

## **Promoting and Strengthening NGO Cooperation Through The Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN)**

**Mr. Emmanuel M. de Guzman**

Consultant, UN OCHA Kobe and ADRC

### **TDRM: the rational and compelling strategy for disaster reduction in Asia**

The current state of disasters has impeded sustainable development, particularly in Asia as most affected region. As more communities and populations become vulnerable to natural and human-made hazards, disaster risks increase and sustainable development become even more elusive. In this regard, the holistic approach to disaster reduction which TDRM promotes has become the rational and compelling strategy to address comprehensively the complex and related issues concerning disaster risks.

Through the active advocacy of the holistic approach by the ADRC and UN-OCHA Kobe in Asia, TDRM has emerged as a relevant and responsive disaster reduction strategy of countries in the region. TDRM is based on the gains and experiences of countries on disaster reduction through the IDNDR and ISDR. It addresses the existing gaps in disaster reduction efforts and allows for broadened involvement and interaction among various sectors of society. Consequently, it promotes coordination and collaboration, effective sharing of information and enhanced public awareness on disaster risks and reduction efforts.

### **TDRM advocacy and NGOs' vital roles**

The involvement and contributions of NGOs in disaster reduction have been significant and vital towards attaining sustainable development objectives. Generally imbued with developmental orientation in mission, work and focus, NGOs inevitably have to address the persistent problem of disasters as obstacles to sustainable development. Rationally, NGOs need to integrate disaster reduction in their plans, programs and activities if only to preserve their gains and achieve short-term and medium-term goals for effectively. The integration of disaster reduction strategies may well complement NGO efforts on poverty reduction, rural livelihood, women or marginal sector empowerment, education, environment, equality, health services, local governance, political or policy advocacy, improving quality of life, and humanitarian assistance, among others.

The capacity of NGOs as agents and partners for sustainable development cannot be underestimated. NGOs have been acknowledged to have excelled in the areas of community development, policy advocacy, emergency relief, training, research, planning, disaster mitigation, capacity building at community level, etc. Their organizational strengths and advantages include the following capabilities: community level intervention, cost-efficient delivery of basic services, bridging national development programs and beneficiaries, mobilizing people and resources for micro-level development initiatives, understanding grassroots concerns, and catalyst for change. Particularly in disaster reduction, NGOs assume important role in providing immediate humanitarian assistance, attention to low profile emergencies, and serving as channel for enhancing public awareness and education in disaster reduction.

With their comparative advantage, especially their focus on the community, establishment at the grassroots level, innovative and participatory in approach, flexibility, concern for the poor, needy and marginalized, NGOs, undoubtedly, are important partner and advocate for adopting TDRM towards sustainable development.

### **The rationale and strategies for NGO networking**

Disaster has become a critical development issue that concerns all. As NGOs assume a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of development strategies and interventions at grassroots level, networking among them is a mechanism for consolidating strengths and capacities and complementing their efforts towards desired development goals. Moreover, NGOs could benefit mutually from cooperation and collaboration, especially in improving organizational efficiency, enhancing capabilities through sharing of expertise, best practices, skills training, etc. Network activities may draw support of donors

to benefit all members and to further strengthen organizational and institutional linkages. Among the possible strategic areas for networking that are consistent with TDRM strategies are the following:

- (1) Coordination mechanism: between and among NGOs, government organizations, and international organizations (in any of the phases of disaster management);
- (2) Information sharing: efficient sharing of information on hazards, vulnerability, disaster risks and early warning, training, research/case study, available expertise and resources at various levels, etc.;
- (3) Investment for disaster reduction: policy development, standards formulation, structural disaster mitigation, etc.
- (4) Public awareness and support: increasing public awareness on disaster reduction through local events and media;
- (5) Collaboration among stakeholders: involving other sectors and groups concerned in disaster reduction, e.g. academe, media, financial institutions, etc.