disasters and the "self", the country itself with its physical and geographical features. Participants are thus informed that the country, for example, has a 28,962-kilometer coastline (one of the longest in the world) and 7,000 islands. It also has 421 rivers, 58 lakes and 100,000 hectares of freshwater swamp. Sixty percent of the country's landforms are mountains.

Module 1 briefs participants on typhoons, tornadoes, floods, tidal waves, drought, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Basic information on these are culled from the country's weather bureau and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS), which monitors earthquakes and volcanic activities.

Module 1 also includes an inventory of the country's natural resources. Participants can appreciate, for example, that 55% of the country's over-60-million population live off the sea's resources. They are also enlightened on the role of other marine environmental resources such as coral reefs and man-

groves. Basic information about other resources are also given: forests and the country's remaining forest cover, and mountains and their role as windbreaker, for example.

Also included in Module 1 are environmental problems and their causes: soil erosion, landslides, "red tide" pollution, and pollution on land, in the air and in the water. All these are included in the module because they also bring disasters such as ailments, injuries and deaths.

Module 2

Module 2 looks into the relation between the impact of disasters and poverty. This module strives to answer the following questions: What was the day-to-day life situation of the victims before the disaster happened? Do they have the capacity to cope with the adverse effects on their livelihood of an earthquake, drought or militarization?

Module 2 includes a whole general orientation on the country's economic situation. The course analyzes, for instance, the implication of the country's huge foreign debt to the International Monetary Fund. It looks into how the loan conditionalities influence the government's policies on trade liberalization, reduction of the budget on social services, tax hikes, currency devaluation and oil price hikes, among others.

Other parts of the course include briefings and analysis of other related issues such as inflation, low wages, prohibitive cost of education, lack of decent housing for the poor, public health woes (malnutrition, sanitation), transportation problems and other social service deficiencies.

Still another part of the module is an orientation on the roots of the armed conflict in the country. The longest insurgency war in Asia, the country's Left-led armed struggle, is directly rooted in a clamor for change toward a social and economic order where the powerless majority is empowered. Still another insurgency war is being waged by Muslim secessionist rebels in Mindanao island in southern Philippines.

Ever since the time of the Marcos regime, the government has instituted counter-insurgency policies. For every automatic rifle fired and bomb dropped in rural communities, thousands of families get caught in the crossfire. CDRC, for example, documented 1.4 million civilians or 256,905 families who became "internal refugees" from 1986 up to 1992. The number of refugees who leave their communities as a result of natural disasters pales in comparison to counter-insurgency-driven "internal refugees". Most vulnerable to this kind of disaster are the aged, women and children.

Module 2's concluding part is called Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (CVA). CVA assesses and analyzes three aspects in a community:

- (a) the physical aspect;
- (b) level of social organization of each community member; and
- (c) attitudes of and motivating factors for community members.

The physical aspect refers to the community's location, and the community folk's livelihoods or occupations, type and structure of houses, skills and training. This aspect also includes a look into who is benefiting the most from the community's natural resources.

The second aspect takes a look at the various formal and informal political organizational structures in a community, which also include community members' level of unity, the family and neighborhood support system, and the decision-making process among community leaders and members.

The third aspect assesses the community members' common and differing worldviews, philosophies in life, and attitudes toward change.

CDRC acknowledges that disasters can victimize all people from all walks of life. But CDRC similarly recognizes that there are those who can easily rise up, pick up the pieces and start life anew, and there are those who can hardly recover. This is where vulnerability and capacity come into play.

CDRC cites an Intensity 7.7 earthquake that battered northern Philippines in July 1990. All were affected, but there were those who recovered faster than others. There were sectors whose livelihoods were badly hit, but they had the capacity to even help others.

Assessing a community's capacities and vulnerabilities enables disaster management handlers to strategize and prioritize their disaster preparedness and disaster response programs.

Included in CVA is how to size up the hazards brought about by both natural and human-made disasters. Disaster management orientation participants are briefed about three types of hazards: natural (typhoon, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal wave, tsunami and floods), hazards brought about by human activities (wars, fire caused by negligence or congested house structures, nuclear fallout accidents and the like), and a combination of both (environmental destruction due to logging, mining and other activities can magnify the effect of natural disasters: forest destruction, for example, leads to floods, siltation and landslides). All these dangers lead to loss of lives and property, injury and grief.

In incorporating these points, Module 2, in a way, not only helps raise the participants' level of disaster awareness; the module also introduces them to an appreciation of environmental protection as a major and long-term approach in cushioning the impact of disasters.

Module 3

Module 3 tackles the rudiments of Disaster Management or DM. DM has three goals: to prevent or minimize loss of lives and property, to reduce personal suffering and grief of victims, and to help speed up rehabilitation and recovery of victims.

For effective DM, CDRC lists at least six vital elements to bear in mind in responding to disasters:

(a) ***Risk management***

This considers the following:

- (i) type of risk or hazard;
- (ii) frequency, time and duration of hazard;
- (iii) estimate of hazard's impact or effect on the community; and
- (iv) possible ways and means to lessen or cushion effect of hazard or risk.

(b) ***Loss management***

This involves a thorough study of the damaging effect of hazards on people's lives, livelihood, infrastructure and property. Based on this study, possible preparations are identified before danger happens. Flood-threatened communities, for example, must be evacuated before a heavy monsoon or typhoon comes. Also included under loss management are the foreseen tasks that must be done after a disaster happens. Preparing ahead for post-disaster tasks will continue to lessen the effect of the disaster.

(c) ***Control of events***

This refers to control of events during and after an emergency. This can be achieved if

- (i) the nature of the disaster and its effect on a community are immediately identified;
- (ii) mitigating measures are carried out to lessen a disaster's effects;
- (iii) the community has organized and synchronized preparation;
- (iv) there is sufficient information on which to base responses;
- (v) responses are appropriate;
- (vi) responses are prompt;
- (vii) responses are morale-boosting and can encourage action and initiative from the community; and
- (viii) responses are systematically done.

(d) *Equity in relief and rehabilitation programs*

Relief and rehabilitation aid must be based on the actual situation and the actual damage wrought by the disaster. The volume of relief aid, for example, must be based on the size of a family, or on the gravity of the damage.

(e) *Relief aid management*

This is related to item (d). Those in charge of relief goods and rehabilitation materials need some management skills and systems, especially in big disasters where there are tons of goods and supplies to distribute. Management skills must come into play, for example, in determining what and how much is enough for each particular victim. The volume of aid also depends on the cost estimate of damage of each victim.

(f) *Lessening the impact of disaster*

Many opportunities, lives, livelihoods and property are lost during disasters. But the impact of disasters is much worse in a country like the Philippines. For example, the country spends so much on relief and rehabilitation, but spends proportionately less on raising the economic lot of disaster-vulnerable folk. **CDRC** believes that a more economically empowered community is less vulnerable to or can recover faster from disasters.

Aside from the vital elements of disaster management, there are the various tasks for each phase of the disaster:

(a) *Pre-disaster phase*

The pre-disaster phase has two sub-phases: preparedness and mitigation.

Tasks in relation to preparedness include a thorough study of the type of disaster which may hit a community and what action plans to take. Prepared with these tasks, community members can synchronize and organize their response.

More specific examples of preparation include these steps:

- (i) getting ready with **CVA** and hazard map,
- (ii) evacuation drills; and
- (iii) training or briefing on how to manage an evacuation center.

Specific examples of action include the following:

- (i) preparing a counter-disaster plan;
- (ii) readying warning device systems;
- (iii) preparing communication and transportation facilities; and
- (iv) organizing disaster response machineries.

Mitigation tasks aim to help lessen damage or loss of lives and property and displacement. Mitigation measures, if all in place, can also help cushion the magnitude of a disaster.

The following are examples of some mitigation measures:

- (i) repairing infrastructures that need to be fixed;
- (ii) building protective dikes;
- (iii) reinforcing posts of houses;
- (iv) establishing livelihood programs;
- (v) reforestation;
- (vi) establishing a system of food storage; and
- (vii) campaign and advocacy for laws to address disaster issues.

(b) Emergency period

Tasks during an emergency aim to help disaster victims recover fast and dampen the magnitude of, if not avoid, any worsening of their situation. Relief operation, for example, is done to stave off hunger and death during disasters.

Relief operation includes food and clothing aid, health aid, search and rescue, temporary shelter, first aid, evacuation, and fast repair of important facilities such as communication and transportation systems, electricity, roads, bridges and others.

(c) Post-disaster phase

Post-disaster tasks stress on how survivors can pick up the pieces, start life anew, and move on. Tasks at this stage focus on rehabilitation. Rehabilitation work stresses on economic recovery, such as livelihood programs (e.g., seed and animal dispersal, and setting up communal farms), and infrastructure and house repairs.

But there is one important point to consider: disaster survivors must actively participate in all stages of disaster management, including rehabilitation. In the process, the community's capacity (in terms of preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation) is strengthened and enhanced, and the community's vulnerability to disasters lessened.

In disaster management, community members are the primary actors. Community members, not outsiders, know best what they need most. It is they who decide what kind of help is appropriate for them. This framework debunks the general misconception that disaster "victims" are miserable beggars. It is true that disaster "victims" need outside help. But the task of decision-making (i.e., what type of appropriate help), for example, rests solely on community members. Any outside help given to disaster survivors must enable them to get on with their lives, and not to permanently depend on some

charity. Thus CDRC's management framework is basically one of helping disaster survivors help themselves.

The gauging of the effectiveness of a disaster management program is also based on this same framework. That such a program is effective can be gauged further by changes in the capacity, outlook and organizational strength of a community. There is change, for example, if a community which used to totally depend on outside help during disasters can now rely on its own capacity. Capacity includes the community's ability to prepare for disasters (via training and setting up of disaster response networks) and mobilize local resources during the three stages of disaster.

Another key element in sizing up effectiveness is whether or not there has been some change in the community folk's outlooks, attitudes and even values. After the disaster management program, for example, how do the community folk view outsiders who help out in disasters? There is some change if outsiders are not viewed simply as "donors", but as "facilitators" to help disaster survivors recover, stand on their own two feet and move on. There is some change if the community folk view disaster response as a collective responsibility of all sectors such as governmental, non-governmental and people's organizations, the victims themselves, the disaster agency and international organizations, and not the sole responsibility of just one disaster agency.

Module 4

Module 4 tackles what CDRC calls a Citizenry-based and Development-oriented (CBDO) strategy to guide community disaster response networks in their ultimate mission. This CBDO strategy asserts that in the long run, disaster response interventions, alongside the active participation of the community, can help improve the socio-economic lot of the community.

The CBDO strategy has two main aspects:

- (a) how to mobilize both the non-vulnerable or less vulnerable and the most vulnerable as partners in preparing for and responding to disasters, and
- (b) how to help the community help themselves in charting their own development goals.

The first aspect aims to enable the community to stand on its own by utilizing its own talents and resources in preparing for, responding to and coping with disasters. If both the non-vulnerable or less vulnerable and the vulnerable **fully** grasp the nature and demands of the various disasters, both can share each other's burden. Those who are less vulnerable and who have more in life (in terms of material resources, for example) can help out the more vulnerable and disadvantaged. This kind of collaboration can go beyond disaster management, and has, as its ultimate aim, the attainment of real

progress for the community or country.

The second aspect seeks to use the whole disaster management program as a way by which to help raise the local capacity of the community and thus lessen its vulnerability to disasters. Because disaster response requires active participation from the community, the community folk, in the process, are being trained to think and decide for themselves. To CDRC, the key to “people empowerment” is developing the ability and confidence of community folk to decide and chart their own development direction, which includes capacity-building programs against disasters.

But building up the community folk’s confidence to decide for themselves is not enough without disaster response machineries. CDRC cites its experience with the communities of Mount Pinatubo, a volcano in Central Luzon 70 km north of Manila.

After it erupted in 1991, Mount Pinatubo spewed out lahar (volcanic mudflow) which practically buried many communities. The community-based disaster response committees and organizations CDRC and other disaster agencies helped set up led the way in helping victims recover from the impact of the volcanic eruption.

In the face of despair and confusion, it was these grassroots machineries that led in planning and facilitating mitigation and rehabilitation programs in the affected communities.

A disaster response machinery can take the form of a community-based committee, organization, association or even simply a volunteer team. Highly trained, this community-based machinery can synchronize and coordinate local efforts to prepare for, cushion and heal the effects of disasters via an organized and systematic approach.

CDRC’S four modules under its Disaster Management Orientation (DMO) have been patterned both from the experiences of other disaster survivors overseas and from the rich experiences of CDRC’s provincial networks and field workers. CDRC, along with its 17 other provincial networks in the Philippines’ key islands, continues to conduct DMO seminars, training and workshops for community-based non-governmental and people’s organizations and community folk. The rich experiences and ideas of grassroots organizations and villagers also continue to enrich CDRC’s DMQ modules.

Aside from the DMO, CDRC has evolved similar modules for its Emergency Response Workshop and Disaster Preparedness Training which have since been used to educate community folk around the high-risk areas around Mount Pinatubo and in the island communities around the Taal Volcano in Batangas Province, also in Luzon island south of Manila.

CDRC’s modules are now easily accessible and made handy through its 80-page disaster management handbook, *Bagyo, Lindol, Bulkan at Iba Pa*

(Typhoons, Earthquakes, Volcanoes and the Like).

Participants and beneficiaries of CDRC's disaster education programs come mostly from government-neglected communities and people's organizations being served by CDRC's strategically located provincial networks. CDRC has nine networks in Luzon island in northern Philippines, five networks in the Visayas islands in central Philippines, and three networks in Mindanao island in southern Philippines. In 1996, CDRC also tapped the Catholic Church network, giving disaster education training to workers and volunteers of the Church's social action centers (SACs) and some representatives from among farmers, fisherfolk and other sectors served by the SACs.

Special training has also been designed for urban poor dwellers who suffer from both human-made and natural disasters. Urban poor dwellers in Metro Manila, who daily face the threat of demolition and are, at the same time, vulnerable to flooding and fire, for example, are given special training. Aside from the usual DMO, human rights education is also given to urban poor dwellers. They must be made aware, for instance, that their rights are protected under the Philippine Urban Poor Law. This law requires the demolishing outfit to first provide relocation sites before urban poor dwellers can be ejected from their homes.

Through the DMO, urban poor residents are also encouraged to identify their capacities and vulnerabilities. In a training program conducted in an urban poor neighborhood in Pasig City, part of Metro Manila, for example, participants identified the following as their capacities: determination and readiness to face challenges, livelihood and technical skills, operation of a daycare center, existence of roads, and active membership in people's organizations. Their vulnerabilities: absence of water supply and electricity, lack of health facilities, health hazards posed by nearby factories, dangers posed by the nearby Pasig River when it swells during the typhoon and monsoon season, and the distance from schools. Another training phase involved the participants in preparing their communities' hazard map and counter-disaster plan.

This example shows how flexible CDRC is in its disaster management programs. In areas where villagers are dislocated by militarization, CDRC also has to be creative and resourceful in employing other means. Take the case of 164 farmer families in Davao Province in Mindanao island in southern Philippines whose community a real estate developer wanted to take over in 1996.

Harassed by armed men, the residents opted to stay on their land. But they had a problem: they were restricted from going in and out of their village. Their livelihood already hampered and with armed men hounding their neighborhood, the villagers worried about their safety.

On its own, CDRC's Mindanao Field Office would have been unable to

conduct emergency relief operations under such a tight situation. Neither could it mobilize the villagers, whose community had practically been transformed into a well-guarded fortress. CDRC's only solution was to mobilize other groups in the region. In planning the actual relief operations, CDRC tapped the support of a local farmers' association, which, in turn, tapped its own networks, for the actual relief delivery operations.

Forming part of CDRC's disaster management program is its Food Security and Nutrition Improvement Program (FSNIP). The program seeks to attain for a community "sustainable, accessible, quality, sufficient and equitable food supply".

Implemented within the context of disaster preparedness and mitigation, FSNIP goes beyond sustainable agriculture and feeding projects. The program also educates community folk about the roots of "food insecurity" or hunger and malnutrition. It therefore cuts through issues such as landlessness, unequal distribution of food supply, market and trade policies, and the impact of global economic policies under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). To CDRC, these issues have significant impact on the capacity and vulnerability of community folk to cope with disasters.

But while CDRC collaborates with other sectoral groups in advocating for strategic programs such as agrarian reform to combat landlessness, the Center's FSNIP has also facilitated short-term projects in key areas nationwide to help communities become self-sufficient in food. These projects include distribution of livestock, seedlings and farming tools, provision of nursery sheds and fences, and feeding programs for severely malnourished children. Also taught are various skills such as food preservation, farming techniques, food and nutrition tips, how to manage a project, and more. All these are integrated with training on disaster management.

CDRC cites a successful pilot project in Compostela town in Cebu Province in central Philippines. Hardly provided with government social services such as health facilities, potable water and schools, Compostela's farming families earned meager incomes. The Cebu Relief and Rehabilitation Center, a CDRC provincial network, introduced to the community folk skills such as putting up a plant nursery, vegetable raising, peanut production, and raising swine and cattle.

In the community nursery, Compostela residents are encouraged to plant seedlings of various fruit-bearing trees, leguminous crops and medicinal plants. Since some of the nursery's seedlings can be sold, individual or family participants also earn additional income. The nursery also gives the community readily available seeds which they do not have to buy from commercial farm supply stores. The plant nursery's long-term goal is to help rehabilitate the

community's depleted natural resource base and sustain farm production there.

Also trained in health and nutrition, organizational management systems and disaster management, Compostela residents can now stand on their own two feet come typhoon or storm.

If there is one word to describe CDRC's disaster response and management program, it is "holistic". CDRC's holistic approach to disasters is based on its comprehensive grasp not only of the country's natural and human-made disasters, but also of the country's political and socio-economic problems which, more often than not, are the more devastating disaster.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE AND ITS ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

Since its establishment in 1984, CDRC has sought to address four main concerns: increasing poverty, natural and human-made disasters, the worsening ecological crisis and the problem of "internal refugees". (Internal refugees, as pointed out earlier in this research, refer to those who are forced out of their homes and villages because of military operations against armed rebels. Internal refugees, all innocent civilians who include the elderly, women and children, have nothing to do with the armed conflict still raging in the Philippine countryside.)

Over the years, CDRC has developed disaster management programs which seek to help raise the people's capacity in preparing for the impact of disasters and thus hasten their recovery. Any assistance CDRC extends to or facilitates for communities is always geared toward improving the beneficiaries' economic condition to help make them less vulnerable to disasters.

Its disaster management programs, as detailed above, provide beneficiaries with skills that are necessary in responding to the demands of rehabilitation work. The programs are also geared toward strengthening people's collective spirit in coping with the effects of both human-made and natural disasters.

It is in this context that CDRC envisions "a just, humane and prosperous society". Under this society, "people ... equitably share in the nation's wealth, have access to basic services, and are self-reliant; ... are free to chart the course their society takes, meaningfully participate in decision-making, and enjoy a credible government; ... pride themselves in their cultural heritage and positive values; ... enjoy the blessings of a healthy environment and abundant natural resources; and ... possess utmost capacity to cope with hazards, both natural and human-made."

Based on its vision, CDRC aims to help increase the vulnerable sectors'

capability to address the issues of poverty, environmental degradation and armed conflict. The approach toward this mission: a citizenry-based and development-oriented disaster response. How? Through the organization and development of a nationwide movement of similarly minded institutions and people's organizations.

Working within the framework of sustainable development, CDRC stresses on rehabilitative and ecologically sound interventions. Since disaster response and preparedness requires the involvement of every citizen, CDRC works with the vulnerable sectors or the marginalized who have little capability to cope with disasters because of their poverty. But it also works with the less vulnerable sectors who have the means to overcome the damaging effects of disasters. As pointed out earlier, the less vulnerable can share and tap their surplus resources in helping the more vulnerable sectors during disasters.

CDRC has five major programs and services: Field Operations; Local Partnership Development; Training and Education; Research, Documentation and Public Information; and Overseas Partnership Development.

The Center's Field Operations include assistance to regional centers during relief operations, appraisal and monitoring of rehabilitation and disaster-preparedness and mitigation projects, and consultancy and technical assistance for project management.

Local Partnership Development covers networking and campaigns, local resource generation and mobilization, and volunteer organizing.

Training and Education include the following:

- (a) development of community-based disaster management training programs and other related training curricula;
- (b) training courses on disaster management orientation, disaster preparedness and emergency response;
- (c) training support for the formation of Barangay or Village Disaster Response organizations and Committees; and
- (d) training management consultancy.

Its Research, Documentation and Public Information program focuses on research and databanking on disaster events, disaster management and on development work. Aside from coming out with publications, this program is also involved in disaster monitoring, information dissemination and advocacy.

The Overseas Partnership Development program is concerned with establishing and strengthening ties between CDRC and various international governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the rehabilitation of disaster victims.

CDRC has 17 regional or provincial networks strategically situated nationwide. It has nine networks in Luzon island, five in the Visayas islands, and three in Mindanao island.

5. PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED AND HOW THEY WERE OVERCOME

One problem CDRC encountered was the difficulty in getting funding support for victims of human-made disasters. In 1996, for example, CDRC had its hands full during the rash of demolitions of homes in Metro Manila's urban poor communities during the preparation for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit which Manila hosted. Some 10,444 shanty homes were torn down. Communities unsuccessfully contested in the courts the demolition orders and tried to defend their homes with barricades. In many cases, relief and resettlement assistance was not provided.

CDRC responded to the situation by circulating a major emergency appeal. But only two European church-based disaster support groups responded. CDRC made do with the support the two international groups extended. CDRC was able to deliver services ranging from food and non-food relief to disaster training and advocacy.

Some 2,722 homeless families received the standard food relief pack and non-food relief items like emergency shelter materials, water and kitchen utensils. All these items were based on the damage-needs-capacities assessment of CDRC and the victims. The prompt arrival of the external support enabled CDRC to respond to the victims' plight within 24 hours amid rainy weather.

But in its many years of disaster response and management work, CDRC found that response to human-made disasters was virtually nil. Most foreign donor agencies and local sources like corporations do not empathize much with demolition victims as much as they do with victims of volcanic eruptions, typhoons and earthquakes.

From this experience, CDRC thought of a way out: setting up a "standby fund". This fund is programed to help CDRC respond promptly to human-made disasters. But in the long term, CDRC has a more apt solution: educate the less vulnerable sectors of Metro Manila. By educating them, CDRC hopes that they will not hesitate to help out individuals affected by human-made disasters such as demolitions.

Another human-made disaster which hardly generates sympathy and support is the hazards caused by big commercial mining. CDRC and other advo-

cacy groups who bring to the public's attention the perils of large-scale mining have often been misunderstood. They, for instance, have been perceived as "politically inspired" groups out to sabotage the mining industry.

But CDRC found one effective way of getting to the bottom of the problem. Once in 1996, CDRC presented the hazards of big mining through a nine-day photo exhibit at a shopping mall in Makati City, Metro Manila's business and financial district. One of the photographs, for example, showed a former footbridge construction worker who has become paralyzed after suffering from aplastic anaemia because of prolonged exposure to toxic mine tailings in the Boac River in Marinduque Province in central Philippines. The province is where the Filipino-Canadian Marcopper Mining Corporation has been operating for decades. In March 1996, the company's mine tailings spilled into the river, rendering it biologically dead.

Subsequently, a rich foundation offered CDRC a space in which to display further its photo exhibit. The exhibit, which the media also featured, helped induce public opinion and debate about the Marcopper tailings. CDRC and the media, which also sufficiently reported on the mine-tailings spill, all helped in pressuring the government to make the company accountable for the damage done. Aside from suspending the company's operations, the government also fined Marcopper.

Another common problem CDRC and its regional networks often encounter in the field is the dole-out mentality of some community folk. CDRC acknowledges, however, that this problem is understandable in many communities where such dole-out mentality has been fostered even by the government.

But through sincerity and developing a good rapport with the communities, CDRC has been able to turn such a mentality upside down through its holistic disaster response and management education.

6. EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE/INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE

The practice has helped CDRC's target groups brace themselves for disasters. Because CDRC has always stressed on tapping local resources (human and material), the practice has, in a way, helped and continues to help empower communities. The practice has helped communities to stand on their own two feet.

Through CDRC's disaster education program, community-based disaster management handlers can strategize and prioritize disaster response programs. The education program has also helped reinforce traditional community values such as self-help, resourcefulness and cooperativism.

7. SUITABILITY AND POSSIBILITY FOR UPSCALING

CDRC seeks to upscale its operation through its 17 regional and provincial networks nationwide. The Center continues to expand by building new alliances at the community level. Its priority target in expansion, however, is the more vulnerable communities, which are often neglected by the government.

8. SIGNIFICANCE FOR (AND IMPACT ON) POLICY-MAKING

In a country where the government's response to disasters is by and large reactive, CDRC's disaster preparedness and management program cannot be ignored. Through a holistic disaster preparedness and management approach, the government's resources can be maximized and wisely utilized.

More often than not, millions of pesos in calamity funds end up being siphoned off through graft. These resources cannot be laid to waste if they are put to use where they should be – in the affected communities. But as CDRC's experience shows, these communities must be well-versed in disaster preparedness and disaster management. They must be well-organized. Through organized disaster response machineries, these communities can effectively demand from the government what is due to them. Once organized, they can tightly guard every cent the government allots for calamities.

The government's smallest political unit, called the *barangay* (village), which has its own set of officials, can also adopt CDRC's disaster education program. Municipal and provincial governments can actually make disaster preparedness and disaster management a permanent policy. But they must not forget one important facet: they must work hand in hand with the communities.

CDRC's disaster preparedness and management program also poses another challenge to the government: how to make community folk less vulnerable to disasters by addressing the roots of their vulnerabilities. The roots of their vulnerabilities, which are often more disastrous than **typhoons**, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, include unequal access to the country's wealth and resources and political powerlessness.

9. POSSIBILITY AND SCOPE OF TRANSFERRING TO OTHER COMMUNITIES OR COUNTRIES

The practice can be replicated in any disaster-prone community or country which lacks disaster preparedness strategies. The lack of preparedness to disasters often magnifies the impact of typhoons, quakes, volcanic eruptions and other calamities. Preparedness via education, training and organization can help save lives and property.

Disaster preparedness and management can also bring out the best in people: their leadership, managerial abilities and resourcefulness can be unearthed and put to good use. Once prepared, communities can anticipate disasters in the same way that they can anticipate the changing of the seasons.

10. OTHER COMMENTS

If there is one key element in disaster preparedness, it is, as CDRC has shown, reliance on the capacities of people. Disaster preparedness does not simply require funding and material support. Funding and material support are necessary. But it is the people's managerial abilities, creativity, innovation, outlook and values which make the real difference. This is the reason CDRC stresses on disaster education. Unless properly educated, a community will most likely put to waste, if not mismanage, enormous amounts of funds and other material support intended to help ease the pain of disasters.

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