

Seminar-Workshops on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Metro Manila

In line with the agenda on mainstreaming disaster risk management in megacities and complex urban areas of the 3cd Program, two separate seminar-workshops were conducted in Metro Manila in December 2005.

Held on **1 December 2005** and hosted by the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the first seminar-workshop was entitled “**Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Metropolitan Planning.**” Both local and foreign experts from MMDA, University of the Philippines, and EMI’s 3cd Program Team provided lecture inputs during the plenary session.

This activity was conceived to address the increasing disaster risk to megacities and complex urban areas such as Metro Manila. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) particularly links disaster risk reduction (DRR) to urban development. The workshop thus focused on finding ways and means of integrating disaster risk reduction in the regular operations and responsibilities of MMDA’s various departments as they coordinate and govern urban development at the metropolitan level. It was also a step towards building the institutional capacity of one of the world’s biggest and most at-risk megacity in support of the shared agenda of UNDP and ProVention on developing mainstreaming mechanisms and overcoming current impediments to DRR in metropolitan governance.

Hence, during the workshop session, directors, chiefs, and senior staff members of the various departments and divisions of MMDA were clustered in three groups, namely: Operations, Planning and Infrastructure, and Support Functions. The workshop enabled the participants to identify practices that are regularly conducted by respective departments and offices that actually contribute in reducing disaster risk as well as other opportunities to further actively and effectively mainstream risk reduction as they plan, coordinate, and deliver metro-wide services.

Several lessons on the current practices of DRM of Metro Manila surfaced from the workshop. With the current mandate of MMDA, the agency still holds the authority to engage in development planning, urban renewal, and public safety notwithstanding the enhanced autonomy of the cities and municipalities that comprise the metropolis. Moreover, MMDA still has a key role to play as the lead facilitator in the process of integrating disaster risk reduction measures in the day-to-day operations of a local government unit by being a role model to cities and municipalities in disaster risk management, by setting standards, and by promoting a safer, disaster-resilient metropolis for the benefit of all. As the governing body at the metropolitan level, MMDA also has a coordinating function in the mainstreaming process of DRM since it can unite cross-sectoral, cross-boundary, and inter-institutional concerns such as disaster risk reduction. Aside from the current practices related to DRM, the workshop likewise provided some insights into the current gaps and needs in DRM of MMDA.

The second seminar-workshop entitled “**Land Use and Urban Planning Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction**” held on **5 December 2005** at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, addressed the need to raise the level of understanding and appreciation of disaster risk management of land use and urban planning officers of the member local government units (LGUs) of Metro Manila.

Cities as key actors in mitigating risk is again an integral part of UNDP’s and ProVention’s agendas as disaster reduction cannot be achieved without the active engagement of local governments and institutions. Emphasized as well in the HFA, the mainstreaming of disaster reduction at the city level is high priority because ultimately development policy implementation takes place at the local level. The day-to-day undertakings of urban planning, construction and building regulation, poverty reduction and social programs, and infrastructure development remain in large part rests on the shoulder of the local government.

In the plenary, familiar planning tools such as zoning, community participation, GIS, and information and education programs were discussed by local and foreign specialists to

illustrate how the local comprehensive land use planning process could be utilized to reduce disaster risks and promote a culture of disaster resilience.

Preparing a comprehensive land use plan is a regular, iterative activity of cities and municipalities. During the workshop, it was established that disaster risk reduction measures are being practiced by the LGUs as part of their customary land use planning process, e.g. production of flood-prone areas map. Several LGUs, however, conduct risk reduction practices on an ad-hoc per-need basis instead of treating it as part and parcel of land use planning. Most LGUs pointed out institutional constraints such as inadequate training on disaster risk management, insufficient number of personnel, and inadequate equipment.

Lessons learned from the workshop include the realization that there is an urgent need for government institutions involved in land use and urban development planning at the local, regional, and national levels to engage in active partnership with one another, for the inclusion of risk reduction standards and criteria in planning, and for harmonization of individual efforts of cities and municipalities to come up with a concerted risk reduction effort.

The workshop also served to provide a preliminary assessment of the current practices, gaps, and needs of the local government units (LGUs) comprising Metro Manila. The lessons learned from this activity will serve as inputs in the training needs assessment that is being conducted by EMI in support of the UNDP and ProVention agenda. The development of specialized training aims to develop local institutional capacity in land use and urban planning and disaster risk reduction at the city level by incorporating risk factors in land-use and urban planning and practical tools and techniques for DRM.

The demonstration and discussion of the **Megacities Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Base (KB)** and the **Internet Map Viewer** by Mr. Jim Buika of the Pacific Disaster Center in the two workshops is worth mentioning. Both the KB and Map Viewer, currently hosted by PDC and accessible from anywhere to anybody who has an internet connection, are useful information tools for disaster reduction. The KB, developed by PDC in collaboration with EMI and EdM, is a source designed for urban decision makers, city planners, residents and other stakeholders who are interested in reducing disaster risk to their cities and as a venue for information exchange among cities at risk. The KB is rich with a collection of searchable Disaster Risk Management City Profiles and DRM Sound Practices as well as other sets of references and documents. The Map Viewer is a web accessible GIS system that offers dynamic online GIS risk maps and databases of Metro Manila, and which can be used for risk communication and analysis. From the GIS risk maps, users can begin to assess vulnerable elements and evaluate their resources and opportunities for reducing disaster risk.

In all, the two seminar-workshops have made significant inroads in the objective of promoting the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in the regular planning and operations at both the city and metropolitan levels of governance. EMI's 3cd Program, along with its partners—EdM, PDC, Kobe University, UNDP, ProVention and the Hazard Management Unit of the World Bank, will continue implementing the Disaster Risk Management Master Plan (DRMMP) in Metro Manila to achieve the goal of full integration of disaster risk reduction in development planning and land use and urban management towards creating safer and sustainable cities.

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