IRP Workshop on Disaster Recovery Planning

For Local Governments Impacted by Typhoon Haiyan, 19-21 February 2014 Cebu City, Philippines

Over 50 local government officials from the Provincial Government of Cebu, Provincial Government Leyte, Provincial Government of Samar, City Government of Tacloban, Municipal Government of Palo (Leyte), and Municipal Government of Basey (Samar) participated in the workshop which organized by the International Recovery Platform, February 2014 to explore strategies and actions on recovery and reconstruction from the super typhoon Haiyan.

The workshop on Disaster Recovery Planning was facilitated by the International Recovery Platform (IRP), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), Hyogo Prefectural Government, and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Education and Training Institute (UNISDR-GETI) in collaboration with the Office of Civil Defense Department of National Defense (OCD-DND) Philippines on 19-21 February 2014.

The main objective of the workshop was to provide technical assistance in formulating the recovery plans of local governments impacted by super typhoon Haiyan (local name Yolanda). The workshop was also aimed at strengthening the local capacities for integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in disaster recovery planning and long-term development programming. Additionally, partners from UNISDR-GETI (South Korea), Office of Civil Defense (Philippines), and GIZ-Philippines also participated to further contribute in the discussions and make sure that partners’ knowledge and experiences are shared with the impacted local governments.

The deputy administrator of OCD General Romeo F. Fajardo along with the administrator of the Province of Cebu Atty. Mark Tolentino and OCD Region7 Director Minda Morante were present at the opening to grace occasion. They inspired the participants to work collaboratively and effectively for recovery. At the workshop, the participants were exposed to various options to “build back better” after a disaster through a wide array of strategies and actions from the Guidance Notes on Recovery, which served as options for local governments to adopt, if it suits to their respective contexts.

The lessons on recovery, as compiled by IRP from various experiences around the globe, provided an additional input to build on the existing initiatives of the local governments which served as reference in establishing a temporal link between preparedness, recovery, and sustainable development. At the end of the workshop, each local government came up with an outline of Recovery Plan, including a list of strategies, actions, and responsible offices/organizations to implement the proposed actions.

In December 2013, a team of researchers and experts from IRP/ADRC visited some areas in the provinces of Leyte and Samar that were impacted by typhoon Haiyan (local name Yolanda) in the Philippines. The objective was to draw information on preparedness, response, and plans for recovery in order to provide greater understanding of the disaster, including what gaps and challenges need to be addressed.

The team found that essential preparations were made in anticipation of the super typhoon, such that preemptive evacuations to schools, churches, stadiums, and public buildings were made. Additionally, relief goods and services were ready in most command centers.

However, the preparations did not match the magnitude of the unexpected super typhoon which caused massive storm surge that destroyed the evacuation and command centers, specifically those located near the coast. Among of the immediate impacts were high casualties, relief goods washed away, and command centers became dysfunctional.

Subsequently, the response effort had no choice but to be delayed. As island provinces, there were challenges in the operational capacities of airports and seaports as well as communication/coordination because most infrastructures were damaged. In fact, most relief goods and services were stranded in some islands before reaching the impacted areas.

In terms of recovery, the local governments and communities acknowledged that greater challenges in housing, livelihoods, and infrastructure are expected. Since most areas where flattened, people immediately need shelter.

Communities also need alternative livelihoods because assets from original activities such as coconut harvesting, farming, and fishing were gone. Furthermore, the local market, transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure were also urgently needed.

The findings from the visit suggest that in terms of preparedness, public awareness on storm surge needs to be strengthened, location of evacuation and command centers need to be reviewed, and policies and activities on preparedness (e.g. early warning systems) need to be reassessed.

As way forward, the local governments intend to further refine the recovery plans together with local stakeholders, specifically the community. They will form working groups to fine-tune the outputs from the workshop. The revised draft will then be shared to other local departments for comments and suggestions.

After gathering the comments, the working group of each local government will incorporate them in the draft. The final version of the recovery plan will be submitted to the local council for discussion and adoption by the local government.

Once adopted, the plans will be submitted and discussed with the Philippine Reconstruction Czar General Panfilo Lacson, who is the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Reconstruction (PARR) on super typhoon Yolanda, for further amendments and funding.

Activities of IRP Member Organizations
Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction was held on 4 ~ 6 March, 2014 in Tokyo, Japan