

## **Sound Practice No.3**

### **Creation of Barangay Disaster Brigade, Bgy. South Triangle, Quezon**

#### **Overview**

Poor communities are faced with day-to-day problems. A poor family faces a hand-to-mouth existence and “too busy” earning a livelihood; of its members ever find one. One day, a fire threatens their lives and their one important asset, their dwelling.

This triggers them to devise coping strategies like having things they absolutely need all packed together, ready to be picked up in case they have to hurry away from the scene. There are other such poor families as well as other citizens who work and live around and businesses that need to cope with the same threat. They all need to be protected. However, the poor are among the most vulnerable in a city. Mitigation and preparedness measures to protect their homes from fire and other hazards are essential to keep their assets intact. Their assets are their houses, their family members, and a few possessions.

In the first city workshop held in August 2004 in Quezon City, a barangay leader described how her community came about knowing and understanding how to deal with such threats.

The barangay has since then adopted mitigation measures through a combination of means: organizing disaster brigades, installing fire extinguishers and water tanks as fire fighting measures, conducting emergency drills at the community level and the barangay level. This sound practice originates from good interaction with a local government department. The local government officer served to facilitate the process of making it possible for residents to capably deal with fire and other hazards. However, this process was not triggered alone by a desire to be safe from fire, but was an offshoot of a new level of consciousness about community-level problems – mostly unmet needs. Through a poverty alleviation program of the national government called KALIHA- IDSS, the residents, particularly the poor, felt more confident on how to protect themselves from the next hazard. This confidence stems from being organized into disaster brigades, being more aware of danger spots and safe places through a hazard map, and in constant dialogue about how to protect their communities through fire extinguishers and water tanks.

## **Background**

In Quezon City's Department of Social Services and Development (DSSD) pursues the minimum basic needs approach of the national government. Through Executive Order 443, a national delivery mechanism to meet the minimum basic needs (MBN) of people (so-called minimum basic needs approach) was put in place. Through the sponsorship of the national government's Department of Social Welfare (DSW), a Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) group was established in the local government.

This mechanism is initiated by a participatory situation analysis. The local government DSSD through its CIDSS group hold dialogues with residents of the "depressed areas" (a term to denote very densely populated, environmentally unsanitary, poor communities with housing units made of inferior materials and unsafe construction where access to roads consists of very narrow alleys, often where drainage also flows) areas. The DSSD has made a preliminary investigation on which barangays have communities that might be categorized as "depressed areas", wherein the MBN approach can be used. One of these barangays is Bgy. South Triangle, which is located less than a kilometer away from the Quezon City Hall. Bgy. South Triangle, one of the 142 barangays in Quezon City, has 7,800 residents. In Bgy. South Triangle is a "depressed" area in the midst of affluent houses and big commercial establishments.

From the workshops held in Bgy. South Triangle, dealing with disasters ranked third among the top priorities of the residents. Bgy South Triangle's request for to build the capacity of its residents came about from a series of interventions by the DSSD using the CIDSS MBN approach. A series of minor fires from among the small houses located inside the "depressed" area also persuaded the leaders of Bgy. South Triangle to raise the awareness of residents on how to mitigate hazards that they themselves can do and to select types of mitigation measures that may have to be put in place.

## **Details**

Executive Order 443 is supported by a law called the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act (Republic Act No. 8425), which gives local governments the mandate to formulate, implement, monitor, and evaluate the anti-poverty agenda within their boundaries. CIDSS is a poverty alleviation program for depressed areas; its goal is "empowerment of disadvantaged families, communities and sectors so that they can access basic services and manage their resources." CIDSS was initiated during the term of President Ramos in 1994 under his Social Reform Agenda to respond to the unmet minimum basic needs of poor families and communities all over the country. It was (and still is) supported by international donors like the World Bank.

Priority is given to all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class municipalities and all urban poor communities, while second priority is for disadvantaged communities in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class municipalities. When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2001, features of the CIDSS were adopted to consist the government's centerpiece poverty alleviation program called Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI); the present program is often referred to as KALAHI-CIDSS. Quezon City has pursued the poverty alleviation program for its urban poor population. The local government shares in cash or in kind to carrying out activities under KALAHI-CIDSS.

The DSSD identified the depressed areas in Quezon City. It started applying the CIDSS approach in 1999. Starting with three barangays, it eventually undertook MBN surveys in 13 other barangays called expansion areas. Among the expansion areas was Bgy. South Triangle, one of three tackled by a group of five implementers from DSSD at that time.

The implementers enter the community and integrate with the community members. The community study is undertaken by a few residents themselves (participatory situation analysis). DSSD implementers guide resident interviewers how to use the MBN survey instrument, which consists of 33 items with a section that leaves some options for interviewers to use if found appropriate. A key feature of the questionnaire is the identification of the top ten unmet needs. The results are reported to the rest of the community once the survey is completed.

In Bgy. South Triangle, livelihood ranked first among the unmet needs. Dealing with fire and floods (poor drainage) ranked third a)

Upon receiving the request by the barangay leaders on building capacity among community members, the DSSD officers communicated with the DSW. DSW has developed training modules related to hazard mitigation. Based on the available training materials, the Quezon City DSSD officers then proceeded to plan for a two-day training workshop. As secretariat for a training workshop, the DSSD officers identified resource persons; some of the officers prepared to conduct the workshop themselves. A venue in the barangay was mutually agreed between the Quezon City officers and barangay officials. Quezon City government provided the training materials and refreshments during the workshop.

The results of the training workshop include the identification of what the community needs - in terms of preparation for fire and other hazards. Future actions to be undertaken the organization of the disaster brigade, provision of fire fighting implements, and conduct of emergency drills, among others. Since then, Bgy. South Triangle reduced risks from fires and other hazards through installation of fire extinguishers, simple devices such as water drums and pails, and other mitigation measures. This was the result of training sessions conducted over two days in the barangay by Quezon City DSSD.

Unmet needs require to be satisfied through different means with corresponding resource requirements. Equipment and materials may need to be purchased. A project proposal incorporating the steps and specifying outputs becomes an important tool to request for funds. DSSD then provides training on how to prepare proposals.

To address the concern about fire and floods, the barangay prepared a proposal to build capacity to manage disasters and submitted it to the DSSD. The DSSD in turn forwarded the proposal to DSWD which eventually determines the technical assistance required and funding level. For the expansion areas, barangay funds of up to 100,000 pesos maximum are recommended. The CIDSS approach is carried out with the so-called convergence policy which means that all stakeholders focus and synchronize resources. National agencies are mandated to provide additional funding to supplement barangay funds whenever necessary.

In accordance with the CIDSS procedure, a tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the local government unit, the barangay, and DSWD is executed. This MOA defines the roles and responsibilities of each party including the sanctions for violations of the agreement and of the policies and principles of the Project.

The barangay through its disaster brigade is also better prepared to cope with hazards other than fire such as accidents related to heavy rain, which is a common occurrence in the neighborhood. One feature of the CIDSS is that monitoring is undertaken through a set of indicators. Role assignments are also spelled out among the barangay management structure (BMS), the municipal inter-barangay forum (MIPF) and the regional office of the MSWD. The BMS controls internal auditing, reviews the financial report and physical accomplishment, and presents findings to the barangay assembly. The findings are reviewed by the MIPF and the DSWD regional office.

Bgy. South Triangle has two major radio and television network office and studios (also called media centers) and their transmission towers which are considered important landmarks within its boundaries. The barangay was the scene of a few exchanges between opposite camps of the military in 1986 when citizens were calling for the then President Ferdinand Marcos to concede defeat after a snap election. Recalling a major turning point in the country history, these media centers played a major role the change of political leadership at that time when the military forces for opposition managed to seize facilities and occupy the media centers. The media centers as shown by their past played a significant role in the political events of the country nationwide. These radio and television facilities are therefore in this sense critical. The media centers conduct emergency drills to prepare how to deal with extreme events. The barangay residents including those from the depressed area participate in these,

## **The Megacity Context**

The depressed area reported here is located in a barangay consisting of mixed land uses – residential, commercial and institutional. Two major radio and television network office and studios (also called media centers) in Bgy. South Triangle may set it apart from a typical barangay. However, around the depressed area are hotels, restaurants, and as pointed out above, which may be commonly observed in many built-up areas in Metro Manila. Although most of the 1, 559 sq km of informally occupied areas (informal settlements that are easily categorized as “depressed”) are found in Quezon City, the remaining 22.3% are scattered all over Metro Manila, could be dealt with in a manner similar to Bgy. South Triangle.

Apart from Quezon City, the MBN approach is being used in other parts of Metro Manila. In 2000, Makati City Mayor Elenita S. Binay signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Regional Director of DSWD to implement CIDSS in the city. (<http://www.makati.gov.ph/roms/index.php?act=cat&categ=041>, accessed June 28, 2005). It can therefore be said that other cities and municipalities in Metro Manila can follow the same process to ensure the institutional back-up for a wide range of social services and meeting unmet needs of the urban poor.

As noted earlier, KALAHI-CIDSS is a poverty alleviation strategy which intends to integrate stakeholders and the many government agencies towards a convergence of purposes, thus meeting the needs of the poor families and communities. President Arroya at her State of the Nation Address in 2003 reported that 50,047 families in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila) benefited from the program at a cost of 21 million pesos. The benefits are in terms of “medical missions, construction of potable water supply, and provision of immediate relief and rehabilitation assistance to areas affected by natural calamities” (<http://www.ops.gov.ph/sona2003/ncr.htm>, accessed June 29, 2005).

However, each barangay has a different set of priorities identified by its residents during the series of interventions by the city’s social workers. Therefore, disaster mitigation measures are likely adopted by the barangay if safety from hazards has been found unmet through regular services and under existing circumstances. Awareness of the people about safety from fires and other hazards is often triggered after their occurrence. Quezon City has had the most destructive fires in Metro Manila (see Table 1 and also reported in one of the survey responses). Fire units of the neighboring municipalities and cities respond to requests of the local government unit where a fire has broken out. Often, Quezon City has been at the receiving end. However, it is notable that a barangay in Quezon City has shown the way to reduce hazard risks within their own neighborhood and among the residents.

## Supporting Documentation

**Table 1. Disasters in Quezon City**

Date(s)	Hazard	Number of dead or missing	Number of injured	Property losses
April 2001	Fire - Manor Hotel	74 dead	28 injured	N.A.
July 10, 2000	Slide - Payatas Dump Site	224 dead 38 missing	N.A.	N.A.
May 17, 1998	Fire - Lung Center	25 dead	13 injured	1.7 Billion pesos
March 18, 1996	Fire - Ozone Disco	156 dead 96 missing	90 injured	N.A.

**Sources:** Questionnaire Survey conducted in 2004; Solidum, 2004; “Big Hotel Fires” (<http://www.iklimnet.com/hotelfires/bighotelfires.html>, accessed June 10, 2005). Note: N.A. means “not available.” Among the other big hotel fires in the Philippines according to Iklim Ltd. Sti of Turkey, the only one listed was the Regent Hotel in Manila, where the 17 died in the fire in 1985.



**Figure 1.** A crowded settlement in the depressed area of Bgy. South Triangle in Quezon City. Walking in the foreground are male members of the barangay disaster brigade, an officer from the Quezon City Department of Social Service Development, an staff member of PHIVOLCS.



**Figure 2.** A small neighborhood “sari-sari” (variety” store) along a road in Bgy. South Triangle, Quezon City with a fire extinguisher placed strategically.

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**Knowledge Base Coding Reference:**

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