



# Lessons from Community-Led Actions for Strengthening Disaster Resilience: A Case from the Philippines

Image source: DAMPA

## Key Messages

- Community-based women's organizations effectively used risk mapping to build their capacities and strengthen the relationship between communities and local government. Community risk mapping helped to identify priorities, reach consensus, and deepen local understanding of disaster resilience.
- Concrete action on community resilience priorities in the form of livelihoods resources, delivery of social protection, and infrastructure improvements were achieved as a result of organized women's groups negotiating directly with local government.
- Community-based disaster risk assessment, combined with dialogue and partnerships with the local government, delivered a demand-driven approach that captured the complex and interrelated resilience issues of communities—i.e., land tenure, waste management and livelihood resilience—often overlooked by planning processes.
- Dialogues between community-based women's groups and the local government enhanced the groups' capacities for influencing public decision making and led to their recognition by the national and local government as reliable partners in social protection programming.

## Background

This project demonstrates how women's groups in communities acutely vulnerable to disasters effectively led disaster risk assessment and priority setting to build a deeper understanding of disaster resilience and priorities among local communities and with the local government. The project is one of a number of similar pilot programs recently funded in Southeast Asia by the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Integrated Disaster Risk Management Fund and executed by civil society organizations<sup>1</sup>.

This initiative led by Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api, Inc. (DAMPA), a federation of community-based organizations from 242 communities across the Philippines, was implemented in five barangays in Metro Manila and five Barangays in the municipality of Tanauan in Leyte province. Manila is regularly impacted by typhoons and tropical storms, which are increasing in incidence and severity in the region. Communities regularly experience flooding and were severely affected by typhoon Ondoy (international name Ketsana) in 2009. In Tanauan, coastal communities are still recovering from livelihoods losses caused by the devastating typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) in 2013, responsible for widespread deaths and destruction in Leyte province.

In the Philippines, the Local Government Code (Republic Act 7160) 1991 and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (Republic Act 10121) 2010 provide a strong institutional framework for planning and resourcing development and disaster resilience at the local level. Implementation of this framework, however, is patchy as institutions and capacities, particularly at the barangay level, remain weak and there is no clear path for ensuring community perspectives and priorities on disaster resilience are integrated into the wider development planning process.

## The Project

The project sought to demonstrate the leadership of community-based women's groups in integrating community disaster resilience priorities into local development programs in collaboration with the local government. It also aimed to position community-based women's groups as knowledgeable actors through networking and peer learning processes that rapidly transferred practical knowledge.

This project is part of a larger initiative implemented in the Philippines and Indonesia funded by ADB and facilitated by the Huairou Commission (HC), an INGO that works to empower grassroots women's organizations. The HC provided strategic management for the project, including learning, networking, and overall monitoring activities. In the Philippines, the project was implemented by Damayang Maralitang Pilipinong Api, Inc. (DAMPA). This federation of women's community groups is a member of the HC and works with urban and rural communities across the country. DAMPA coordinated, facilitated, and supported member groups in the National Capital Region (NCR) and Leyte to implement a series of key activities summarized in Figure 1.

<sup>1</sup> The Integrated Disaster Risk Management Fund established by ADB in 2013 and supported by the Government of Canada aims to assist the development of disaster risk management solutions for ADB's Southeast Asia developing member countries. The objectives of the pilots were to support innovative gender focused community-based solutions to strengthen resilience.

## Key Achievements

- Community-based women's groups effectively used community risk mapping to mobilize and educate communities in disaster-prone urban and rural settings to advocate for their disaster resilience priorities. Local barangay officials collaborated on community risk mapping, supplementing and endorsing community information on vulnerable households.
- In dialogues with government, the groups successfully employed risk assessments and resilience plans as evidence-based tools to gain access to resources and integrate community resilience priorities in local development plans, programs and budgets.
- Dialogue and partnerships with government officials at multiple levels helped DAMPA groups to access capacity building support and financial resources (as well as upgrade infrastructure to address disaster-resilience priorities) from barangay, municipal and national government.
- Improving waste management to reduce flood and health risks emerged as a common priority across many communities. To address this, DAMPA collaborated with the local government on clean-up drives and organized multi-stakeholder workshops to inform communities of waste management and recycling practices.
- Community-based women's groups were recognized as credible partners by government institutions. The Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) requested DAMPA to identify beneficiaries for a cash-for-work programs. The municipality of Tacloban agreed to partner with DAMPA in identifying beneficiaries for livelihoods programs and requested the organization to support in selection of beneficiaries for a crop insurance program.

Figure 1



Source: Huairou Commission 2016

- On-going advocacy in informal settlements in Manila was strengthened through the knowledge gained from community risk mapping. Ultimately, this advocacy resulted in a decision to relocate 200 households.
- Peer learning workshops within the Philippines exposed new groups to risk mapping and disaster resilience practices. The learning exchange with Indonesian women's groups helped DAMPA women learn several new practices to advance disaster resilience—including waste recycling, waste banks, rice banks and aquaponics—and allowed DAMPA women to transfer their savings, organizing, and advocacy strategies.

## Lessons Learned

Community-based women's organizations effectively used disaster risk mapping to build their capacities on disaster risks, build relationships with the local government, and advocate for the integration of community disaster resilience priorities in local development.

Organized communities can scale up and transfer effective practices as demonstrated by the community women's groups' ability to raise awareness on disaster risks, as well as transfer resilience practices across communities.

Both the national and local government have recognized organized communities as valuable partners who can effectively undertake beneficiary identification for government social protection programs.

Community-based disaster risk assessment and the identification of resilience priorities have to be accompanied by dialogue and negotiation opportunities to establish a more demand-driven approach to resilience planning and wider development planning.

In addition to promoting community disaster resilience priorities, dialogues between community-based women's groups and the local government were also capacity-building opportunities that enhanced women's understanding of how to influence public decision-making.



Source: DAMPA



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