

# THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & MANAGEMENT BILL

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## **Why is there a need for a policy for reducing and managing disaster risks in the Philippines?**

A policy is needed to reduce and manage disaster risks in the country because of two reasons. One, the Philippines lies in the heart of an area prone to natural disasters and two, the country's socio-economic and political conditions make the Filipinos vulnerable to disaster impacts.

The geographical location of the Philippines in the Pacific makes the country highly susceptible to natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons. The country is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, "an area encircling the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes and volcanic activity result from the movements of tectonic plates." (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2008) On the average, the country experiences five (5) imperceptible to perceptible earthquakes everyday. (Punongbayan, 1993) The country is also home to about 220 volcanoes. Of these, twenty-two (22) volcanoes have been recorded in history to have erupted, and five (5) are considered to be the most active namely: Taal, Mayon, Bulusan, Canlaon and Hibok-Hibok. Situated on the Pacific typhoon belt, the country is hit by an average of 20-30 typhoons every year, seven of which are highly destructive. Damage on infrastructure and agriculture caused by typhoons has cost the country up to P 20 billion in a single year.

According to the recent Mortality Rate Index (MRI) released by the United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the Philippines ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in a list of 200 countries whose populations are at-risk from natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, typhoons and landslides (Ubac, PDI, 17 June 2009). On the other hand, in the Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2008, the Philippines ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world as far as the number of disasters events reported in 2008, next to China and the United States (CRED, 2009). The reports only show that indeed the Philippines is truly one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. Based on the 2008 Philippine Disaster Report, in last year alone, there were 253 natural and man-made terrible disasters that occurred in the country (CDRC, 2009). On the same vein, 1.7 million families or 8.5 people were affected, 194 lives were claimed and 22.074 billion was the estimated damage to properties in 2008 (CDRC, 2009).

As to man-made disasters, particularly those displaced as a result of armed conflicts, the number people affected reached 684,626 in 2008, as against 209,652 in 2007 (CDRC, 2009). The 2008 data beat the all-time high 600,000

internally displaced citizens, which was recoded in 2001. This massive displacement puts the Philippines at the top of the list of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugee.

Aside from being naturally pre-disposed to natural hazards, owing largely to its geographical location and topography, the Philippines also needs to address the displacement of its population due to armed conflict. Socio-economic factors (i.e. the number of people living below the poverty line and increasing rate of urbanization) bring about vulnerabilities that causes that can cause natural and man-made disasters.

In rural areas, these communities are found in lowlands and coastal towns. In urban sites, they can be found in crowded and depressed areas, using makeshift houses. Such human vulnerability if exposed to natural hazards can lead devastating or even catastrophic impacts. And as climate change bring stronger and more frequent typhoons and heavier rainfalls that can further lead to storm surges, flooding, and landslides, the Filipino people's vulnerability to disaster impacts is also increasing.

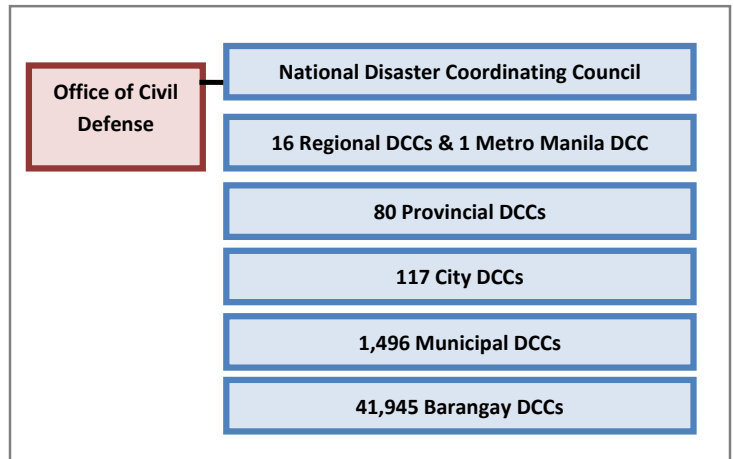
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**Is the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Bill a new policy initiative by the National Government to respond to disaster risks?**

No. For more than two decades now, the Philippines' Disaster Management System (DMS) is governed by Presidential Decree (PD) 1566, "*Strengthening the Philippine Disaster Control, Capability and Establishing the National Program on Community Disaster Preparedness*". Issued on 11 June 1978, PD 1566 established the authority, units concerned, and process required to manage disasters.

Specifically, PD 1566 created the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), chaired by the Secretary of the Department of National Defense (DND). Composed 17 members, NDCC is the "highest policy-making, coordinating and supervising body for disaster management." Serving as its secretariat is the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), lodged in the DND.

The Law also directed a tiered approach to responding to disasters by organizing the disaster councils from the regional level (i.e. RDCC), to the provincial (PDCC), city (CDCC), municipal (MDCC), and down to the barangay (BDCC) level.



Current Institutional Arrangements

PD 1566 follows the principles of self-reliance, mutual assistance, and maximized use of resources.

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**If we already have Presidential Decree No. 1566, why is there a need to replace the old law with a new one?**

A new law is needed because a paradigm shift is *urgently* needed in transforming the country's disaster management system. The new law shall adopt and adhere to principles and strategies consistent with the international standards set by the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) which is a comprehensive, action-oriented response to international concern about the growing impacts of disasters on individuals, communities and national development. The HFA was formulated and adopted by 168 governments at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan in 2005.

The prevailing framework for disaster management in the Philippines and in many developing nations has been the traditional or "dominant" approach. The government's response to disaster is *focused on emergency relief measures*, succumbing to the "tyranny of the urgent", while rehabilitation and mitigation are carried out rarely, and if so, comes in the form of technical and structural measures only (Heijmans, 2001). In the 30-year National Physical Framework Plan (1993-2023), the National Land Use Committee (1992) acknowledged that disaster preparedness was inadequately integrated into the overall development process. (NLUC, 1992).

The flaw with this approach is that it narrowly views disasters as a function of the physical strength, magnitude or intensity of a hazardous event. This is not always the case. Disasters become disasters when the people who are affected cannot cope with the social, psycho-social, economic and physical impacts. As professed by the Citizen's Disaster Response Center (CDRC), disaster is also determined by the capacities of the affected community and the people's ability to withstand, shield itself and recover swiftly from such devastating events (CDRC, 1993). Sadly, many experts declare that when hazards strike, the people who suffer the most are the poor. To aggravate matters, worsening economic conditions increase the poor's vulnerability (Heijmans, 2001). Therefore, disasters should be viewed as a function of people's development.

Under the traditional approach, the aim of restoring things to normal implies a re-creation of the conditions that led to the disaster. The problem with this is that because disasters which have mainly natural hazards involved are perceived to be unforeseen events, government and aid agencies neglect the real source of the disaster, the root cause of the people's vulnerability. Here in the Philippines, the root causes of people's vulnerability stem from social inequity and bad governance specially government policies that fail to promote people's interests (Heijmans, 2001).

The proposed DRRM Bill encourages the government *to shift its focus to disaster prevention and risk reduction by putting more emphasis on strengthening the*

communities' and people's capacity to anticipate, cope with and recover from disasters, as an integral part of development programs. Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in the country's policies, programs, and plans therefore lies at the very heart of the DRRM Bill.

In addition, the DRRM Bill has expanded the guiding policies and objectives for disaster risk management to include the following:

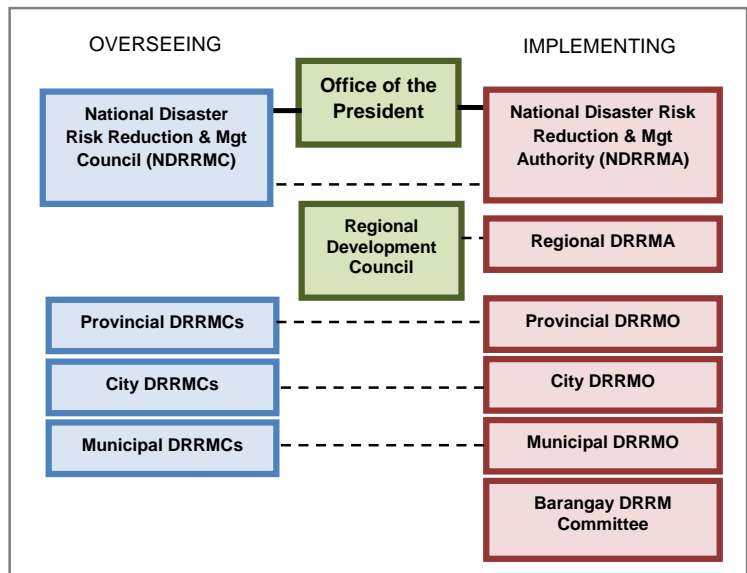
- (a) Adherence to universal norms, principles, and standards of humanitarian assistance;
- (b) Upholding of right to life and security by addressing root causes of vulnerability;
- (c) Supremacy of civilian authority over military especially in complex emergencies and human-induced disasters;
- (d) Good governance through transparency and accountability
- (e) Integrated, coordinated, multi-sectoral, inter-agency, and community-based approach to disaster risk reduction;
- (f) Empowerment of local government units (LGUs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) as key partners in disaster risk reduction;
- (g) Providing for provisions on the declaration of a state of calamity, remedial measures, prohibited acts and penalties therefor.

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**Under the DRRM Bill, how is the Philippine disaster management system structured?**

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) shall oversee the Philippine disaster management system. Similar to the NDCC, it will be multi-agency in composition, expanded to include the National Anti-Poverty Commission, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the Philippine local government leagues, Philippine insurance companies, and representatives from the private sector, CSOs. It will be responsible for developing the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework, the set of guidelines serving as basis for formulating a National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Plan (NDRRMP).

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), attached to the Office of the President, is the implementing arm of the NDRRMC. The NDRRMA will have policy-making powers and executive functions that will allow it to manage, coordinate, and



synchronize programs and projects in the formulation and implementation of a NDRRMP.

The Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (RDRRMA), the director of which will sit as a member of **Proposed Institutional Mechanism** Regional Development Councils (RDCs), serves as the regional arm of the NDRRMA. The RDRRMA will be responsible for ensuring the formulation of disaster-sensitive regional development plans. In case of emergencies, the RDRRMA shall convene the different regional line agencies and concerned institutions and authorities.

At the local level, the existing provincial, regional, city, municipal, and barangay disaster coordinating councils will be reorganized into provincial (PDRRMC), city (CDRRMC), and municipal (MDRRC) disaster risk reduction and management councils. Multi-sectoral and multi-agency in composition, it will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans (LDRRMP). Heading these councils are the local chief executives as the chairperson and the local planning and development officer as the vice-chair.

Performing executive and administrative functions at the local level is the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO) to be created in every province (PDRRMO), city (CDRRMO), and municipality(MDRRMO). At the barangay level, a Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committee (BDRRMC) will be established. The LDRRMO together with the BDRRMC will be responsible for setting the direction, development, implementation and coordination of disaster risk management programs within their territorial jurisdiction. These offices will be under the Office of the Governor, City or Municipal Mayor, and Punong Barangay in case of BDRRMC. Each office/committee will be headed by a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer to be assisted by three (3) staff responsible for: Administrative and Training, Research and Planning, and Operations and Warning.

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### **Why is civil society participation important?**

The participation of civil society organization is crucial in ensuring effective reduction of risk and management of disasters. Underpinning the DRRM Framework is the principle of multi-sectoral responsibility. DRRM is a cross-cutting issue and it encompasses the advancement of reforms in social, economic, and political affairs. Disasters also affects the most vulnerable sectors of society and therefore these vulnerable groups, particularly the poor, women, children, elderly, and the differently-abled must have a say in how their lives are shaped. It is important that the voices of the grassroots communities are represented and heard. Moreover, civil society organizations possess a wealth of knowledge in effective risk assessment and risk reduction approaches and have played many key formal and informal roles in community recovery and risk reduction. Their

participation in public decision making is a key element in overcoming the barriers of social exclusion, economic inequity, and political marginalization that have led to their increased vulnerability.



**Where shall the funds for disaster risk reduction and management programs and operations come from?**

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (DRRMF) is a novel element in the DRRM Bill. It emphasizes the need for resources to fund disaster risk-reducing projects and activities, not just emergency and rehabilitation projects, which has been the old practice with the National and Local Calamity Fund.

The establishment of the DRRMF at all levels of government ensures that a specific budget will be available for the LGUs and local agencies, thus promoting accessibility of these funds and ensuring that DRRM concerns are prioritized as regular items in funds appropriation and allocation.

The DRRMF is proposed to be taken from “not less than five percent (5%) of the [LGU’s] estimated revenue from regular sources.” Under the proposed bill, the DRRMF will already include the Local Calamity Fund and other dedicated disaster risk reduction and management resources for the LDRRMO operations and programs.