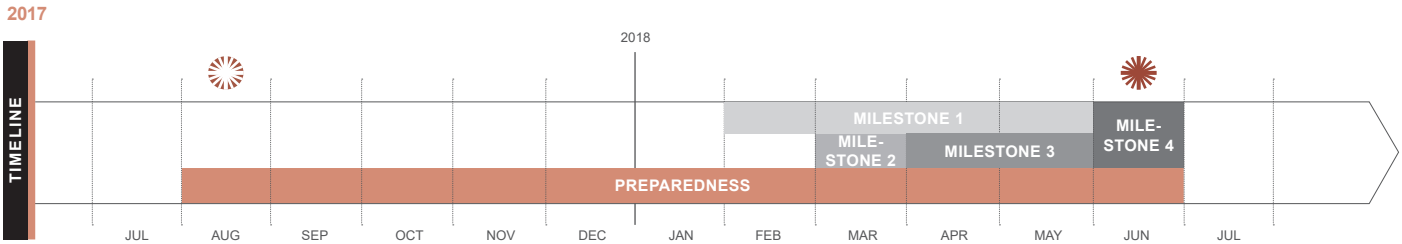
PHILIPPINES DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROJECT

KEYWORDS:
PREPAREDNESS, URBAN, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, CAPACITY BUILDING

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT	Natural disaster
PROJECT LOCATION	Metro Manila: Quezon City, Navotas and Pateros
PROJECT DURATION	August 2017 - June 2018
NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT	972,700
CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM	Sector/working group (operating in another part of country)

SUMMARY:
The Mass Evacuations in Natural Disasters (MEND): Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building in Metro Manila's Most Vulnerable Cities project aimed to build the resilience of the vulnerable populations constantly threatened by natural disaster, particularly the threat of a major earthquake. The project targeted the most vulnerable urban poor communities, particularly the informal settlements and slum areas along rivers and water ways. The preparedness approach of the project focused on capacity building with both local authorities and community members through gathering information about the target communities, hands-on trainings to refine and adapt local contingency plans and a final simulation exercise to stress test the evacuation plans.



August 2018 — **Project start, Project planning and partner consultations, August 2017 – January 2018**

1 Feb 2018 – May 2018 — **Community Hazard Risk, Vulnerability and Capacity Profiling. This included geotagging open spaces, KIIs, FGDs, and training on building alternative transitional shelter.**

2 March 2018 — **Drone mapping of project barangays, MEND-CCCM training.**

3 April 2018 – May 2018 — **Barangay evacuation planning, family and community disaster preparedness orientations.**

4 June 2018 — **Mass evacuation and camp management exercises with community members, lessons learned workshop, MEND summit.**

June 2018 — **Project completion**

IOM Chief of Mission interacts with IDPs at CCCM Simulation site in Kathmandu

CONTEXT

The Philippines has been one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world,[1] with risk of cyclones, earthquakes, floods, landslides, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and wildfires,[2] as well as conflicts in Mindanao. Metro Manila, the most populous region of the country,[3] intersected by the active West Valley Fault System, which has the capability of producing earthquakes with a magnitude of 7.2.[4]

The Philippine government has been investing in preparedness efforts, with efforts ranging from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) at the national level to the LGUs (Local Government Units) at the local level. The NDRRMC has included preparedness in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan and barangays (the smallest geographical unit of government in the Philippines) tend to have contingency plans in place should disaster strike. However, contingency plans tend to be generic rather than contextualized and because plans may not have been tested through simulation, may have gaps.

The cities of Quezon City, Navotas and Pateros, the target cities of the MEND project, are located in high risk areas and already had contingency plans in place. However, these plans were not often actively engaged with or not adapted to context. To support ongoing efforts in disaster preparedness in the Philippines, IOM joined with LGUs in these target cities to build resiliency in informal settlements and slum areas that were prone to flooding and earthquake. The goal of the project was to increase the capacities of the existing local actors and communities through training initiatives and simulations.

PROJECT

SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES

The cities of Quezon City, Navotas and Pateros were proposed as target cities for the project due to a variety of factors. The implementing agencies worked with Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to determine which cities have unique cases for mass evacuations, and then did a physical assessment in each city to check for available open spaces. Within each city, a number of families were selected by the local governments to participate in the Family and Community Disaster Preparedness Orientations. The project relied on the knowledge of local government officials to select the families who would benefit most from the orientation and participation in the simulation.

CCCM ACTIVITIES

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan of the Philippines (NDRRMP)[5] recognizes the CCCM needs of a population following a disaster. The Plan included outcomes around addressing temporary shelter needs and providing basic social services and mental health services to the affected population and host communities. A background in CCCM helped communities and local authorities to manage evacuation sites to meet the needs of displaced populations in line with both CCCM standard practice and the NDRRMP. Identifying appropriate open spaces and developing community-based emergency plans were important parts of disaster preparedness for communities in the event of mass displacement. The Mass Evacuations in Natural Disasters (MEND): Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building in Metro Manila's Most Vulnerable Cities project aimed to improve the disaster risk reduction capacity of the existing local actors and communities through technical assistance and training on evacuation and displacement management.

© IOM / Francis Borja

Navotas Simulation Exercise

IMPLEMENTATION

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) was adapted to create profiles of community hazard risk, vulnerability and capacity. The process used was adapted from the assessment process in disaster response. The MEND Guide was used to develop questions to profile areas that are vulnerable to large displacement. The assessments of the community included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with LGU personnel and community members, particularly engaging segments of the population with vulnerabilities that could be exacerbated in displacement, such as youth, women and persons with disabilities. The assessments also included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to assess vulnerability in the community as well as local knowledge about disaster response. While the teams were conducting assessments, they were also geo-tagging open spaces in the communities to note potential evacuation sites.

The next piece of the project was a week-long training covering both technical and social aspects of CCCM, including focus on the rights of the displaced in times of crisis. The participants were also able to conduct a table top exercise to simulate an evacuation camp based on Sphere Standards and were able to work with maps of the project neighbourhoods.

Barangay evacuation planning built on the results of the MEND-CCCM training and allowed the LGUs to transfer knowledge from the training to the barangay level. Assessments of open spaces were ongoing as participants in the planning phase were able to discard some of the geo-tagged spaces due to local risks such as tall buildings nearby and were able to suggest additional viable open space options. The project barangays were mapped by drones to produce high quality visual images of the local neighbourhoods, including open spaces, roads and walkways. These maps were used to plot evacuation pathways based local knowledge of their neighborhoods.

Community members, selected by the LGUs and barangay officials, participated in Family and Community Disaster Preparedness Orientations. Community members were able to give feedback on the proposed evacuation routes and to draw a route from their house to the open space on a drone map. The Family and Community Disaster Preparedness Orientations were the last step to take the project training from the city government to the household level.

The trainings culminated in large-scale evacuation simulations involving several hundred participants each. Several months before the simulations, there were trainings for local committee members to properly store, build and dismantle Alternative Transitional Shelters. Several days before the simulation, a cash for work initiative engaged these trained committee members as well as additional community members to set up the Alternative Transitional Shelters that were used in the simulation and donated to the cities for future use, as well to set up tents provided by the Department of Social Welfare and WASH facilities.

The simulations included partner organizations and government departments, with the aim of including the stakeholders who would be involved in an actual disaster response. For example, the NGO Accord participated, the Filipino Red Cross provided the WASH facilities, and the Department of National Defense and the national police provided security and halted traffic. The aim was to involve all actors who would be involved in a disaster response in the simulation.

Following the first two simulations in Pateros and Navotas, a lessons-learned activity was planned to record experiences and to gain insight. This feedback helped with the preparation of the third simulation in Quezon City, which was a larger simulation involving approximately three times as many participants.

A final MEND summit was the culmination of the project and was built around a presentation of the project outputs to other prospect cities in the Philippines as well as to donors and other stakeholders. The summit was an opportunity to showcase how the project addressed mass evacuation from the bottom up with community engagement and participation and from the top down with trainings and planning with government authorities.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

- Positively impacted contingency planning in the target cities by establishing a process to involve communities and local authorities jointly in evacuation planning.
- The MEND summit allowed disaster risk reduction authorities in the target cities to present how the project was built up step by step, beginning with the community hazard risk, vulnerability and capacity profiling. This debrief at the MEND summit allowed cities interested in replicating the project to understand the importance of each step in the process and reinforced the importance of integrating the community into the evacuation planning process for the target cities.
- The drone mapping drew interest from prospect cities, who expressed interest in undertaking the mapping exercise to evaluate their own evacuation plans. The maps reinforced the importance of having baseline maps and plans for different barangays based on context.
- The MEND project has potential to impact contingency planning in the Philippines, as the national government has interest in the project and the comprehensive process used to develop the plans at the community level. There may be further opportunity to adapt the project to non-urban contexts for contingency planning in rural or hard to reach areas.

© IOM / Charissa Soriano

Focus Group Discussion

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The preparedness actions taken through the project allowed communities to build resilience.
- Inhabitants of the high-risk neighbourhoods now know their evacuation routes, have emergency supplies on hand, determined roles and responsibilities for each family member during a crisis event, and importantly, have tested their level of preparedness through simulation.
- The Gawad Kalasag National Award,[6] earned by the Disaster Risk Reduction and management Council of Quezon City in the Highly Urbanized City category for their presentation of their participation in the MEND project. The Gawad Kalasag was awarded to Quezon City for their achievements in prioritizing disaster resilience.

CHALLENGES

- Due to the Marawi conflict, implementing agency staff were deployed for emergency response, which delayed the project start date. The project unfolded on a tight schedule. This increased the burden of planning on local authority partners as well as on implementing agency staff.
- In an actual mass evacuation event, there was a need for multiple open spaces to shelter the affected population. Families noted the closest viable open space to their home during the Family and Community Disaster Preparedness Orientations, but the simulations used only a single open space, which would not necessarily be the sheltering space for the participating families. However, running the simulation in multiple open spaces at the same time would have required a sharp increase in resources and planning coordination.
- Smaller barangays may not be able to afford to run the simulation step of the process, which proved to be a critical way to stress test evacuation plans developed by barangays and community members.
- An additional external challenge was an election in the middle of the process, impacting the schedule as government officials running for office, were not able to act in their official capacities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It important to design programming from with input coming from all levels of society. The project constantly gathered feedback from top to bottom, from community inhabitants to local government unit authorities.
- The project gained buy-in by maintaining local authorities in the lead during the trainings and planning. The implementing agency served as a facilitator, but the contingency plans in each barangay are owned by the community.
- Community members informed the entire process, from the initial assessment stage to the final feedback after the simulation. It was critical to involve the affected population to truly build resilience in a community.
- The final summit allowed local authorities to emphasize the importance of building up to the simulation by first undergoing comprehensive trainings and orientations to their peers.
- The simulations were an opportunity to stress test local contingency plans and local stakeholders and brought together an array of community members, local authorities and civil society organizations.

[1] OCHA. N.d. The Philippines.

[2] The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). 2017. Philippines.

[3] Republic of the Philippines Department of the Interior and Local Government. N.d. LGU Directory.

[4] Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. 2015. The Valley Fault System in Greater Metro Manila Area Atlas.

[5] Republic of the Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). 2011. National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan.

[6] Quezon City Local Government. 2018. Quezon City Awarded best DRRMC in Highly Urbanized Category.

© IOM / Charissa Soriano