

Prevailing over Disasters through People's Organized Action: A Continuing Engagement in Community-Based Disaster Management in Central Luzon

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INTRODUCTION

On 11 January 2004 the houses of Adelyn Ramirez and some women in the urban poor village of Baseco in Tondo, Manila were spared from burning. However, the houses of 5,000 families or some 20,000 persons were razed to the ground.

How did those in Adelyn's group manage to save their homes and a few belongings? They used mud as a fire breaker. This was a common practice in Sitio Depensa, Orion, Bataan, a coastal community in the Central Luzon province of Bataan. But this practice is not known to many and, in the case of Adelyn's group was only rediscovered by necessity and out of desperation. The fire in Baseco, a community of slum dwellers that was always vulnerable to such a disaster could have been averted had the residents been organized and able to put in place community disaster plans that included early warning signals, fire breaks, an evacuation system, resource generation, advocacy and health programs. These are some of the major activities of a Community-based Disaster Management (CBDM) program.

COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER MANAGEMENT (CBDM)

CBDM is an approach focused on increasing the capability of the communities to reduce their vulnerabilities to disaster events. The framework thus addresses the vulnerability of people on the ground, who are regarded as the main actors in the CBDM program and process. The salient features of the approach include recognizing the existing capacities of victims, encouraging people's participation, putting premium on the organizational capacity especially of vulnerable sectors – they who have less in life and so are more prone to dangers and the adverse effects of disasters. The activities of CBDM are in the areas of disaster prevention and preparedness, emergency response, mitigation and rehabilitation. It is fully integrated into the campaign of organized communities against landlessness, joblessness, and environmental destruction that makes them vulnerable to disaster and renders them less able to cope with its consequences.

Founded in 1986, the Central Luzon Center for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation, Inc. (CONCERN) adopted and developed CBDM as an approach with a corresponding program in the course of assisting calamity victims. The Mt. Pinatubo eruptions in 1991 and the subsequent destructive lahar (volcanic flows) and floods in its wake provided more opportunities to practice and further refine CBDM.

Implemented on a regionwide scale through a network of people's and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) that are closely coordinated with the government for scientific information and resource management, the CBDM, as advocated by CONCERN has helped save more lives than dole-out type relief operations. Moreover, the CBDM experiences and lessons learned in the Mt. Pinatubo disaster (eruptions, lahar flows, and later floods of much longer duration) has proven the correctness, viability, and empowering elements of such an approach.

CBDM continues to be significant. Given the unsustainable use of the environment and the widespread poverty and unemployment in agricultural and urban areas, the approach needs to take root in more vulnerable communities.

THE CONTEXT OF DISASTERS IN CENTRAL LUZON

The region lies at the heart of Luzon, one of the three major islands in the Philippines. By 2002, it accounted for 8.03 million people or

roughly 11 percent of the country's population. Considered the third smallest region in the country with 1.8 million hectares of land area, it ironically has the third biggest population (National Statistics 2000).

Four major volcanoes are also located in the region – Pinatubo in Zambales, Natib and Mariveles in Bataan, and Arayat in Pampanga. Three major earthquake fault systems rock the region in varying intensities. The long stretches of coastline on Central Luzon's eastern and western areas are prone to storm surges, heavy rains, and violent winds from the Pacific Ocean and South China Sea. The basin-like shape of the plain makes Central Luzon naturally prone to flooding.

Mountains outline the region's peripheries with some 771,174 hectares of potential forestland. However, only about 194,500 hectares are actually forested. This lopsided ratio is only exacerbated by the increasing rate of deforestation – estimated at an annual average of 4,000 hectares – that endangers forest wildlife and results in soil erosion and river siltation.

The 1991 eruptions of Mt. Pinatubo emitted some 800 million cubic meters of pyroclastic materials. Washed by strong rains from the slopes into the rivers that wind through the plains, volcanic flows as high as 15 meters drastically altered the region's landscape. Because the rivers overflowed with volcanic debris, the region has lost its natural drainage, rendering it more vulnerable to floods.

Considered one of the world's most catastrophic events in the twentieth century, lahar flows from the eruption buried and left unproductive some 385,000 hectares of agricultural lands, and changed the biological composition of thirteen rivers. Lahar flows have also claimed the lives of 2,729 people in the past 10 years, inundated more than 500 villages and triggered floods that lasted from 30 days to 6 months in the provinces of Pampanga, Zambales and Tarlac. These are the provinces at the foothills of the Zambales mountain range (otherwise known as the Western Luzon Arc) where Mt. Pinatubo lies.

Aside from disasters caused by natural hazards, the region also bears the brunt of numerous human-made disasters or a combination of natural and human-made ones such as floods, droughts, landslides, armed conflicts, development aggression, fires, red tides, epidemics, pest infestations, and pollution.

Despite the region's natural wealth, the lack of employment and livelihood opportunities renders lives no better in Central Luzon than elsewhere in the Philippines. Though the official unemployment rate remains low compared to other regions, millions of the classified "employed" are actually engaged in seasonal and contractual jobs. Added to this is the fact that the daily minimum wage of less than Php230 is less than half of the required Php534 daily cost of living allowance for a family of six.

The region has also lost some 5,918 hectares of farmland to residential, industrial and commercial uses through legal and illegal land use conversions between 1994 and 2001 (PDI 2001). This trend, which remains unchecked, affects thousands of small land-owning farmers and tenants. Then as now, this results in the phenomenon of urban migration.

More than 66 percent (5.3 million) of the region's residents belong to those considered as most vulnerable to disasters. They are the landless/tenant farmers, workers, Aetas (indigenous people), fisherfolks and squatters. They are the farmers who have no land, no equipment for production, and no control over the domestic market. They are the workers who are underpaid, have no stable jobs and suffer from unfair labor practices. They are the indigenous people who, because of poverty and the lack of access to quality education, do not participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their own lives. They are the fisherfolks and the squatters who are equally poor, homeless and without stable sources of food and income. For these people who are economically unprepared, disasters are simply part of their everyday struggle to eke a living.

Efforts by poor parents to provide education to their children as a way to improve their life status are rendered useless. Even when elementary and secondary public education is declared free, parents have difficulties paying the miscellaneous fees. Without formal education, the ability of their children to comprehend highly technical

information is diminished. They also have very limited access to information through the media. Most of the families in the remotest rural communities do not have television or radio, let alone, access to newspapers. Thus, they are frequently misinformed and thereby prone to wrong decisions or poorly-timed actions.

Dire poverty and marginalization have made it difficult for shattered families and communities to rebuild and recover in a way that might make them more resilient to a subsequent disaster. A strong case in point is the plight of the Mt. Pinatubo victims. More than a decade after the eruptions, some 40,000 resettled families transferred to resettlements continue to bear the brunt of the tail-end effects of the disaster (PDI 2001). Displaced from their farms and uprooted from their villages, these families remain in dire straits because resettlement sites are too far from the main towns and cities; there are no farmlots; and there are few basic social services as local governments whose populations have dwindled receive a lesser share in national revenues. Of all disaster-stricken towns, it is, perhaps, Bacolor in Pampanga that has suffered the most. The construction of a 56-km lahar-catching dike there occupied the site of 18 out of the 22 villages, making the return of these residents next to impossible.

Furthermore, environmental degradation has exacerbated the occurrence and impact of floods, typhoons, and droughts. Rapid urban migration, along with population

density, has driven families to embrace more risks. People are driven to erect shanties near major highways or along riverbanks, increasing the risk of mishaps. Traditional coping mechanisms are also eroded when families tend to fragment and disperse in the face of disasters.

CBDM APPLICATION IN CENTRAL LUZON

Concern is a nongovernment organization mandated to render services to disaster victims. Its mission is to assist in developing the capability of the most vulnerable sectors to pursue a people-based development-oriented disaster response (PBDO-DR).

To realize this, CONCERN has worked to form a regional network of people's organization committed to PBDO-DR. It is a network that addresses the vulnerabilities stemming from poverty, economic degradation and ideologically-based armed conflict. It mobilizes resources and rallies its constituency to mitigate the effects of disasters on its victims. It is a network whose understanding of its framework deepens and whose capability for giving life to such a framework develops in the course of actual disaster response. What emerged from this effort were the Grassroots Disaster Response Mechanisms (GDRMs) organized into a single network that spans the Central Luzon provinces.

As an institution, CONCERN has three programs. The first is the Disaster Preparedness Program (DPP)

which aims to develop the capability of both organized and unorganized communities. The two major components of DPP are Education and Training. These are aimed at raising disaster awareness, building skills in disaster response management and organizing the formation of Grassroots Disaster Response Machineries (GDRMs). The DPP assists in the drafting of Disaster Response Plans through the conduct of Disaster Response Management–related trainings, drills and resource generation at the grassroots level. The second is the Emergency Response Program (ERP). This provides immediate relief services to disaster-stricken communities. Through the program, CONCERN coordinates or cooperates with other organizations, institutions and agencies for relief delivery operations, medical missions, stress-de-briefing sessions, evacuation assistance and rescue operations. Other support services include disaster monitoring, information dissemination, volunteer mobilization, resource generation and advocacy of the victims’ plight and related issues. The third is the Rehabilitation Program. This aims to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to intervention in areas where the GDRM has attained the capability for organized action. Organizing support, skills training, livelihood assistance, and environmental regeneration comprise the program’s holistic intervention in the communities.

In its 17 years of operations, CONCERN has evolved from simply a relief institution into a comprehensive disaster management center. This

development has passed through several phases or stages: first, a responding-to-actual-disaster events framework from 1986 to 1989; second, a community-based development-oriented framework from 1990 to 1997; and lastly a shift to a people-based development-oriented framework from 1997 to the present.

A. Responding-to-disaster-events framework, a reactive approach

From 1986 to 1989, CONCERN’s services included relief operations to 9,433 families affected by typhoons and floods and assistance in the evacuation of 5,215 families affected by armed conflict. In the aftermath of emergencies, CONCERN implemented small-scale rehabilitation projects such as agricultural support (palay seeds and vegetables), credit, children’s educational assistance, irrigation and animal dispersal to 1,189 families. In these responses, CONCERN was guided by a framework of “responding to disaster events” instead of addressing the vulnerabilities of the people. Its limitations were:

- The services focused on providing relief services to victims to address their immediate needs and subsequent rehabilitation projects aimed at ensuring that victims were able to cope economically from the effects of disasters;
- CONCERN carried out the emergency response, with staff conducting data gathering, packaging of relief, identifying of beneficiaries and other logistical requirements – the victims were merely recipients of relief goods;

- Small-scale projects were coordinated with people's organizations (POs) without doing an assessment of their organizational and management capabilities, resulting in many POs experiencing difficulties in managing and sustaining the project, and even at times contributing to existing organizational problems; and
- Other sectors were not fully mobilized to help the disaster victims; CONCERN relied mainly on projects funded by international and local donors.

While it cannot be denied that such responses benefited disaster victims, CONCERN realized the strategic limitations of adhering to a framework of "responding to actual disaster events". This framework was found unsustainable and lacking in the values of participation and accountability. As it merely employed a "dole-out" approach, it also overlooked the significance of building the people's own capabilities through disaster preparedness.

B. Addressing vulnerabilities at the grassroots, local, regional and national levels (1990 to present)

In 1990, CONCERN was among the proponents of a national network of disaster response centers to uphold the *Citizen-Based and Development-Oriented (CB-DO) DM* orientation. The CB-DO is premised on the capability building of the vulnerable sectors. It encourages broad grassroots participation and a sustainable developmental approach, which

establishes pro-active, holistic and preventive response rather than palliative measures. It believes in the inherent capability of the communities to prevail over disasters. It seeks the realization of organized communities capable of changing their lives, mastering their conditions and charting their future.

It was in the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo that the CBDO framework was tested and developed. First, the people of Central Luzon were unprepared for disasters especially with the magnitude of the Mt. Pinatubo's eruptions. CONCERN's institutional programs were inadequate to serve the thousands of affected people.

Taking up the challenges, CONCERN developed the concept of grassroots disaster response machinery (GDRM). These units are mandated to immediately respond in the advent and aftermath of disasters and address their effects on the community by generating and mobilizing available resources and capacities inside and outside the community. The capacity of the GDRM is built along more comprehensive community concerns and the realization that vulnerability is rooted in the socioeconomic condition of the people. As such, capacity building for disaster response entails socio-economic empowerment.

By 1996 or five years after the Mt Pinatubo's eruptions, CONCERN carried out an evaluation of its practice over the last decade. The result was the adoption of a People's Based

Development Oriented (PBDO) principle to replace the Community Based Development Oriented (CBDO) one. PBDO places emphasis on increasing the capabilities of the most vulnerable sectors and emphasizing that disaster response is not the sole work of CONCERN. Disaster response is actually a movement characterized by people's organized actions aimed at vulnerability reduction.

Organizing communities for vulnerability and risk reduction is crucial in all types of interventions because organized communities can better launch development initiatives. People at the grassroots level have inherent but limited capacity. What they need is to be assisted in identifying their potentials and resources and in formulating procedures to mobilize them. With functional organizations, people can better study their problems, plan out their moves, make use of their limited resources and eventually gain from it.

CBDM PRINCIPLES AND CASE STUDIES*

1. DM work is not only the responsibility of the institution. DM work is an integral part of the cause of people's organizations. Disaster response management can be best pursued when done in collaboration with various stakeholders – people's organizations, support institutions such as CONCERN, individuals and private agencies.

This approach has resulted in the formation of a disaster response network (DRN) at the regional and at the provincial levels in Pampanga, Zambales, and Tarlac. Acting as the secretariat of the DRN in the regional level from 1992 to 1996, CONCERN rendered relief operations to 217,597 families, trained 3,528 people, and provided rehabilitation support to 5,494 families from different sectors. In churches, offices and schools, it campaigned for help and solicited mainly relief items like canned goods, used clothes, mats and other kitchen utensils.

Trained by CONCERN, the provincial networks composed of people's organizations implement the entire DM work through their secretariat. The secretariat unifies the POs on DM orientation. The provincial DRN helps in formulating disaster preparedness plans, organizing GDRMs, disseminating information, delivering goods, conducting resource generation, implementing rehabilitation project and advocating for relief, rehabilitation and resettlement at the provincial and regional level. The concerted effort is effective in addressing the needs of the victims. However, the sheer numbers make the work daunting.

In 1997, CONCERN spearheaded the formation of the Oplan Sagip Bayan (OSB), a national coalition against the La Niña phenomenon in 1998. It comprised a little less than 50 NGOs, church organizations, academic organizations as well as hundreds of individuals. The resources (goods, funds, volunteers) mobilized

by this coalition were directed to relief operations, sandbagging work in immediately threatened villages, advocacies through the media and disaster preparedness training in Luzon, including Dumagats in remote Quezon province. Before the services were rendered, CONCERN unified the coalition to undertake the tasks along the PBDO framework. The OSB continues to render services.

In 2001, CONCERN assisted its partner, the Zambales Disaster Response Network in information dissemination and disaster preparedness orientations in Barangays San Juan, Paudpod, Carael, Batonlapoc and Bangan in Botolan. The threat of lahar flows burying these villages loomed as government proceeded to breach the crater-lake of Mt. Pinatubo and release water that would mobilize lahar downstream. Barangay-level GDRMs were immediately formed with strong linkages to existing community leadership structures. The GDRMs were able to respond to the impending threat of lahar and flashflood. They linked up and conducted dialogues with municipal officials for mitigation measures. The municipal council provided 500 sacks for the sandbagging operation in Barangay Baytan, which was located at the upstream portion of the Bucao River.

At the onset of the rainy season, the GDRMs actively monitored the situation in their respective barangays. They were able to set-up an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Batonlapoc. The GDRMs on the other hand, assisted barangay leaders

in the identification of evacuation sites and the listing of evacuated families. For lack of funds to provide adequate food assistance and because the worst-case scenario predicted by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology did not eventuate (happen), local government advised families to return to their villages.

2. DM work gives premium on organizing the people and building their capability to prepare for disasters. This is the core of addressing people's vulnerabilities. By organizing the people through the formation of Grassroots Disaster Response Machineries, they are given the strength to cope and recover against the impact of disasters, and eventually address the underlying problems of their vulnerability that include poverty, landlessness, homelessness, unemployment, low income and disempowerment.

During the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, a community-based course for Disaster Preparedness and Evacuation Center Management was designed and conducted in 120 communities. The trainings resulted in the formation of 113 grassroots disaster response machineries.

The GDRMs through its warning committee in Manibaug Libutad in Porac, Pampanga – (considered as one of the high risk areas for lahar flows) warned residents that the water level at the creek was rising and that they should prepare for evacuation. They blew their whistles and immediately mobilized the foot patrols that

contacted households. They informed the residents of the impending danger, instructed them to leave their houses and to gather at the marketplace or a school building that had previously been identified during the disaster preparedness training. A few hours later, a one-meter high lahar claimed houses upstream, while lahar of two meters tall buried the houses downstream. However, no one was killed or hurt.

But the GDRM concept also suffered setbacks during its formative years. GDRMs formed without adequate linkage to people's organization that already existed in communities fizzled out after the actual disaster event. To address this, CONCERN ensured that GDRMs were next formed as committees within the PO structure. In areas without POs, the organizational skills of GDRMs leaders were strengthened.

3. In the course of building people's capabilities, DM work initiates advocacy campaigns for the reduction of vulnerabilities and for accessing services. Advocacies for a sustainable environment vis-à-vis local occurrences of deforestation, river siltation, and mangrove destruction were pursued. Advocacies for welfare services include resettlement, relief assistance and rehabilitation (seeds, potable water, etc.) Leaders were encouraged to mobilize their constituents and their resources to generate public opinion or influence local policy-making bodies to effect life-nurturing policies and measures.

The network actively campaigned for the relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of Pinatubo victims. By 1996, the advocacy campaigned against the usufruct scheme in which the victims are required to pay for lots and houses. The scheme was shelved, and in 2003 the government started issuing land titles to the settlers (PDI 2003). However, this process has moved so slowly that it required another campaign to press for the swifter distribution of titles.

4. The program is integrated because it applies different but complementing strategies and approaches at any point within its duration. It seeks to address both the short and long-term needs of communities, assisting in the defense of local resources and environment as the people's livelihood base through advocacies. Concretely, this program is an integration of the three main strategies applied by the institutions namely, disaster preparedness through organizing and training, emergency response, which includes health services, and rehabilitation which includes small-scale and multicomponent livelihood projects.

The project in Masantol, Pampanga began with relief assistance. A year later, the Emergency Response Committee evolved into a people' organization covering ten barangays. It has addressed concerns relating to floods and other problems confronting the communities.

Flooding has worsened over the years in Masantol and in the nearby towns of Macabebe, Calumpit, and Apalit in the aftermath of the Mt. Pinatubo eruptions. This can be observed in the greater occurrence of floods despite moderate rains, floodwater levels that reach an average of two feet after only moderate rains and four feet after heavy downpours, and the occurrence of a longer period of inundation that can last for as long as more than six months. These detrimental developments can be partly attributed to the destruction of the remaining mangrove forests. Coastal villages have been stripped of their natural defense against the battering waves of Manila Bay and rendered more vulnerable to erosion. Through the years, due to salt intrusion and frequent flooding, many people have shifted from rice farming to inland aquaculture to raise prawns and crabs or do a combination of both simultaneously.

CONCERN held relief operations in the ten flood-affected barangays of Masantol in August 2002 in the aftermath of typhoon "Gloria." The project assisted 1,000 families. Because residents were involved in assessing the situation, on who needed help most, what help was most needed, and how this help should be offered, the participatory process led to the formation of a municipal-wide GDRM in Masantol. Even during an emergency response, CONCERN tapped the inherent capacity of the victims. In Palimpe, the Emergency Response Committees held sandbagging activities so that 300

children could resume classes. The initiative paved the way for the local government to cement the sandbagged structure.

The *Sagip Cabalen ning Masantol* (Save the People of Masantol), as a municipal-level GDRM, managed to get five potable pumps after they campaigned for safe drinking water. It also called for dredging to improve the drainage capacity of the river. It launched a *bayanihan* (working together) activity for sandbagging and pushed the town's vice mayor, who heads the local legislative body, to pass a resolution protecting the remaining mangroves.

5. Women's role in disaster management is important and it needs to be enhanced. Being half of the population who take up most of the domestic concerns as their principal responsibility, women have much to share in carrying out community-based initiatives at disaster management. They should be given venues to express and develop their leadership potentials so they can have more significant participation in the development process.

Barangay Saluysoy-Pandayan is a squatter's community along the dilapidated railway in Meycauayan, Bulacan. It is part of the so-called *Daang Bakal*, connected to other communities by a long stretch of railway tracks previously operated for public transport by the Philippine National Railways. The squatters together with the other similar communities in Daang Bakal have been

declared public land and the residents as illegal occupants or “squatters”. However, without places to move to, families are forced to remain despite the many threats of demolitions.

The project assisted in the formation of a ‘railroad-wide’ GDRM with a functioning leadership structure. It conducted a disaster preparedness training attended by 19 selected community leaders. Thirteen (13) of these participants were women (65%). The GDRM conducted contingency planning for disaster response, hazard mapping, dialogues with barangay officials regarding road development and with provincial officials regarding demolition, a community-wide Operation Clean-up, and herbal preparation training. The project also helped form the Barangay Fire Brigade (BFB). The BFB initiated a 12-hour monitoring during the dry months of March until May to prevent any fire hazard. The GDRM gathered resources to support the BFB by providing bread and coffee to members on patrol. There had been several attempts to burn down the community but these have been prevented because of the sustained monitoring of the BFB.

In March 2002, a fire broke out in another squatters’ community some 500 meters away from Saluysoy-Pandayan. Overcoming parochial concerns, leaders of the GDRM helped in the rescue and evacuation of some 400 of the affected families. They assisted the local government unit in identifying and preparing evacuation sites. They initiated an appeal on behalf of the affected families for relief

assistance. In less than a week after the fire, the GDRM was among the first to conduct relief delivery operation but since the resources were not enough for the 400 families, they prioritized those who were most in need. After CONCERN’s relief delivery, other organizations and local government followed.

6. The genuine participation of disaster victims in all aspects of disaster management is at the core of successful intervention. The people are the primary forces or stakeholders whose future relies mainly on their own decision and determination to pursue DM. The actual participation of the people is best expressed in their involvement in decision-making. The role of NGOs is to guide them and unite them around particular principles. Different views should be encouraged to come up with better judgment and resolution on certain issues.

Barangay Sta. Isabel is a rural village in the central portion of Dinalupihan town in Bataan. Considered one of the poorest communities in the fourth-class town, the community is located on a low-lying plain surrounded by privately-owned tracts of agricultural lands that were previously tilled for sugarcane.

About five hectares of the village has been declared under dispute by the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office (MARO). Three different clans claim ownership of this land which is part of a 20-hectare property that had been left idle for two decades. The disputed land unfortunately has been the home

and source of food to 48 families for several years. Faced by the possibility of eviction since 1998, the residents organized themselves and formed the *Balikatan ng Mamamayan (People's Cooperation)* to assert their tenure to the land.

In July 2000, immediately after typhoons "*Ditang*" and "*Edeng*" left Sta. Isabel under four feet of water for several days, CONCERN conducted a DNCA (*Damage-Needs-Capacities Assessment*). CONCERN discovered that more than 20 families that had been evacuated at the height of the typhoons were forced to return because of inadequate space at the evacuation site. After the rains, some of the families chose to remain on their roofs rather than go elsewhere. The urgency of providing food and medicines prompted CONCERN to include Sta. Isabel in the top priority for relief assistance.

CONCERN assisted by helping form a Disaster Response Committee or GDRM, instructing the community in the step-by-step procedure of emergency response, and helping them systematize their operation. The residents organized a DR Committee under the leadership of *Balikatan* instead of creating another structure. Through the leadership of *Balikatan*, members of the DR Committee helped CONCERN identify the needs and enumerate the beneficiaries. They also prepared the program and technical requirements of the relief delivery operation.

Through the project, local people gained knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness, health

management and herbal plant preparation. They initiated monthly communitywide cleanups of the waterways; procured medicines, rubber boats, life vests and canned foods; and accessed water pumps as a source of potable water.

When typhoons "*Reming*" and "*Seniang*" hit Central Luzon in November 2002, the community was relatively well-prepared. They were equipped with monitoring gadgets, ropes, medicines, rescue/evacuation facilities and a stockpile of canned food. They also identified and prioritized the most flood-prone areas for evacuation. Through these initiatives, the community suffered less from the flood, which remained for three days at the height of the typhoons. Despite the number of families needing to evacuate their homes, no personal property was damaged as these had been earlier transferred to safer places.

Even after the project had ended, CONCERN sustained its support to *Balikatan* by helping in the campaign to remain on the disputed land. It also supported the local PO on its disaster mitigation campaign concerning a proposed dike system. In June 2001, while the project was in progress, CONCERN designed a livelihood project seeking to improve income. The proposal was submitted to the Small Grants Programme of the New Zealand Embassy. It was approved for implementation in January 2002.

7. Capability building for organizational strengthening and project management is crucial

to project sustainability. Project success cannot always be effectively measured in terms of achieving project objectives as designed but rather in terms of how effectively the local people and their organization have undergone the process of achieving the project objectives.

CONCERN, in line with the PBDO framework developed an Integrated Program for Development (IPD) for Aetas in the upland communities of Batiawan and Malipano in Floridablanca, Pampanga. The IPD, by design, strengthened the capacities of the people's organization through socio-economic empowerment. The program resulted in the reforestation of 10 hectares in upland areas of the villages, the training of 50 adult Aetas in functional literacy and numeracy, and access to potable water to less than 100 Aeta families. Besides the benefits from livelihood projects and social services, the program also facilitated the long-lost unity between the Aetas and the upland settlers against whom they harbored negative feelings as "land grabbers". Through the program, they began to cooperate. Guided by the program, the local PO then campaigned against land grabbing and illegal logging in their communities.

CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES

The CBDM guided by a people-based development-oriented (PBDO) framework is both comprehensive and integrated. It is comprehensive because it not only tackles the

aftermath of disasters as well as their onsets but also the entire range of disaster response work. It gives utmost priority to assisting vulnerable communities to prepare for the onset of any disaster event in the context of addressing their vulnerability and building their capacity to manage disasters. It involves the provision of relief assistance as well as the important task of extending knowledge, skills and opportunities for the resumption of economic activities that can help people rebuild their lives. It is essentially pro-active and is not content with mere stopgap measures or reactive interventions.

But there are challenges as well. First, there is a need to lobby for a government legislation to create an independent body or structure for disaster management. The increasing occurrences of disasters and the dire lack of comprehensive DM work necessitates the creation of that body with year-round work.

Second, it is high time for government and funding donors to give emphasis to disaster prevention, preparedness, and mitigation instead of relief assistance. Actual engagement in disaster management (DM) is hampered by the lack of knowledge and expertise on it. There remains a dearth of development NGOs involved in DM work either through services or advocacy of disaster-related issues. Most NGOs involved in disasters only tackle the relief aspects of the work and there are only a few NGOs engaged in comprehensive DM let alone in the training and development of DM

practitioners in communities, schools, areas of work, and even within government.

Third, the five percent calamity fund should be confined to services such as relief and other preparedness activities. In South Cotabato, the calamity funds were reportedly being used to hire three companies of CAFGU (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit) to fight against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Although armed conflict is considered a human-induced disaster, scarce funds should not be allocated for services that effectively increase the

military budget which already consumes a large share of the budget. DM practitioners should look into how local governments use calamity funds (Business World 2003).

Lastly, CBDM should be integrated into the programs of the people's organizations so as to save more lives. These organizations can identify the hazards, mobilize the people, advocate for services and reforms and work with barangay disaster coordinating council (BDCC). To date, the DM networks in the Philippines are still composed of NGOs and private groups.

NOTE

* Taken from materials of CONCERN (n.d.).

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