



Ha Pagtindog han Bungto:¹ Improvising Local Governance and the Use of LDRRMFs in Yolanda-Ravaged Leyte and Eastern Samar

PERLITA M. FRAGO-MARASIGAN

ABSTRACT. This study examines local disaster responses in Palo, Leyte and Balangiga, Eastern Samar, which were the towns hardest hit by super typhoon Yolanda in November 2013. Using qualitative research methods and a policy framework that focuses on the top-down implementation of Republic Act 10121, this study examines disaster management responses and improvisations made by local government officials as first responders in these two municipalities. Despite the proactive nature of the law and the presence of the local disaster risk reduction and management funds (LDRRMFs) to address disasters, responses of these two municipalities were still largely improvised and reactive giving the impression that said funds were inaccessible or underutilized. This study reconstructs and compares activities done before, during, and after the devastation in these two municipalities, and presents lessons learned.

KEY WORDS. disaster · crisis emergency · improvisation · local governance · Yolanda (Haiyan) · Leyte · Eastern Samar

INTRODUCTION

When disasters of unimaginable proportions strike, what mechanisms are in place to ensure the safety and protection of local communities in the Philippines?

The unimaginable did take place on 8 November 2013. Super typhoon Yolanda, internationally known as typhoon Haiyan, made its landfall in the Philippines affecting the Eastern Visayas region. It stayed only for a few hours but, the damages it caused were daunting. According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), as of 17 April 2014, Yolanda took 6,300 lives, left 28,689 injured, and 1,061 missing, with damage to properties worth PHP 89,598,068,634.88.²

When Yolanda left the Philippine area of responsibility, the international community and non-governmental organizations donated hundreds of millions of dollars worth of humanitarian disaster relief assistance. It is worthwhile to examine local government response in the aftermath of Yolanda. How did Palo and Balangiga respond to Yolanda? What were the improvisations made by local government units? How did these municipalities utilize their local calamity funds?

Vulnerability

Of the 173 countries around the world, both the World Risk Reports of 2012 and of 2013 show that the Philippines ranks third among the most vulnerable with a risk index of 27.52 percent (ADW, UNU, and UB 2013, 9) The risk index is measured taking the following into account:

. . . in the four components of exposure to natural hazards such as earthquakes, cyclones, floods, droughts and sea level rise, susceptibility depending on infrastructure, nutrition, housing conditions and economic framework conditions, coping capacities determined by governance, preparedness and early warning, healthcare, and social and material security, and adaptive capacities relating to the future natural events and climate change. (ADW, UNU, and UB 2013, 6)

This implies that the Philippines is likely to witness disasters of this kind. While this may not be a comforting thought, studying disasters and reinforcing governance mechanisms that are in place and improving coping capacities of our people may provide better roads to recovery.

This study aims to reconstruct the events that transpired shortly before, during, and after Yolanda hit Palo in Leyte and Balangiga in Eastern Samar—two of the most devastated municipalities along Yolanda's track. It also aims to document improvisations made by local government officials as plausible ways of coping with inaccessibility or underutilization of local calamity funds. This study does not seek to relate improvisation with utilization of funds but tries to examine the presence of these two practices when Yolanda happened.

Disasters

There are various studies on disaster. A handful of these studies discuss the conceptual, theoretical, and characteristic features of disasters (Bose 1994; Furedi 2007; Sementelli 2007; Shaluf 2007). For instance, Bose (1994) discusses disaster in its myriad political forms.

Bose asserts that there is politics in disasters and looks at disasters in terms of a process involving “who gets what and how much” (Bose 1994, 119). He recognizes that disasters can be politicized for they attract not only media but publicity seekers. According to him, what is assumed as outpouring of support may actually be political than humanitarian and that politics occurs most especially in the distribution of international disaster relief assistance (Bose 1994, 120). On the other hand, Furedi adopts Carr’s definition that disasters exist only in the presence of injuries, deaths, and serious losses (Carr 1932, cited in Furedi 2007, 483). Furedi (2007, 483) adds that nowadays, disasters are seen as “events that would be associated with human action and the cause would be perceived as that of human irresponsibility or malevolence.”

There are case studies pertaining to countries hit by specific natural disasters (e.g., Shaw 2006; James 2008; Aldrich 2011). Some studies focus on disaster management and government responses at the regional, national/federal or local levels (e.g., Loh 2005; Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2010; Col 2007). A plethora of studies specify the need to use a community-oriented/based, multi-stakeholder approach to disaster management (Jahangiri, Izadkhah, and Tabibi 2011; Bankoff 2007; Said et al. 2011; Patterson, Weil, and Patel 2010; Boshier et al. 2009; Bawagan et al. 2015). Among these the different issues (e.g., building resilience) and challenges (e.g., overcoming vulnerability) concerning disasters have been highlighted (McEntire 2012; Oloruntuba 2005). David McEntire (2012) provides a number of ways by which vulnerability can be defined. He classified these definitions along three “areas of convergence” (McEntire 2012, 207): vulnerability as “proneness or liability” (*ibid.*); vulnerability as “capacity or capability” (*ibid.*, 208); and vulnerability as a “dual concept” associating it with both proneness and limited capacity (*ibid.*, 209). Anchoring his study on the dual approach to vulnerability, McEntire finds its underlying causes to be mostly “physical or social” (*ibid.*, 210). According to McEntire, some causes of vulnerability can be classified as physical. These factors include “the location of human settlement,” the “construction of buildings,” and “technology” (*ibid.*). On the other hand, he sees “people’s attitudes, politics, demographic patterns and economic conditions” as examples of social factors that cause vulnerability (*ibid.*, 211-12). McEntire identifies those who are likely to be vulnerable. These are “the aged, young and women,” “minorities and some ethnic groups,” “some government agencies, local and state government organizations,” “communities,” and “nations” (*ibid.*, 213-14).

IMPROVISATION

Improvisation is frequently discussed in the literature concerning emergency management and adaptive governance. A very useful article focuses on improvisation using various examples derived from the Israeli policy-making landscape. In their study, Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch (2000) discuss the necessity of improvisation in the Israeli case. The authors provided several examples of improvisation in areas where it was observed and resorted to. The authors note that improvisation becomes “a way of coping within bounded rationality” (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000, 322). The authors also aver that improvisation may also be seen as a “cultural artifact” when cultures prefer “a spontaneous, improvised managerial style” to the more rational and methodical formal planning style in decision making (ibid.). Furthermore, they see scarcity of resources as a major determinant that pushes policymakers, administrators and managers alike to “improvise ways of stretching the limited means” (ibid.). According to these authors, improvisation may also be resorted to in order to prevent conflict, to deal with tension and to maintain the peace (ibid.). The authors propose the idea that decision makers tend to improvise when they cope with economic stress. This kind of improvisation takes place in the context of rapid change and limited resources which may be in the area of financial administration (ibid., 324).

In an essay reflecting on the 9/11 attacks, Tierney presents the inevitability of improvisations by indicating that as “disasters become larger and more complex, routinized organizational roles and even disaster plans give way to improvisation, as it becomes increasingly evident that those earlier expectations and guidelines no longer apply” (Tierney 2016, fifth paragraph).

Kendra and Wachtendorf (2006) aptly raise the necessity of improvisations. In their paper, they argue that “improvisation is a distinct capacity that individuals and groups employ, and that while planning encompasses the normative ‘what ought to be done,’ improvisation encompasses the emergent and actual ‘what needs to be done’” (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2006, 1). The same is observed by Howitt and Leonard (2006) who see the necessity of improvisations especially in responding to “crisis emergencies” (Howitt and Leonard 2006, 217). According to them,

‘crises’ require quite different capabilities from ‘routine’ emergencies. In crises, responders must first quickly diagnose the elements of novelty (e.g.,

in New Orleans, the need for assisted evacuation, the likely consequences when the levees failed, and the unexpected use of the convention center for sheltering immobile refugees). Then they need to improvise response measures adequate to cope with the unanticipated dimensions of the emergency (e.g., quickly procuring vehicles for evacuation, rescuing stranded residents and restoring water and power, and providing food and law and order in an unprepared shelter). (Howitt and Leonard 2006, 217–18)

Weick (1998) and Fossett (2013) present alternative views on improvisation. While Weick looks at “all management” as improvisation (Weick 1998, cited in Kendra and Wachtendorf 2006, 3), Fossett describes improvisation as “ad hoc, uncoordinated and reinvented from scratch” (Fossett 2013, first paragraph). He believes that the road to recovery is through a more coordinated and long-term approach rather than through improvisations that have been the approach of the American local governments to disaster recovery. Both of these views deny the importance of studying crisis or emergency management situations which precludes the possibility of finding best practices that may be replicated in the future.

This study looks at Yolanda as a “crisis emergency,” (Howitt and Leonard 2006, 217) by virtue of it being regarded as a category 5 super typhoon, the strongest, thus far, that ever hit the country. As such, it necessitated emergent responses as improvisations. It assumes that every disaster, especially of such magnitude and complexity like Yolanda, presents new and unique problems that are unprecedented and hence, may necessitate improvisations. It documents local governance improvisations in the context of possibly weak institutional mechanisms and scarce resources. This becomes relevant especially because the socioeconomic impact of disasters cannot be overemphasized in disaster-prone countries like the Philippines.

This study hopes to contribute to strengthening governance measures that will not only maximize the adaptive capacities of local government units (LGUs) toward a holistic and long-term approach to disaster risk reduction and management. By examining situations—never contemplated before Yolanda—wherein the LGUs, the state’s first responders to affected communities during times of disaster, were themselves severely affected and yet, were able to provide ways of addressing their immediate problems, this study can also show possible weak spots in the existing law and policies that structure access and disbursement of the local disaster risk reduction and management fund (LDRRMF).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs primarily qualitative methods of data collection. The research progressed in three phases: pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, and post-fieldwork. The first phase involved intensive library research and document analysis concerning the law, policy, and local governance structures and dynamics. The research team also attended a conference to gather materials and networking resources in preparation for the fieldwork. On 7 April 2014, a pre-validation workshop was organized to gain further insights from selected experts and informants. The following shared information, observations, and insights on their area of expertise: a) Carmencita Delantar, Department of Budget and Management representative, b) Kristin Roxas, disaster risk reduction and management officer from the Marikina City, c) Professor Jocelyn Cuaresma, local government specialist from the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines (UP), and d) Prof. Emmanuel Luna, community development professor from the UP College of Social Work and Community Development.

In the second phase, the research team conducted fieldwork from 9 April 2014 to 9 May 2014 for data collection and cross-validations of views of key informants. A series of semi-structured interviews with a total of thirty-one key informants (sixteen municipal officials and fifteen *barangay* [village] officials) were conducted in Palo, Leyte and Balangiga, Eastern Samar on various dates in respective municipal halls, barangay offices, and residences (see appendix). The views of municipal key informants were cross-validated with the responses of the barangay key informants. Data were validated further using document analysis.

In the post-fieldwork phase, after debriefing and some discussions with the research team, the interviews were transcribed from June to July 2014. Thereafter, coding and preliminary data analysis were done in the month of July. Data analysis was completed in the months of July and August. The planned validation through a roundtable discussion in the field did not push through for lack of time and due to some administrative problems. The results of the study were presented in a public lecture on 7 November 2014.³ The three reactors/discussants were from the academe, a nongovernmental organization, and a local government unit in Metro Manila. These reactors were the following: Dr. Kristoffer Berse, assistant professor, UP National College of Public Administration and Governance; Dr. Fouad Bendimerad, Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative; and Dr. Val Barcinal,⁴ disaster risk reduction

and management officer of Marikina City. They all provided their comments on the research and shared their insights drawn from their respective engagements.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The researcher initially wanted to focus more on the actual utilization of the LDRRM funds but certain problems were encountered during the data collection process, including: unavailability of actual documents and supporting documents for the analysis of fund utilization that could validate the data gathered during the interview, and the sensed reluctance to share some financial data with the researchers.

The research team was not able to gain access to fundamental documents to substantiate the financial angle of the study for two reasons: 1) some financial data/reports were damaged due to the flood and; 2) the researchers were not given access to supporting documents containing the receipts.

THE PHILIPPINE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT ACT⁵

In 2010, Republic Act (RA) 10121 was signed into law. This statute enables local government units to have greater flexibility in disaster management. The law revolves around the idea that disaster management follows a cycle, namely: disaster mitigation, preparation, response, rehabilitation, and recovery.

The law enables LGUs to utilize a minimum of 5 percent of their internal revenue allotment (IRA) for disaster risk reduction and management, which is an improvement on the previous budget allocation for a calamity fund. Of the said fund, 30 percent is marked as quick response fund (QRF) to address expenses concerning relief and recovery, the remaining 70 percent is categorized as mitigation fund. The law also gives disaster management a proactive nature because it places more emphasis on mitigation and preparedness measures rather than on disaster response. It highlights the bottom-up approach to disaster management by giving more importance to strengthening the capacity of people to anticipate and cope with disasters and provides suggestions on how to improve coping mechanisms and build resilience of the communities in the process. It allows for the immediate release of calamity funds. Furthermore, the law defines and allows contingency

planning to anticipate emergent situations, which implies room for improvisations.

The Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council

In the Philippines, there exist two tiers of government that perform hierarchical and coordinated functions, the national and the local. RA 10121 delineates disaster risk reduction and management in terms of its national and local dimensions. Local includes the province, the city, and the municipality. The Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council at the municipal level is called the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (MDRRMC). While the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council guides disaster risk and reduction management efforts in the country, the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council/MDRRMC oversees implementation in its respective area of jurisdiction.

The MDRRMC⁶ is a multimember body headed by the mayor of the municipality as chairperson. The said council is composed of the following: different department heads of the municipality, division head/superintendent of schools of the Department of Education, the highest ranking officer of the Philippine Army who is assigned to the area, the municipal chief of police, the municipal fire marshall of the Bureau of Fire Protection, the president of the Association of Barangay Captains, the Philippine National Red Cross, four accredited civil society organizations, and a representative from the private sector.

As specified in the law, the officer tasked to coordinate all activities in times of disaster is the municipal disaster risk reduction and management officer.

The Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Funds

Apart from the immediate release of calamity funds, a major innovation in the law is the idea that local calamity funds shall be “not less than 5 percent of the estimated revenue from regular sources” (RA 10121). This means that the local government unit (LGU) is free to increase the calamity funds allocation so long as it can afford to do so. Funds which will not be utilized shall be added to a special trust fund for the next five years. Beyond five years said unexpended fund shall revert back to the general fund.



Figure 1. Map of Palo, Leyte. *Source:* Map by Mike Gonzalez from Wikimedia Commons.

Financial Profile (as of 2012, in PHP)

IRA Share: 82,087,943.00

Local-Sources Revenues: 7,601,900.66

Other Revenues: 87,578,254.56

Total LGU Income: 177,268,098.22

Source: Local Governance Performance Management System 2014a.

WHY PALO AND BALANGIGA?

Case study selection was based on the NDRRMC data on totally damaged houses reflecting areas that were hardest hit by the super typhoon. This determinant is perceived as the clearest and most straightforward indicator of areas that had been hardest hit by Yolanda. NDRRMC data were then examined against National Statistics Office data on the number of households to get the estimated percentage of totally damaged houses with the highest number of households. After which, municipalities in both provinces were ranked. Palo in Leyte and Balangiga in Eastern Samar yielded the highest percentage of totally damaged houses.



Figure 2. Map of Balangiga, Eastern Samar. *Source:* Map by Mike Gonzalez from Wikimedia Commons.

Financial Profile (as of 2012, in PHP)

IRA Share: 41,407,249.75

Local-Sources: 3,710,954.86

Other Revenues: 1,740,390.75

Total LGU Income: 46,858,595.18

Source: Local Governance Performance Management System 2014b.

Palo, Leyte⁷

The Municipality of Palo is located along the area of San Pedro Bay and is 12 kilometers southeast of Tacloban City. It is a third class municipality with thirty-three barangays wherein twenty-five are considered rural while eight are urban.

It is bounded by Tacloban City to the North, San Pedro Bay to the east, the municipality of Sta. Fe to the west and Tanauan to the south.

As of 2014, the three most populated barangays of Palo, Leyte are Guindapunan (5,504), Pawing (4,217), and Baras (3,537). These three barangays were chosen for cross-validation of facts obtained from Palo municipal officials.

Balangiga, Eastern Samar⁸

Balangiga, Eastern Samar is a fourth class municipality located at the southern part of the province of Eastern Samar and is 80 kilometers from the highly-urbanized City of Tacloban. Balangiga is bounded by the municipalities of Llorente and Gen. McArthur to the North, the municipalities of Quinapondan and Giporlos to the east, Lawaan to the west and San Pedro Bay to the south.

Of the thirteen barangays in Balangiga, the three most populated are Sta. Rosa (1837), Poblacion VI (1750), and Poblacion I (1707). These populated barangays were chosen for cross validation of findings from interviews with Balangiga municipal officials.

SUPER TYPHOON YOLANDA

Based on the situation report no. 108, issued by the NDRRMC, this is the official chronology of events on the path taken by Yolanda:

6 November 2013–Yolanda entered the Philippine area of responsibility from the eastern side of Mindanao.

7 November 2013–Typhoon Yolanda became stronger and moved towards the Eastern Visayas region.

8 November 2013–The typhoon made its landfall over Guian, Samar at 4:40 a.m., moved towards Tolosa, Leyte at 7:00 a.m. and towards Daanbantayan, Cebu at around 9:40 a.m.

9 November 2013–Typhoon Yolanda left the Philippine area of responsibility towards the West Philippine Sea. (NDRRM 2014, 1)

The super typhoon made its first landfall in Eastern Samar. Balangiga residents felt the typhoon past four o'clock in the morning of 8 November 2013. Two hours later, it hit Palo with the same tenacity and gustiness of the wind. The following is a narrative of what transpired in these two municipalities.

Balangiga

When Yolanda came, Mayor de Lira of Balangiga was in Manila. He said that he attended an important meeting and had to stay there despite the news of a super typhoon. So he gave instructions to municipal

heads for the welfare of the Balangiga community. Prior to his trip to Manila, the mayor appointed as officer-in-charge, Councilor Gayda, who was a nurse by profession. The mayor also designated as MDRRM Officer (MDRRMO), Engineer Inting who concurrently heads the Engineering division. Upon hearing that a super typhoon was approaching, MDRRMO Inting called the council for an emergency meeting on 6 November 2013 to identify tasks that should be done in preparation for the typhoon. He felt that all they had to do was to implement a resolution on forced evacuation and to purchase foods and relief goods for the evacuees. He was confident that evacuation would proceed like clockwork because people in their municipality had been so used to typhoons. However, he himself did not evacuate his family because, as an engineer, he was confident that the foundation and structure of his house was strong.

As the MDRRMO mentioned in the interview, his main concern was where to buy food and relief goods for the evacuees. The mayor advised him to buy the food in Giporlos, a contiguous municipality of Balangiga. The problem was that the municipal office did not have enough funds to buy relief goods. To address this urgent concern, the first week salaries and the thirteenth month bonuses of the municipal council members were withheld and used to buy food and relief goods for the evacuees.

According to the witnesses interviewed in Balangiga, Yolanda was a super typhoon like no other. There was small amount of rain but tremendous wind. The evacuation centers were not able to accommodate all of the evacuees so some of them went instead to the municipal building. The municipal building not only became a temporary shelter for evacuees, it also served as a "hospital" for the wounded. Councilor Gayda, the officer-in-charge, in his capacity as a nurse, treated the people who were wounded during the typhoon. The municipal hall functioned as an operations center where they repacked relief goods.

Meanwhile, the mayor rerouted his flight to Cebu hoping that Ormoc was not hit. But he was wrong. Ormoc was hit and he was stranded there for one day. On Sunday, he tried to hire and hitch several rides. He saw the devastations in Tanauan, Tacloban. In Tacloban he saw numerous dead bodies. From Tanauan he spent roughly around PHP 10,000.00 from his pocket to take a ride in a truck and a *habal-habal* (motorcycle taxi) to Balangiga. Finally, he was able to reach the municipality on Monday. He knew that the scarcity

of food would be the number one problem of the evacuees. Unfortunately, there was no food nearby. The relief goods that they bought from Tacloban prior to the typhoon were damaged in storage. The mayor himself drove a truck in order to purchase rice and other supplies using promissory notes. Unfortunately, according to the mayor, the National Food Authority in Borongan refused to give rice on loan despite the urgency of the situation.

Palo

According to Vice Mayor Reposar, he was in his house in Barangay Arado when the super typhoon arrived at around 6:20 a.m. For some time, the vice mayor said that the wind was so strong that the walls appeared to be breathing and he had to hold on to the door knob. Not before long, the roof was blown away. When it was over, though his hand was injured, his main concern was his family and relatives who live in other places. He went out and saw the destruction. According to him, roads and landmarks disappeared; there were uprooted trees, debris, and dead bodies all around. According to Reposar, he headed toward the municipal hall and went up the mountains of debris, but he had to go back because some areas were not passable.

In the meantime, newly-installed MDRRMO Ritchie Gilang recalled that at least two days before the typhoon, he warned the residents along the coastal areas to evacuate because of a “storm surge” that, unfortunately, he understood only vaguely. He said that he reiterated the warning that Yolanda would be a strong one, a super typhoon, but he only mentioned the possibility that there could be rising water. He was able to evacuate some, but most of them were stubborn and had to be forced to evacuate. He admitted that he did not evacuate his wife and newborn baby because he underestimated the strength of the typhoon. When Yolanda came, he was at the municipal hall, together with the mayor and all other officials and division heads. Heavy rains and strong winds came. Windows were shattered and they had to hide in a small room inside the mayor’s office for protection. He said that all the while his mind was on his family that stayed in his house. For him, it was the greatest mistake of his life. Had he known that it would be a very strong typhoon, he would have evacuated and secured his family first.

All throughout the typhoon, municipal officials concurred that the mayor of Palo was on top of the situation. Heads of divisions of the municipality of Palo commended their mayor who, despite her being

a septuagenarian, stayed with them at the office. The mayor organized a team and made the municipal hall the chief operating center. She created a disaster response team so Palo officials were prepared. Medicine and food supplies were prepared and purchased in Palo. Unfortunately, some of the supplies that were stored in Tacloban as a standby were washed out by the flood. Palo officials bought food and supplies through negotiated and direct procurements and waived the bidding. The Palo mayor just signed and provided these stores some IOU notes. According to the vice mayor, they organized a community watch and there were volunteers in the aftermath of the storm to ensure the security of the Palo community.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN PALO AND BALANGIGA

Before discussing specific disaster management activities that transpired in Palo and Balangiga, it is necessary to define specific stages of the disaster management cycle. The following definitions were taken from the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2013-1 of the NDRRMC, Department of Budget and Management, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (2013) to highlight the differences among prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery phases.⁹ First,

[d]isaster Prevention—refers to outright avoidance of adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters. It expresses the concept and intention to completely avoid potential adverse impacts through action taken in advance such as construction of dams or embankments that eliminate flood risks, land-use regulations that do not permit any settlement in high risk zones and seismic engineering designs that ensure the survival and function of a critical building in any likely earthquake.

Disaster Preparedness—the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions. Preparedness action is carried out within the context of disaster risk reduction and management and aims to build the capacities needed to efficiently manage all types of emergencies and achieve orderly transitions from response to sustained recovery.

Disaster Response—the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce negative health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs

Table 1. Disaster preparedness activities of LGUs in Palo and Balangiga

Activities	Palo	Balangiga
Conduct of planning sessions, training, seminars, workshops	✓	✓
Creation of an office for disaster preparedness	✓	–
Designation of MDRRM Officer	✓	✓
Creation of disaster response team	✓	–
Purchase of equipment and supplies	✓	✓
Construction of disaster prevention (e.g., infrastructures and other projects)	✓	–
Passage of ordinance(s), resolution(s) for local generation of calamity funds	✓	–
Passage of ordinance on forced evacuation	–	✓

Source: Based on various interviews as listed in the appendix.

Note: The symbol check (✓) means the interviewees mentioned the activity, while the dash (–) indicates that the interviewees did not mention it.

of the people affected. Disaster response is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called “disaster relief.”

Post Disaster Recovery—the restoration and improvement where appropriate, of facilities, livelihood and living conditions of disaster-affected communities, including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors, in accordance with the principle of “build back better.”

How Did Palo and Balangiga Prepare for Yolanda?

The following sections examine preparedness activities in both municipalities.

Table 1 presents the activities conducted by both Palo and Balangiga local government officials in preparation for Yolanda.

Planning was an essential component of disaster preparedness efforts in both Palo and Balangiga. According to the Balangiga mayor, they had to attend workshops and seminars before they could produce their distinct MDRRM Plan. Efforts to tailor-fit the said plan started in Balangiga as early as 2011, a year after the enactment of RA 10121.¹⁰ Mayor de Lira also mentioned that they attended various seminars in preparation for the crafting of the said plan. The Palo vice mayor also understood the disaster management plan as something that just had to be implemented and that they could not deviate from.¹¹

When news about Yolanda came out, key informants attested to the conduct of meetings to plan for the coming typhoon. The

Table 2. LGU activities right before super typhoon Yolanda in Palo and Balangiga

Activities	Palo	Balangiga
Conduct of meetings right before the typhoon	✓	✓
Creation of MDRRMC operations center	✓	–
Delegation of tasks to municipal officers	✓	✓
Preparation of cooked food for the evacuees	✓	✓
Purchase of food, relief goods, materials, supplies, first aid kits	✓	✓
Acceptance of disaster relief goods	✓	✓
Issuance of Letters instructing businesses to make purchase of sacks of rice from NFA	✓	–
Coordination between municipalities and barangay officials especially in flood prone areas	✓	✓
Request for additional relief goods	✓	–
Designation of evacuation centers	✓	✓
Forced evacuation	✓	✓
Designation of OIC	–	✓
Monitoring and tracking of the typhoon	✓	✓
Coordination with other offices outside of the municipality	✓	–
Information dissemination about the typhoon through going around barangays providing a written bandillo (announcement) and oral announcement using a megaphone	✓	✓
Provision and distribution of food in the evacuation centers	✓	✓
Accessed calamity funds	✓	✓
Resorted to other sources of funds	✓	✓

Source: Based on various interviews as listed in the appendix.

Note: The symbol check (✓) means the interviewees mentioned the activity, while the dash (–) indicates that the interviewees did not mention it.

development and planning officers of both municipalities claimed that they held planning sessions in preparation for the super typhoon in their respective local government units.¹² According to Cabaltera, two days before the coming of Yolanda, the Palo mayor called a meeting to create an MDRRMC operations center and to constitute a disaster response team that would be organized along thematic and functional concerns (such as food, budget, etc.). Similarly in Balangiga, Inting said that as concurrent MDRRMO, he had to call a meeting with the rest of the MDRRMC members two days before Yolanda made its landfall

to determine their plan of action and to buy food for the evacuees. Inting also said that the council would just implement the Balangiga ordinance on forced evacuation.

Besides conducting planning sessions, both municipalities also did budget prioritization, had sent their representatives to trainings, seminars, and workshops on disasters, purchased equipment and supplies, and passed resolutions and ordinances pertinent to disaster management. Budget priorities differed based on their perceived needs. In the case of Palo, purchase of megaphones, flashlights, raincoats, and boots were prioritized. In Balangiga, apart from the purchase of paraphernalia for rescue, such as spin boards, helmets, floatation devices, rope, hazard maps, and others, the local government also deemed it necessary to buy fire trucks. Ordinances and resolutions passed were also different.

The Palo municipality had a more specific strategy to address the typhoon apart from its creation of a disaster response team with clear tasks and responsibilities. According to the Palo municipal treasurer, the Palo Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council, now the MDRRMC, even way before Yolanda, was able to pass through the municipal council an ordinance for an additional PHP 2.00 payment for every transaction at the municipal hall. This tax goes to the disaster fund of the municipality.¹³ Palo also had disaster prevention measures such as a barangay resolution enabling barangays to solicit funds from provincial agencies for the construction of seawalls. Other projects include: declogging of drainage and national-funded repair and cleaning of Palo creeks. Balangiga, on the other hand, focused more on forced evacuation and converted the municipal office into a temporary shelter where they could treat the wounded.

Table 2 shows activities right before Yolanda that included: 1) meetings and assignments of tasks; 2) cooking food for the evacuees; 3) purchase of relief goods; and 4) forced evacuation. In Palo, municipal officers spearheaded the preparation of cooked food. While barangay tanods and health workers cooked the food for the evacuees in Balangiga.

Activities During the Typhoon

During the super typhoon, the activities in both municipalities consisted of the following: 1) assisting some people who did not evacuate in moving to safer grounds (Palo and Balangiga); 2) monitoring

Table 3. Post-Yolanda activities of LGUs in Palo and Balangiga

Activities	Palo	Balangiga
Retrieval of bodies	✓	✓
Actual counting and monitoring of number of casualties	✓	✓
Provision of First aid, health services, medical supplies	✓	✓
Acquisition of medicines and medical supplies	✓	✓
Preparation of food	✓	✓
Distribution of relief goods	✓	✓
Purchase of additional relief goods	✓	✓
Clearing operations of debris and waste materials	✓	✓
Burying of the dead	✓	–
Repacking of relief goods	–	✓
Conduct of meeting(s)	✓	✓
Coordination with other officials	✓	–
Declaration of state of calamity	✓	✓
Provision and distribution of basic resources (e.g., water, food, fuel)	✓	–
Acceptance of donations	✓	✓
Creation of assistance programs and relief coordination	✓	✓
Imposition of curfews	✓	–
Communication with various levels of government	✓	✓
Inventory of available resources and damages	✓	–
Recording of donations	✓	–
Attended seminar on disaster prevention and rehabilitation	✓	–
Cash for work livelihood program	✓	✓
Dealt with administrative matters in their respective localities (e.g., inventory of properties damaged and financial reports)	✓	✓
Passage of Yolanda-related resolutions/ordinances	✓	✓
Resumption of businesses	✓	✓
Payment of bills	✓	✓
Reliance on root crops and biscuits for food	–	✓
Assembled constituents for some announcements	✓	✓
Borrowed equipment like the back hoe	✓	–
Procurement of construction materials for the reconstruction of infrastructure	✓	✓
Purchase of lot/property for temporary relocation	✓	–
Submission of reports/retrieval of documents	✓	✓

Source: Based on various interviews as listed in the appendix.

Note: The symbol check (✓) means the interviewees mentioned the activity, while the dash (–) indicates that the interviewees did not mention it.

(of the typhoon, checked on the people) (Palo and Balangiga); 3) preparation of food (Palo and Balangiga); 4) evacuation (Balangiga); 5) provision of first aid (Balangiga); and 6) finding higher grounds for the new tsunami alert (Palo).

How Did Palo and Balangiga Respond to Yolanda?

As can be gleaned from table 3, both localities are steeped with activities in the aftermath of the typhoon. Note that some informants mentioned activities that may be classified in the other phases (i.e., recovery and preparedness) of the disaster management cycle.

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN BOTH MUNICIPALITIES

There were a number of problems encountered in both municipalities of Palo and Balangiga. The following were problems common in both local government units.

Inaccessibility of Quick Response Funds

Both municipalities experienced problems unique to their particular environment and context, and at the same time faced similar concerns in their respective localities despite their differences.

Based on the interviews, there were fund-related problems that emerged in Palo. The immediate concern was to buy disaster relief goods for the evacuees. However, the calamity fund was not readily accessible. Hence, the municipal officials were prompted to pay for initial expenses and just reimbursed them. There were no banks in Palo at the time when this research was conducted. The banks were all located in Tacloban, which was badly hit. In addition, when Yolanda hit the area, banks were also closed. The Palo mayor just issued IOU notes that served as guarantees for later payments of purchased goods. Stores only provided improvised notes as receipts after Yolanda, which made it difficult for documentation of purchases made by the LGU. Inaccessibility of LDRRM funds, particularly the QRF, was also a problem cited by municipal officials in Balangiga. The Balangiga bank account was located in Borongan at the time. Another concern that was raised was that the QRFs are in checks, thus, there was no cash ready. As can be expected, some of the documents used for audit were lost to the flood.

Fortunately, the Commission on Audit gives due consideration to local government units under a state of calamity. During these times when immediate action is necessary, regular rules of procurement and bidding may not be observed. Under Article XVI, Section 53 (b) of RA 9184, negotiated procurement is allowed:

(b) In case of imminent danger to life or property during a state of calamity, or when time is of the essence arising from natural or man-made calamities or other causes where immediate action is necessary to prevent damage to or loss of life or property, or to restore vital public services, infrastructure facilities and other public utilities; (RA 9184)

According to an informant from the Commission on Audit, these LGUs are not expected to submit the reports for auditing right away. Fund utilization in disaster situations is unique in a sense that local government units face no constraints in terms of on-time submission of reports and attachment of supporting post-audit documents, like receipts.

Difficulty in Evacuating People

Casualties in Palo were relatively higher compared to that in Balangiga. The MDRRMOs and some barangay officials of both municipalities attested to the difficulty in evacuating the people along the coastal areas. Key informants in the Palo community cited the following as reasons behind the difficulty in evacuating people:

- *Cultural predisposition.* Some people in Palo said that if they leave their houses and evacuate, their houses would be destroyed.
- *Underestimation of the typhoon.* There was a calm before the storm so no one anticipated Yolanda would be that strong. The people had been used to typhoons and thought that Yolanda was just like the other storms that they were able to overcome. Some people were simply stubborn and hard-headed and even hid at the height of the pre-emptive evacuation.
- *Lack of scientific knowledge.* Some did not understand the meaning of a storm surge. Even the Palo MDRRMO said that though he monitored the movement of the typhoon he did not fully understand the technical aspects of the

news. He noted his lack of complete understanding about the ramifications and implications of a “storm surge.” Hence, the “bandillo” or warning only intimated the “possibility of rising water levels” and failed to communicate the tsunami-like effect of a storm surge.

- *Security reasons.* While women evacuated prior to the storm, males stayed behind to guard their houses. A barangay captain in Balangiga, for example, could not leave his five sewing machines for fear that they would be stolen.
- *Confidence in the structure of their houses.* Some thought their houses would withstand the typhoon because they were made of concrete.

Lack of Adequate Preparation

Despite having respective MDRRM plans¹⁴ in both municipalities, specific problems experienced by communities during and in the aftermath of the typhoon revealed inadequate planning and preparation. For one, the people were shocked by the magnitude of the typhoon that they could not take action immediately. The message of a “storm surge” was not expressed and comprehended adequately by the people concerned. Most of them lost their proofs of identity like their birth certificate and identification cards to the typhoon. Secondly, disaster relief assistance that the LGUs prepared was not enough. Balangiga municipal officers had to buy food in nearby localities outside of Balangiga in the aftermath of the typhoon. In Palo, the heavy flood washed away the warning system device and most of the supplies and food that they had stored at the airport for the evacuees. Stored gasoline only lasted for a few days. There were about 1,200–1,300 households and around 1,500 families but only fifty sacks of rice were available. Even the National Food Authority could not respond to the Balangiga demand of 200 sacks of rice; only 100 sacks of rice were given. Evacuees outstripped the food supply. Thirdly, the evacuation centers were not sturdy and high enough. Aside from these unanticipated problems, the overwhelming number of casualties necessitated the Palo municipality to look for alternative burial sites. The Palo cathedral grounds, for example, served as mass graves. The LGU did not have any heavy equipment or loaders for clearing operations. As a fourth class municipality, municipal officials maintained that they did not have enough money to purchase disaster preparedness equipment. Finally,

many became homeless because their houses were destroyed yet, there was no contingency plan for relocation.

Lack of Communication and Coordination

There was no power supply, hence, network communications were down at the height of the typhoon. There was no means of contacting people. Some municipal officials in both Palo and Balangiga were in Manila when it happened. Some barangay officials in Balangiga did not know that they were members of the barangay DRRMC.

Institutional Problems

While Palo officials noted the presence of security and looting problems in the aftermath of Yolanda, it was attributed to the fact that most of policemen were victims themselves. Balangiga officials mentioned the lack of an institutionalized MDRRM office. The MDRRMO of Balangiga and another official noted the problems of not having an institutionalized MDRRM office and an MDRRMO as reasons for the inadequacy of disaster risk reduction and management. At the time of the research, there was no formal provision for an MDRMM officer because of the absence of qualification standards as verified in the Civil Service. Although there is a ruling that an LGU can create the position and the qualification standards, there is a personal services cap that limits the ability of LGUs to hire a permanent person for the position of the municipal disaster risk reduction management officer.

IMPROVISATIONS IN PALO AND BALANGIGA

Before discussing different improvisations in these two municipalities, it is worth noting how the local chief executives of these municipalities differ in many ways. In the context of disaster management, leaders matter for they are the ones who allow improvisations.

The Palo local chief executive is a senior citizen, a matron-politician who belongs to a political family and who had a strong network of business and political friends at the local, regional, as well as, the national levels. She had been a congresswoman for three years and governor for nine years, which contributed to her vast leadership experience. As governor, she was provincial coordinator for the disaster provincial council. She has strong connections across tiers of government. In fact, at that time, one of her sons was the governor of

Leyte and the other a cabinet secretary. Meanwhile, the vice mayor is a lawyer with previous experience working for a nongovernment organization. They both demonstrate a hands-on leadership style.

On the other hand, the Balangiga mayor is fairly young and lived a corporate life before assuming office. He has a dominant personality and is quite proactive in establishing networks in the business community. He believes in community empowerment. He was out on a fund-raising business trip in Manila when the typhoon came. He was on his last term as mayor, as such, he finds relative difficulty in dealing with the newly elected municipal council and barangay officials who come from the opposition party.

Improvisations in Palo

To address inadequate funds for disaster relief, the Palo municipal treasurer mentioned that there was no more bidding; they just purchased goods directly. For about ten days, they were on their own. The mayor just signed for items and goods from the stores, the payments were given later. According to some witnesses, the mayor spent her own money to purchase some disaster relief goods and then had it reimbursed later. The bidding process was waived so they just went through negotiated procurements, direct procurements, and direct negotiations with contractors. The budget had to be realigned to buy certain properties for shelter and to buy food. The Palo municipal council penned a resolution giving the mayor omnibus or total authority to enter into any memorandum of agreement with any donors or sponsors as long as it was for Yolanda-related rehabilitation and recovery initiatives.

Despite the damaged warning system devices and communication facilities, some officials mentioned that the level of flood water was communicated through text messages. The movement of the typhoon was monitored in social networking sites through mobile phones. Palo and other municipalities communicated through radio.

The security and looting problem was addressed by organizing a community watch organized by the vice mayor of Palo. The vice mayor also drafted an executive order for the mayor declaring curfew and putting up checkpoints so that whoever violated this executive order would be detained for security purposes, especially if that person was not from Palo. This was announced to the barangays through a bandillo. This practice was replicated in other barangays. Nearby

provinces like Davao, Surigao, and Southern Leyte sent additional police to address the security problems.

To address the inadequate gasoline supply in Palo, the local chief executive negotiated with a councilor who owns a gasoline station to have his gasoline station fixed in exchange for the sole utilization of gasoline for the LGU. The same improvisation was resorted to by the local chief executive when she had the least damaged rice mill repaired and supplied gasoline for its operation in exchange for free milling of rice grains so that the barangays would have a steady supply of rice.

In the aftermath of the typhoon, the vice mayor organized community relief operations and told the communities not to wait for LGU assistance nor depend on them because everything was destroyed. He initiated an inventory and documentation of survivors, casualties, and damages. He prepared data for assessment purposes. These data became the basis for the prioritization of barangays that needed assistance the most. Later on, his office forwarded all these data to the national government. He drafted a handwritten resolution declaring a state of calamity in Palo.

The Palo cemetery was full of rubbles so the church grounds served as an alternative burial ground.

Improvisations in Balangiga

The inaccessibility of funds for purchase of disaster relief goods was addressed through improvisation. The salaries and year-end bonuses of municipal council members were withheld temporarily for the immediate procurement of disaster relief goods prior to the coming of the typhoon. Year-end bonuses were paid/reimbursed through the 70 percent mitigation fund from the LDRRMF after the typhoon.

The municipal office served as an evacuation center. As earlier mentioned, some municipal officials multitasked. The municipal engineer was designated as MDRRMO, while Councilor Gayda acted as officer-in-charge because the mayor was in Manila when the typhoon came. Councilor Gayda also served as a nurse to treat some of the wounded evacuees that were inside the municipal hall. After the typhoon, the government reimbursement expense receipt forms were used in the purchase of goods. To expedite procurement, the mayor himself did the actual purchase of sacks of rice in the aftermath of the typhoon. The municipal office centralized disaster relief goods distribution and supplied the potable water needs of the community.

ANALYSIS

In this narrative focusing on two municipalities, it can be gleaned that though there were plans designed initially to address disasters, not everything proceeded as planned. This is because Yolanda was not just another typhoon. Howitt and Leonard (2006) describe this kind of disaster aptly as a “crisis emergency” whose “novel features may result from threats never before encountered” and whose novelty would require “different capabilities from ‘routine’ emergencies” (Howitt and Leonard 2006, 217). Given the unique circumstances that they were in, both sets of municipal officials resorted to improvisations such as donating their salaries and bonuses for the purchase of disaster relief goods in Balangiga and the shelling out of personal funds in the case of Palo. Both municipalities were not prepared but managed to address immediate problems by virtue of their own improvisations. Actors in both municipalities resorted to role and process improvisations. Palo and Balangiga provided ad-hoc and creative ways of responding to financial constraints during the typhoon. Palo’s mayor drew funds from her pocket and negotiated with business owners who were willing to cooperate with the municipality to centralize the supply of resources (i.e., fuel and rice mill) to the constituents. Palo’s vice mayor had to get medicines from his mother’s pharmacy and initiated the actual counting of casualties and estimation of the damages. The Balangiga mayor did the actual purchase of additional sacks of rice. Palo barangay heads utilized their personal tricycles to bring victims to evacuation centers during the preemptive evacuation phase. Council members volunteered their businesses (fuel, hardware) for the rehabilitation phase. Balangiga could not withdraw the QRFs and the LDRRFs cannot be accessed because the bank is in Borongan, the provincial capital. The municipal council members loaned the municipality their first week salaries and thirteenth-month pay bonuses. While role improvisations and process improvisations can be seen in both cases, it is interesting to note that more improvisations were resorted to in Palo.

It is interesting to note that both municipalities did not have a permanent MDRRMO, nor were MDRRM offices institutionalized at the time when Yolanda happened. Hence, much of the disaster responses emanated from the respective offices of the mayor. There were also turnovers of power to newly-elected barangay level officials, giving them only a short period to adjust to the demands of their positions. The designated MDRRMOs had different backgrounds. One was a political science graduate, the other was an engineer. They

did not have the technical expertise to handle disaster situations. The Palo MDRRMO just assumed the position in the first quarter of 2013 after being a *kagawad* (council member) of another barangay. The Balangiga MDRRMO multitasked and had been preoccupied primarily with his main responsibilities as engineer. But he knew the vulnerabilities of each barangay. However, they were not the ones who called the shots. They merely followed orders. Both MDRRMOs were also not able to or did not evacuate their own families.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study attempted to reconstruct the specific activities that preoccupied hardest hit municipalities before, during, and shortly after the onslaught of Yolanda in the municipalities of Palo, Leyte and Balangiga, Eastern Samar. Admittedly, this study relied heavily on the memory of key informants. Nevertheless, the study reveals that the improvisations that took place in both municipalities were clearly initiated and driven by the local chief executives in both municipalities.

What lessons can be drawn from these cases?

Super typhoon Yolanda resulted in various interrelated problems, ranging from lack of food, clothing, and decent shelter to sleep in to related community and health issues such as looting and illnesses. Further studies that will document more cases to show the interrelatedness of problems and threats experienced by these vulnerable communities during the typhoon will highlight the need for a more coordinated response to address them.

The presence of improvisations may imply the lack of adequate preparation. Although improvisation skills are important, they also imply a lack of planning and preparation for disasters. However, improvisations may be seen as coping strategies, too. Careful analysis and further comparison of case studies can be done to record and map practices of improvisations that may be worth replicating. After all, improvisations are necessary to address urgent needs and unanticipated events. Most of the time, improvisations depart from existing practices because of the novelty of situations (Howitt and Leonard 2006, 217).

Responders are victims too. What is clear from this study is the fact that in the two municipalities, local government officials acted as heroes though they were victims as well. Despite the promises of the law to make communities better prepared in times of calamities, in actuality, the communities still heavily relied on the wisdom, directions, and resources of their local government officials. However, these

officials were not exempted from the destruction of Yolanda. While they were required to provide answers to the problems of the communities, they themselves had to overcome their own problems as their houses were also destroyed and their relatives also became victims of the typhoon. Disasters, like super typhoon Yolanda, required them to think out of the box. There is room to conduct more studies evaluating retooling and training programs for first responders whether or not these will equip them with adequate knowledge to make them cope and respond adequately to emergency situations.

Leadership qualities and experiences of local officials matter. Disasters create unique problems each time and no municipality can be too prepared for a disaster. Third and fourth class municipalities, like Palo and Balangiga, respectively, definitely benefited from having experienced local chief executives with unique leadership qualities and ample knowledge to deal with serious phenomena such as disasters. Though both municipalities had plans and contingency plans, local government officials still had to rely on improvisations. When disasters happen, local governments are usually left on their own during the first few days; hence, it is important for local government officials to be able to think fast and to act fast. Local government officials with experience have an edge in terms of solving related problems and in improvising management. Sometimes, some events require creative and out-of-the-box responses. Leadership matters especially in times of crises. More studies focusing on leadership in times of disasters ought to be conducted.

Teamwork is very important. So is community empowerment. As can be gleaned from this study, careful planning is needed. Top-down planning, meaning ideas coming from the national government, has its advantages. However, addressing super typhoons requires a hybrid approach and necessitates more active involvement from below. It is important to maximize all resources and to empower communities in order to make them more prepared. In both cases, by virtue of tradition or force of habit, the residents generally wait for their leaders' instructions. Palo communities utilized to their advantage the power of teamwork. This could be replicated even at the barangay levels in order to maximize efforts to address problems. If possible, teamwork and community empowerment should be created and sustained further in preparation for typhoons of the same magnitude. However, it is important for local camps, especially in Balangiga, to overcome partisanship and to recognize that disaster responses ought to transcend political colors and biases. It would be helpful to conduct further

studies on these municipalities and other vulnerable communities to document best practices at the height and in the aftermath of the typhoon to find traces of community empowerment in these vulnerable communities.

Designated MDRRM offices, when not institutionalized, handle purely ministerial tasks. As in both cases in Palo and in Balangiga, respective “MDRRMOs” multitasked and were assigned to do ministerial tasks such as making announcements and doing pre-emptive/forced evacuations. They depended more on their mayor’s instructions. When the MDRMM offices are institutionalized, these able officers must perform decisive tasks and, if possible, perform functions that will require them to have more discretionary powers to initiate and make informed decisions involving disaster management. It would be interesting to examine further how local government units understand the provisions of this law to determine whether or not the problem lies in the inadequacy of the law or in its interpretation and implementation.

There are advantages in having networks in the national and regional level. As can be gleaned from the study, both communities benefited from the networks and alliances, not only at the local, but at the national and international levels as well. If only better mechanisms can be put in place to promote better coordination and mobilization of efforts and resources needed not only in disaster response and recovery but also in all stages of the disaster management cycle. Further studies on the politics of distribution and the mechanisms of coordination are deemed essential. Further studies could be made on the networks of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and regional organizations that have extended disaster relief assistance to the country if the long-term aim is to make disaster response more coordinated.

On two occasions when findings of this study had been disseminated, questions pertaining to accountability and corruption were raised. After all, improvisations allow elected officials to think out of the box and devise creative ways to respond to the needs of their constituents during crisis situations. While corruption is apparent in the use of public funds (or government positions) for personal gain, improvisation may manifest itself in the use of personal funds for public gain. While the former is clearly unlawful, the latter is deemed justifiable. If we examine these two cases closely, there is a parallelism. Both cases necessitate the use of discretionary powers by public officials. How, then, do we make sure that the use of discretion is exercised within

prescribed limits during crisis or emergency situations? Unfortunately, those questions are not addressed in this study, but it is recommended that future studies examine further the relationship between these practices.

To maximize efforts in addressing disasters of this magnitude in the future, it is not only enough to institutionalize better laws and policies but also to make sure that the information contained therein are completely understood; mechanisms to realize these policies are in place; leaders, partners and communities are aware of their fullest potentials to better contribute; and that community demands and requirements are systematically and fully coordinated and implemented at all levels within the framework of good governance. ❀

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was funded by a Source of Solutions grant from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Development, University of the Philippines Diliman. The author acknowledges the two reviewers who provided their constructive insights and comments. Likewise, the author would like to thank her research associates in this project, Raymond Freth Lagria and Bianca Farida Velicaria for their invaluable assistance in the data collection and data preliminary analysis stages of this study.

NOTES

1. The Filipino translation of the Waray phrase "*ha pagtindog han bungto*" is "*sa pagbangon ng bayan*." In English, it essentially means recovery.
2. National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (2014) Council updates as of 17 April 2014 (to its Situational Report 108 dated 3 April 2014).
3. The public lecture was organized by the UP Third World Studies Center in cooperation with the UP National College of Public Administration and Governance. The lecture was part of a series and was entitled, "Risking Resources, Reckoning Risk: The 2014 UP Third World Studies Center Public Lecture Series on Natural Disasters; Lecture 4: Improvising Normalcy, The Normalcy of Improvisations: Policy and Practice in Post-Disaster Governance." This was held at the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City on 7 November 2014.
4. He succeeded Kristin Roxas as disaster risk reduction and management officer of Marikina City.
5. Salient points were taken from the Agsaoay-Sano (n.d.).
6. RA 10121 stipulates that the mandatory functions of the MDRRMC are to: "1) approve, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Local Disaster Risk

Reduction and Management Plans and regularly review and test the plan consistent with other national and local planning programs; 2) ensure the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local development plans, programs and budgets as a strategy in sustainable development and poverty reduction; 3) recommend the implementation of forced or preemptive evacuation of local residents, if necessary; and 4) convene the local council once every three (3) months or as necessary.”

7. Data were taken from the MDRRMC Plan Write-up (n.d.), 1.
8. Data were taken from Balangiga, Eastern Samar DRRMC Plan (n.d.), 3.
9. These same definitions can also be found in RA 10121.
10. Interview with Mayor Viscuso De Lira on 14 April 2014 at the Mayor’s Office, Municipality of Balangiga, Eastern Samar from 9:00 to 10:27 a.m.
11. Interview with Vice Mayor Ronnan Christian Reposar on 10 April 2014 at the Mayor’s Office, Municipality of Palo, Leyte.
12. Based on interviews with Engineer Armand Cabaltera, the Municipal Planning and Development Officer of Palo, Leyte and Engineer Fiel Inting, MDRRM Officer and Municipal Engineer of Balangiga, Eastern Samar.
13. Interview with Mr. Paul Tiston, Municipal Treasurer of Palo on 11 April 2014 at the Municipal Treasurer’s Office in Palo, Leyte. The research team was only able to find a related ordinance indicating an additional PHP 1.00 for every transaction.
14. The Palo MDRRM Plan, which was drawn in the earlier months of 2013 contained infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects such as flood control, dredging, comprehensive land use program, identification and construction of evacuation centers, and various plans for training and seminars. The Balangiga MDRRM Plan (Balangiga Eastern Samar DRMMC Plan n.d.), on the other hand, contained various plans for training and retooling, acquisition of a firetruck, purchase of warning device, procurement of sirens, and noted the need for evacuation centers. Super typhoon Yolanda happened in November 2013 when most of the projects had not yet been realized.

REFERENCES

- ADW, UNU, and UB (Alliance Development Works, United Nations University, and Universitat Bonn). 2013. *World Risk Report*. Berlin: Alliance Development Works. http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:2018/WorldRiskReport_2013_online_01.pdf.
- Agasaoay-Sano, Eunice. n.d. *Primer on the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010*. Edited by Allan Vera. Quezon City: Disaster Risk Reduction Network of the Philippines. <http://downloads.caraga.dilg.gov.ph/Disaster%20Preparedness/DRRM%20Act%20Primer.pdf>.
- Aldrich, Daniel. 2011. “The Power of People: Social Capital’s Role in Recovery from the 1995 Kobe Earthquake.” *Natural Hazards* 56 (3): 595–611. doi:10.1007/s11069-010-9577-7.
- Bankoff, Greg. 2007. “Dangers to Going it Alone: Social Capital and the Origins of Community Resilience in the Philippines.” *Continuity and Change* 22 (2): 327–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416007006315>.
- Bawagan, Aleli B., Lenore Polotan-dela Cruz, Maria Rosario S. Felizco, Ma. Corazon J. Tan, Matt Wamil, and Jerico Roy Santos Germar. 2015. *Shifting Paradigms*:

- Strengthening Institutions for Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines.
- Bose, B. P. C. 1994. "The Politics of Disasters." *Indian Journal of Political Science* 55 (2): 119-34.
- Bosher, Lee, Andrew Dainty, Patricia Carrillo, Jacqueline Glass, and Andrew Price. 2009. "Attaining Improved Resilience to Floods: A Proactive Multi-Stakeholder Approach." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 18 (1): 9-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560910938501>.
- Chamlee-Wright, Emily, and Virgil Henry Storr. 2010. "Expectations of Government Response to Disaster." *Public Choice* 144 (1-2): 253-74. doi:10.1007/s11127-009-9516-x.
- Col, Jeanne-Marie. 2007. "Managing Disasters: The Role of Local Government." *Public Administration Review* 67: 114-24. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00820.x.
- Fossett, James W. 2013. "Let's Stop Improvising Disaster Recovery." Observations (blog), The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. http://www.rockinst.org/observations/fossettj/2013-07-09-Improvising_Disaster_Recovery.aspx.
- Furedi, Frank. 2007. "The Changing Meaning of Disasters." *Area* 39 (4): 482-89. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2007.00764.x.
- Howitt, Arnold M. and Herman B. "Dutch" Leonard. 2006. "Katrina and the Core Challenges of Disaster Response." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 30 (1): 215-21. <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/77072>.
- Jahangiri, Katayoun, Yasamin O. Izadkhah, and Seyed Jamaledin Tabibi. 2011. "A Comparative Study on Community-Based Disaster Management in Selected Countries and Designing a Model for Iran." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 20 (1): 82-94. doi:10.1108/09653561111111108.
- James, Eric. 2008. "Getting Ahead of the Next Disaster: Recent Preparedness Efforts in Indonesia." *Development in Practice* 18 (3): 424-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27751937>.
- Kendra, James and Tricia Wachtendorf. 2006. "Improvisation, Creativity and the Art of Emergency Management." Paper presented at the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Understanding and Responding to Terrorism: A Multi-Dimensional Approach, Washington D.C., September 2006. <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/3054>.
- Local Governance Performance Management System. 2014a. Department of Interior and Local Government. Accessed 3 July. <http://www.blgs.gov.ph/lgpmsv2/shome/index.php?pageID=23&frmIdDcfCode=9&fLguType=CM&frmIdRegion=11&frmIdProvince=62&frmIdLgu=1195>.
- . 2014b. Department of Interior and Local Government. Accessed 3 July. <http://www.blgs.gov.ph/lgpmsv2/shome/index.php?pageID=23&frmIdDcfCode=9&fLguType=CM&frmIdRegion=11&frmIdProvince=61&frmIdLgu=1143>.
- Loh, Benjamin. 2005. "Disaster Risk Management in Southeast Asia: A Development Approach." *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* 22 (2): 229-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25773855>.
- McEntire, David. 2012. "Understanding and Reducing Vulnerability: From the Approach of Liabilities and Capabilities." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 21 (2): 206-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653561211220007>.

- NDRRM (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management). 2014. "Updates re the Effects of Typhoon 'Yolanda' (Haiyan)." [http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1329/Update_on_Effects_Typhoon_YOLANDA_\(Haiyan\)_17APR2014.pdf](http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1329/Update_on_Effects_Typhoon_YOLANDA_(Haiyan)_17APR2014.pdf).
- NDRRM, DBM, and DILG (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Department of Budget and Management, and Department of the Interior and Local Government). 2013. "Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2013-1." http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1320/JMC_No_2013-1_re_Allocation_and_Utilization_of_LDRRMF.pdf.
- Oloruntuba, Richard. 2005. "A Wave of Destruction and the Waves of Relief: Issues, Challenges and Strategies." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 14 (4): 506-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560510618348>.
- Patterson, Olivia, Frederick Weil, and Kavita Patel. 2010. "The Role of Community in Disaster Response: Conceptual Models." *Population Research and Policy Review* 29 (2): 127-41. doi:10.1007/s11113-009-9133-x.
- Said, Aini Mat, Fakhru'Razi Ahmadun, Ahmad Rodzi Mahmud, and Fuad Abas. 2011. "Community Preparedness for Tsunami Disaster: A Case Study." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 20 (3): 266-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653561111141718>.
- Sementelli, Arthur. 2007. "Toward a Taxonomy of Disaster and Crisis Theories." *Administrative Theory and Praxis* 29 (4): 497-512. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25610893>.
- Shaluf, Ibrahim Mohamed. 2007. "An Overview on Disasters." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 16 (5): 687-703. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560710837000>.
- Sharkansky, Ira and Yair Zalmanovitch. 2000. "Improvisation in Public Administration and Policy Making in Israel." *Public Administration Review* 60 (4): 321-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3110452>.
- Shaw, Rajib. 2006. "Indian Ocean Tsunami and Aftermath: Need for Environment-Disaster Synergy in the Reconstruction Process." *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 15 (1): 5-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560610654202>.
- Tierney, Kathleen. 2016. "Strength of a City: A Disaster Research Perspective on the World Trade Center Attack." Essays, Social Science Research Council. Accessed 28 February. <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/tierney.htm>.
- Weick, Karl E. 1998. "Introductory Essay: Improvisation as a Mindset for Organizational Analysis." *Organization Science* 9 (5): 543-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.5.543>.

APPENDIX

Interviews with various municipal and barangay officials in Balangiga

Name	Position	Venue	Date	Time
Viscuso De Lira	Mayor	Mayor's Office	14 April 2014	9:00 a.m.– 10:27 a.m.
Samuel Enciso	Vice Mayor	SB Secretary's Office	21 April 2014	10:25 a.m.– 11:05 a.m.
Proceso Gayda	Councilor	SB Session hall	15 April 2014	1:05 p.m.– 1:55 p.m.
Marciano Deladia	SB Secretary	SB Secretary's Office		
Eng. Fiel Inting	MDRRM Officer	Municipal Engineer's Office	14 April 2014	2:00 p.m.– 2:50 p.m.
Maria A. Selso	Municipal Treasurer	Municipal Treasurer's Office	14 April 2014	3:00 p.m.– 3:50 p.m.
Myrlina Resurreccion	Municipal Accountant	Municipal Accountant's Office	14 April 2014	1:15 p.m.– 1:50 p.m.
Dexter Alvarena	Municipal Planning and Development Officer	MPDO	22 April 2014	1:50 p.m.– 2:45 p.m.
Gualtiere Marl Gannaban	Municipal Budget Officer	Municipal Budget Office	14 April 2014	11:15– 12:05 p.m.
Nero C. Delantar	Former ABC President (incumbent Brgy. Pob. 2 Brgy. Captain)	Pob. 2 Brgy. Captain's Residence	16 April 2014	9:00 a.m.– 9:35 a.m.
Nestor Alvarena	Incumbent ABC President and Brgy. Pob. 6 Brgy. Captain	Pob. 6 Brgy. Hall	15 April 2014	2:10 p.m.– 2:40 p.m.
Gerardo C. Obillo Jr.	Former Brgy. Pob. 6 Brgy. Captain	Former Brgy. Pob. 6 Residence	15 April 2014	2:45–3:10 p.m.
Elmer Severre	Former Brgy. Santa Rosa Captain	Former Brgy. Santa Rosa Residence	22 April 2014	11:15 a.m.– 12:15 p.m.
Celestino Calisay	Brgy. Santa Rosa Captain	Santa Rosa Brgy. Hall	21 April 2014	1:15 p.m.– 1:50 p.m.
Sygie Marie Canillas Macawile	Brgy. Pob. 1 Kagawad (2nd term)	Pob. 1 Brgy. Hall	22 April 2014	10:25 p.m.– 10:50 p.m.

Michael Calicun, Brgy. Pob. 1 Kagawad Pob. 1 Brgy. 21 April 3:00 p.m.–
 Daisy Diocampo, (1st term), Brgy. Pob. Hall 2014 3:25 p.m.
 Rommel Alvarina 1 Treasurer, Brgy.
 Pob. 1 Secretary and
 Former SK
 Chairperson

Interviews with various municipal and barangay officials in Palo

Name	Position	Venue	Date	Time
Atty. Ronnan Christian Reposar	Vice Mayor/OIC	Mayor's Office	10 April 2014	11:00 a.m.– 11:53 a.m.
Wilson Uy	Councilor	Shell Pawing Station	28 April 2014	2:50 p.m.– 3:25 p.m.
Ritche D. Gilang	MDRRM Officer	Outside the Mayor's office	11 April 2014	9:00 a.m.– 10:00 a.m.
Paul Tiston	Municipal Treasurer	Municipal Treasurer's Office	11 April 2014	10:20 a.m.– 11:00 a.m.
Deogracias O. Rosales	Municipal Accountant	Palo Gym	10 April 2014	3:15 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.
Armand C. Cabaltera	Municipal Planning and Development Officer	MPDC	10 April 2014	1:00 p.m.– 1:50 p.m.
Luz Fernandez	Municipal Budget Officer	Municipal Budget Office	28 April 2014	9:00 a.m.– 9:35 p.m.
Chiqui Ruth Uy	ABC President and Brgy. Pawing Captain	Shell Pawing Station	28 April 2014	2:10 p.m.– 2:45 p.m.
Annaliza Yu	Former ABC President and Former Guindaponan Brgy. Captain	Petron Pawing Station	30 April 2014	2:50 p.m.– 3:10 p.m.
Jaime Yu	Brgy. Guindaponan Captain	Guindaponan Brgy. Hall	25 April 2014	10:00 a.m.– 11:00 a.m.
Ermenia A. Coritana	Brgy. Baras Kagawad (2nd term)	Baras Brgy. Hall	23 April 2014	2:30 p.m.– 3:15 p.m.
Charlyn M. Vitanzos	Brgy. Baras Treasurer	Baras Brgy. Hall	30 April 2014	10:20 a.m.– 10:45 a.m.
Epifanio Consuegra	Brgy. Baras Secretary	Baras Brgy. Hall	25 April 2014	8:45 a.m.– 9:15 a.m.