

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS AN  
APPROACH TO REDUCING RISKS AMONG  
FLASHFLOOD-AFFECTED FAMILIES IN ALBAY,  
PHILIPPINES**

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**Disaster Studies Working Paper 24**

**Aon Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre**

[www.abuhrc.org](http://www.abuhrc.org)

**February 2009**

This paper is part of a series on “Making communities safer: challenges of creating effective disaster risk reduction partnerships”. The series arose out of a panel on this theme at the World Conference of Humanitarian Studies in Groningen, The Netherlands, 4-7 February 2009 ([www.humanitarianstudies2009.org](http://www.humanitarianstudies2009.org)). It includes papers given at the panel and those of others who submitted papers but were unable to attend the conference.

## **Abstract**

The flashflood in Albay in 2006 was a product of volcanic debris deposited on the slope of Mayon Volcano carried by heavy rain runoff due to typhoon Reming. This resulted in hundreds of deaths and several communities literally buried by the debris. Areas along the river pathways were declared uninhabitable and the people were prevented from coming back. They survived but they faced new risks brought by physical and economic displacement, socio-psychological stresses, breakdown of social relationships and neighborliness, and confusion in local governance.

How to re-build communities for the disaster survivors was a big challenge to the government and humanitarian organizations. Using community development perspectives and processes, a local non-governmental organization worked with the affected families in resettling on land provided by the government. Together with the people, they mobilized resources from private, government and other NGO humanitarian organizations. Through self-help mechanisms, the families worked together in organizing, planning, designing, constructing and deciding on policies pertaining to the housing program and in establishing a new community. This is an ongoing program and recent reflection shows that the reduction of further risks among those who have been affected by disasters could be effectively done through a community development self-help approach, in collaboration with external support organizations that could bring in resources that are beyond the community's capacity to produce.

Key Words: Community development, disaster risk reduction, rebuilding, housing

## **Communities at Risk**

Experiences in the Philippines show that poor people and their communities are usually the most vulnerable to both natural and human-induced disasters. Even without disasters, the poor suffer the most due to inequitable access and distribution of resources, powerlessness due to oppressive relationships and constant disappointments, or failure of governmental and institutional mechanisms to respond to poverty. The poor include poverty-stricken families living in sub-human conditions in the slums and informal settlers always fearing the coming of demolition due to large infrastructure programs in the metropolis. People displaced by involuntary

resettlement continue to wonder about their security of land tenure and their survival in the new site. There is an increasing number of victims of armed conflicts uprooted from their communities, and settlements ravished by flashfloods. Ordinary neighborhoods have been deprived of the basic services needed for socio-economic and environmental survival.

More people and communities could be added to the list, and they have more or less common attributes. A social activist provides a very apt description of this:

These are communities which have been marginalized by societal forces beyond their control, people who have accepted their fate as that of simple recipients of national and international developments ...communities and people who are capable only of reacting to conditions which threaten their very survival, and very often their reactions are nothing more than grumbling about issues but ultimately simply finding ways of individually coping with such situations...Communities which have an almost total lack of understanding of the structures that determine their lives...people who, through generations, have accepted powerlessness as a permanent feature of their lives and are thus unable to even perceive reality as problematic ...who have forfeited the right to intervene in decisions and policies that determine the quality of their lives (David,1984).

When these people are faced with natural disasters, they are the ones who have the least capacity to survive. Among the survivors, the poor are the ones who struggle the most to be rehabilitated.

In a country often visited by typhoons, flashfloods and landslides have become an ordinary feature during the rainy season. Table 1 shows the most destructive recent flashfloods and landslides in the Philippines.

**Table 1. Selected Flashfloods and Landslides in the Philippines**

<b>Flashflood and Landslide</b>	<b>Month/Year</b>	<b>Maximum Event Rainfall</b>	<b>Depth of the Flood/Mud</b>	<b>Casualties</b>	<b>Missing</b>
Ormoc City	November 1991	580.5 mm 3 days	3-4 meters	4921	3000
Camiguin	November 2001	517 mm 3 days	1.5 to 3 meters	180	72
Panaon Island	November 2003	793 mm 3 days	Covered a section of the village**	154	40
REINA, Quezon	November 2004	450 mm 3 days	4-6 meters	1068	553
St. Bernard, Leyte	February 2006	802.6 mm six days	Covered the whole village**	1447	968
Albay*	November 2006*	467 mm*	3-6 meters**	604*	419*

Unless noted, the sources of the data came from Ollet, 2008

\*Daep, n.d.

\*\* Observations by the author

As the communities are devastated and the people are displaced by disaster events, there is a need for mobilizing resources in re-building lives. Innovative approaches such as community development has been adapted as a strategy in reducing risks of vulnerable people.

### **Risk Reduction Through Community Development: A Framework for Action and Reflection**

Community Development deals with the growth and sustenance, conflict resolution, rehabilitation and transformation of marginalized communities through people's participation and collective actions to ensure the holistic and corporate well-being of the people. It means recognizing and building up the people's innate potentials and capabilities, enabling them to define their direction, and participate in the process of change through collective actions to ensure the well-being or welfare of the people. Any structural change should lead to greater fulfillment of these goals. Community Development, then, is a process of transforming the marginalized communities so that they may collectively act on their situations and on the external forces that undermine and perpetuate oppressive conditions (Luna, 1999-b).

In a broad and general sense, there are three ultimate goals of Community Development namely

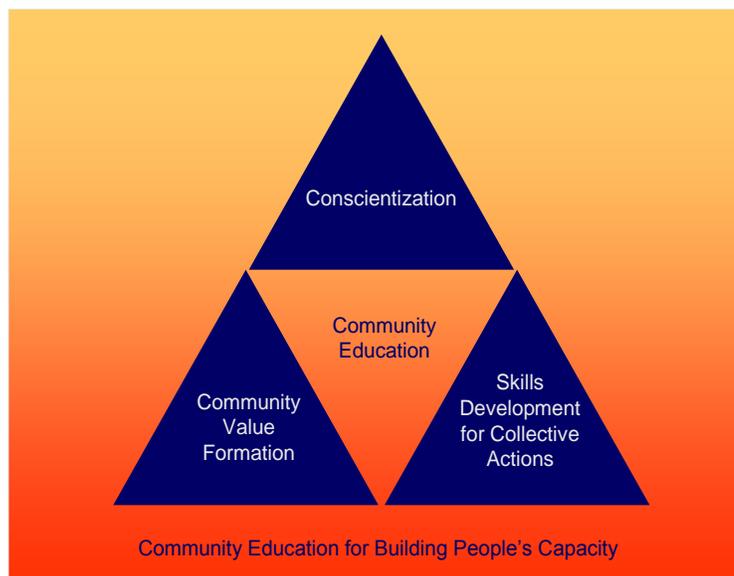
- 1) the enhancement of people's potentials and capabilities;
- 2) the active participation of the people through collective actions in the process of change and transformation;
- 3) and the promotion of the people's well being and welfare.

As a corollary to this, there are three interrelated fields of Community Development practice that correspond to the goals, namely community education (CE), community organizing (CO) and community resource and disaster risks management (CRDRM) (Luna, 1999-b).

### ***Community Education (CE)***

Community education is concerned with the enhancement of the people's potentials and capability. "Education is a potent force for social transformation in terms of upliftment of people's welfare and working towards forming alternative structures and power relations" (Tungpalan, 1991: 2). People have inherent potentials that can be developed towards individual and community transformation.

**Figure 1. Community Education**



Community education has three elements (Figure 1). The first is value formation or reorientation so that people may cultivate liberating and empowering community values. Besides

the “good manners and right conduct” values that are normally taught at home, in the school or in the church, there are equally important social values such as the sense of equity, justice, cooperation and collective concern, nationalism, gender sensitivity, environmental and risk consciousness, and the like. In fact, these social values can counter-balance the domesticating, conforming and dependency-creating values and attitude that have dominated the powerless sectors of society.

Secondly, the people have to critically understand the community and the world they are in, the forces that lead to and sustain such existence, and the way out from any oppressive relationships. Freire calls this conscientization: “The discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis” (Freire, 1970; 52).

Thirdly, to enable the people to translate their consciousness into operational and effective actions, they have to be equipped with the necessary skills for community work such as community organizing, education and mobilization, human relations and communication, conflict confrontation, planning, and management of community resources. Skills development also includes the ability to innovate and to master appropriate technology and other expertise that have been traditionally held by the educated elite and technocrats (such as those pertaining to health, energy, economic production, media and other technologies necessary for community development processes). These can be popularized, simplified and brought down to the level of the people’s understanding and capability.

### ***Community Organizing***(CO)

CO is the core method in community development. Without it, one cannot engage in developing communities.

CO is a method which refers to the activities aimed at the grouping of people to struggle for their common needs and aspirations in a given locality. CO processes involve the following activities, which may overlap and be repeated at a new level during the process of organizing: integration with the community, social investigation, problem/issue spotting, ground work, meeting, role play, mobilization, evaluation, reflection and setting up of the organization” (TWSC, 1990; 5-6).

The Community Development framework as shown in Figure 4 suggests three areas of CO, namely area-based organizing, sectoral or issue-based organizing, and building networks, alliances and coalitions (Figure 2). Community organizations, also known as people's organizations, and supra-organizations in the forms of networks, alliances and coalitions are the people's instruments in expressing their will and effecting changes through collective actions and participation in decision making. Area-based mass organizing is done within a given geographic space such as villages, or groups of adjacent communities. Sectoral or issue-based organizing is "the building of organizations, not by class, but by sectors such as those of farmers, fisher folks, urban poor, tribal (indigenous people) sectors who are usually confronted with common issues or a common enemy...." (TWSC, 1990; 6). Area-based and issue-based organizing can overlap. Community residents can be organized through area-based and sectoral organizing. Both types of people's organization can unite and group together to form alliances, networks and coalitions with horizontal relationships. Similarly, groupings with vertical relationships can also be formed through federations and confederations. Essentially, the formation of these supra-organizations is for mutual support and for strengthening collective views or positions on some issues affecting the organizations, tactically and strategically (TWSC, 1990; 6).

**Figure 2. Community Organizing**



### ***Community Resource and Disaster Risk Management (CRDRM)***

Community resources such as land, urban services, credits and capital, forests, coastal and other natural resources have always been the source of issues and conflicts among people and organizations in area-based and sectoral organizing. CRDRM is a field of study and practice in Community Development. (Figure 3). Community resource management (CRM) includes the acquisition, generation, production, development and conservation, protection, rehabilitation of community resources and the redistribution of benefits from the collective management of these resources. Community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) involves the assessment of risks and vulnerabilities, and the development of people's capacities to enable them to come out with plans and responses to mitigate disaster impacts, and to effectively respond to disaster events. Both CRM and CBDRM entail the involvement of the people in advocacy for policies and programs for resource and disaster risk management that would ultimately be for the advantage and welfare of the people and the community.

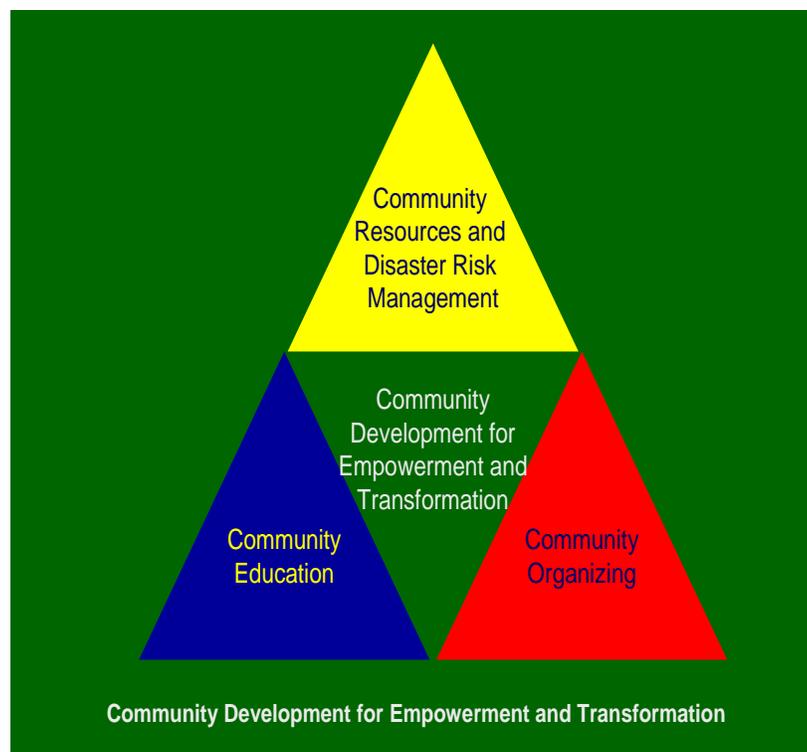
**Figure 3. Community Resource and Disaster Risk Management**



The management of community resources includes the establishment of social enterprises that will provide basic social services such as housing, education, health, recreation and transportation. Community economic development is needed to transform the existing economics by having alternative systems for production, processing and distribution of goods, services and benefits to the people. Similarly, community environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation are imperative to ensure a wholesome, livable, sustainable and ecologically-balanced habitat. There are social, economic and environmental risks that have to be properly assessed and managed to prevent or mitigate disaster events. When the resource thresholds and the environmental limits are reached or violated, disaster occurs. When economic risks are missed in the planning of livelihood projects, losses can take place.

Figure 4 presents the integrated fields of Community Development practice. In the actual practice, these fields are intertwined and in most community development programs, they emerge as program components.

**Figure 4. Community Development Framework**



## **The Community-Based Approach in Disaster Risk Management**

The emergence of community-based approaches in the Philippines has a very strong political undertone. It was a reaction and an alternative approach by cause-oriented groups during the time of the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986). The approach was used by non-governmental organizations to serve the poor and the most disadvantaged communities through several alternative community-based programs such as health, resource management, livelihoods and disaster risk management. The main features of the approach, as contrasted with the traditional delivery system, are presented in Table 2.

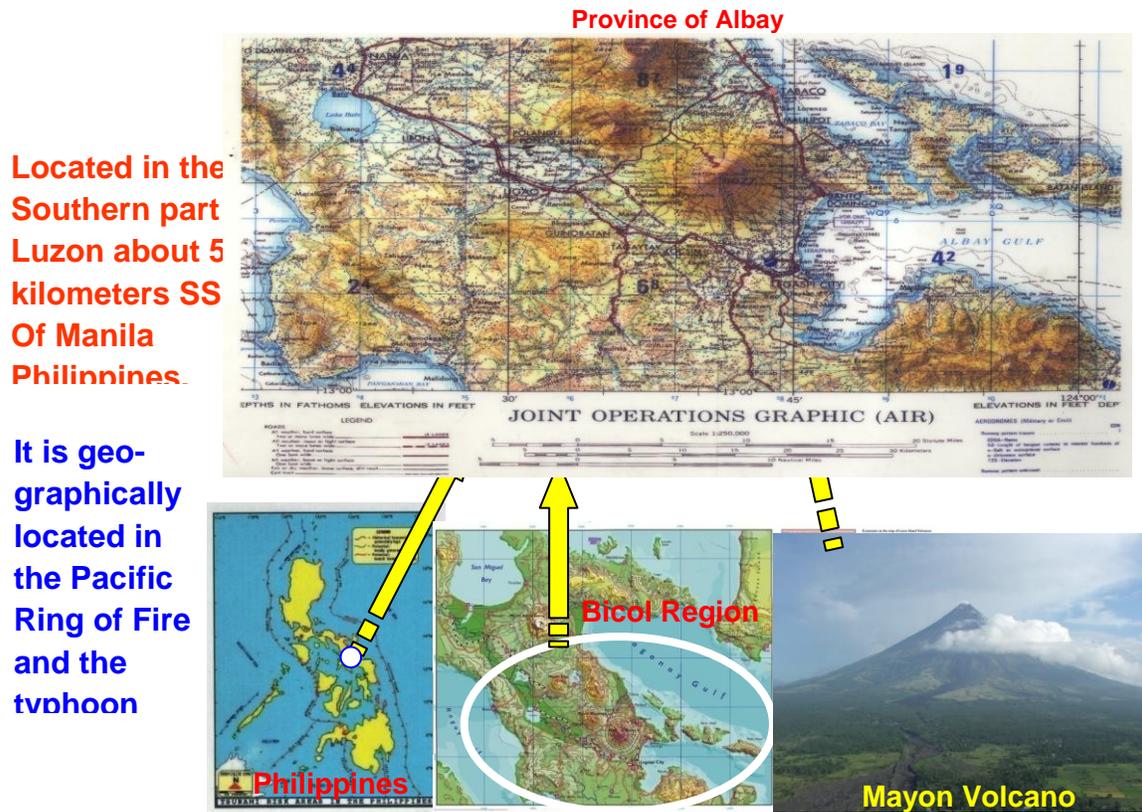
**Table 2. Features of Traditional and Community-based Approaches**

<b>Features</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Community-Based</b>
Locus of concern	Agency	Community
Participation	Token	Dominant to control
Decision making	Top down	Bottom up
Main actors	Program staff	Community residents
Resources	Program-based	Internal resources
Main method used	Extension services	Community organizing
Impact on local capacity	Dependency creating	Empowering

Community Disaster Risk Management adopts the principles of participation, empowerment and people-centered development, as well as the methods of Community Development such as community analysis, community education, conscientization, community organization and mobilization and participatory planning. These are integrated in disaster risk management processes such as emergency response, recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction, development, prevention, mitigation and preparedness (Luna, 1999-a; 11).

This paper presents a case study of how Community Development is used in disaster risk reduction by a humanitarian organization in rebuilding the lives of disaster-affected families. The context is the 2006 flashflood and its aftermath in the province of Albay. This case study was developed with the consent and participation of both the NGO and the community through in-depth interviews with community leaders, residents, the NGO's director and community development officer, and local government officials. The author also had a chance to live in the community and experience how life was in the resettlement area.

**Figure 5. Location of the Case Study Area**



Source: Daep, n.d. Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office

### **Vulnerability of Communities in Albay**

Albay is on the eastern side of the Philippines fronting the Pacific Ocean (see Figure 5). Its physical setting makes it very susceptible to typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Destructive typhoons come to the country at an average of 20 per year, most of them passing through the province, bringing strong winds, landslides and floods. Albay is also the home of the most active volcano in the country, Mt. Mayon. In 2006, there was an ash explosion from the volcano and the local government ordered the evacuation of residents living within the danger zones. There were 9,000 families and 43,000 persons affected from 32 barangays of five municipalities and three cities. There were no casualties reported due to the eruption (PDDC, 2006a).

That same year, in September, typhoon Milenyo hit Albay. Two months later, typhoon Reming (international code name: Durian) hit the country, lashing the province with strong

winds and heavy rains and causing the sediments, sands and boulders resting on the slopes of Mayon to rush down with the rain. Several communities were buried and hundreds of families were displaced. The rainfall brought by typhoon Reming in about eight hours reached 467mm (equivalent to one month's average rainfall). The flashflood resulted in 604 persons dead, 419 missing and 1,465 injured (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Final Damage Report of Typhoon Reming**

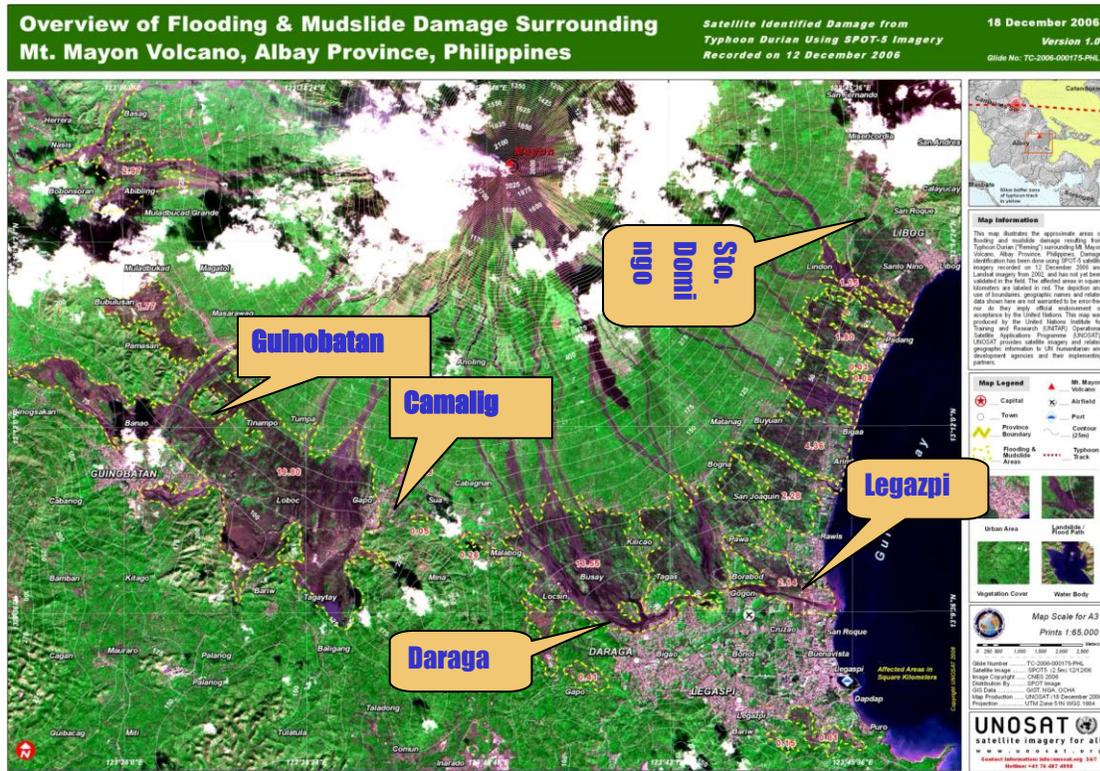
<b>Damages</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>A. Casualties</b>	
Dead:	604
Missing	419
Injured	1,465
<b>B. Damaged Houses</b>	
Totally Damaged	112,074
Substantially Destroyed	99,986
<b>C. Affected Population</b>	
No. of cities	3
No. of municipalities	15
No. of barangays or villages	667
No. of families	203,498
No. of persons	1,053,950
D. Damages to agriculture	P 533,409,734
E. Damages to livestock & poultry	P 20,754,708
F. Damages to infrastructure	P 2,659,790,191
G. Total cost of damages	P 3,230,435,702*

Source: Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, Albay Province

\* estimated at US \$ 71,787,460 at 1 \$ = P 45.

Several reasons were given for the surprising magnitude of the casualties and damage. Most of the areas hit by the mud and debris had not been affected by previous typhoons. Typhoon Milenyo had destroyed some of the evacuation centers and filled the river channels with debris from the slopes of Mayon. Commercial and other lifelines were also down due to the previous typhoon. With no power, the people could not listen to provincial preparedness and evacuation advisories through the local broadcast media. Similarly, the communication network and warning capability of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council of Albay had been destroyed by the previous typhoon (Daep, n.d).

**Figure 6. Overview of the Flooding and Mudslide Surrounding Mt. Mayon**



Source: Daep, n.d. Albay Public Safety & Emergency Management Office

### The Flight of Survivors from Barangay Banyag

One of the affected *barangays* or villages was Brgy. Banyag in the municipality of Daraga Albay. The village is 1.5 kilometers from the center of the municipality. Areas adjacent to the river were buried under the debris, affecting 419 low and middle income families. The low income families were mostly informal settlers living along the river dike. They owned their small shanty houses but the land is owned by the government. The middle income families lived in the more established subdivision whose houses were mostly bungalows, made of concrete and with larger floor areas (up to 120 square meters).

In typhoon Milenyo in September, the people of Banyag experienced rain and strong winds but the village was not flooded. Earlier on the day of typhoon Reming (November 30, 2006) most families considered the typhoon as an ordinary one. Those living in low unstable shelters moved to their neighbors in higher areas and with more stable houses as they normally did. Those living in concrete houses initially stayed and their houses became the temporary

refuge of families living near the dike. They were very confident that their places were safe until they heard warnings from neighbors that huge currents of flood water were approaching. The families moved two or three times before they settled in a safe place. Most of them evacuated when the water was already breast deep. Mang Dan, now the chairman of the Amore People Organization, said that he and his family moved out of the house only when he saw the flood rising very fast. He took off the roof so that they were able to come out:

I held my small children like a cat carrying her kittens. My wife put our youngest one year old daughter inside her shirt and was almost choked by the tight shirt. We passed through the roof, jumping from one roof to another until we reached a safe place.

Some survivors witnessed their neighbors and friends being carried by the current and shouting for help. One managed to hold on to a refrigerator and landed on a big house. But when she saw a large snake just beside her in the house, she let herself flow with the current again. She was later rescued naked. Her husband did not make it. Months later, she found out that she was pregnant. Some victims were never recovered, most probably buried by the debris. Most of the survivors spent the sleepless night wet and without food in a church located on a hill.

The next day there was a gruesome sight of dead bodies in the street. Houses were buried up to the ceiling. There was no power. People were restless physically and emotionally, always moving, crying, bewildered at their experience. Some found a space in the already cramped evacuation center in the school. Humanitarian organizations came with relief. People from all walks of life seemed to be the same during the day: had nothing but their clothes in their bodies, confused at what happened, searching for missing persons, wet and hungry.

### **Responses by a Humanitarian Organization**

One of the humanitarian NGOs that came to assist the victims of the flashflood is Operation Compassion International, Inc (OC). This is a young NGO established in 2004 to assist the victims of a calamity that struck the provinces of Aurora and Quezon. In the Quezon flashflood, more than 1000 people died and thousands of families were displaced. A team of volunteers organized themselves to provide emergency relief and medical assistance to two of the affected communities. While several organizations came and provided emergency relief assistance in

Quezon and Aurora, OC stayed and helped in re-building the devastated communities, developing a long-term, community-based development plan for their holistic transformation of communities. OC envisioned “a transformed nation where people are living out the true essence of *bayanihan*<sup>1</sup> spirit, a progressive attitude towards community welfare, empowered, productive, good steward of resources, and strong love for god and country”(OC-b,n.d.). In partnership with the government, non-government organizations, business and the church sectors, OC is committed to the national transformation by helping calamity-stricken communities via relief and emergency response operations and subsequent holistic community development. (OC-a, n. d.)

Armed with community development experience from the previous disaster work in Quezon, OC went to Albay and an initial assessment of the damages. At that time, there was an influx of emergency assistance coming from government, non-government and humanitarian organizations. OC decided to focus on rehabilitation, particularly in the rebuilding of new communities for the affected families. It became the coordinating secretariat of AYUDA (HELP) Albay, the coordinating body created by the provincial governor to facilitate the rehabilitation of the province. The provincial government gave OC the mandate to manage 2.5 hectares called Amore Transit Camp as a Transitory Housing Project. This became the resettlement area of the families from Barangay Banyag.

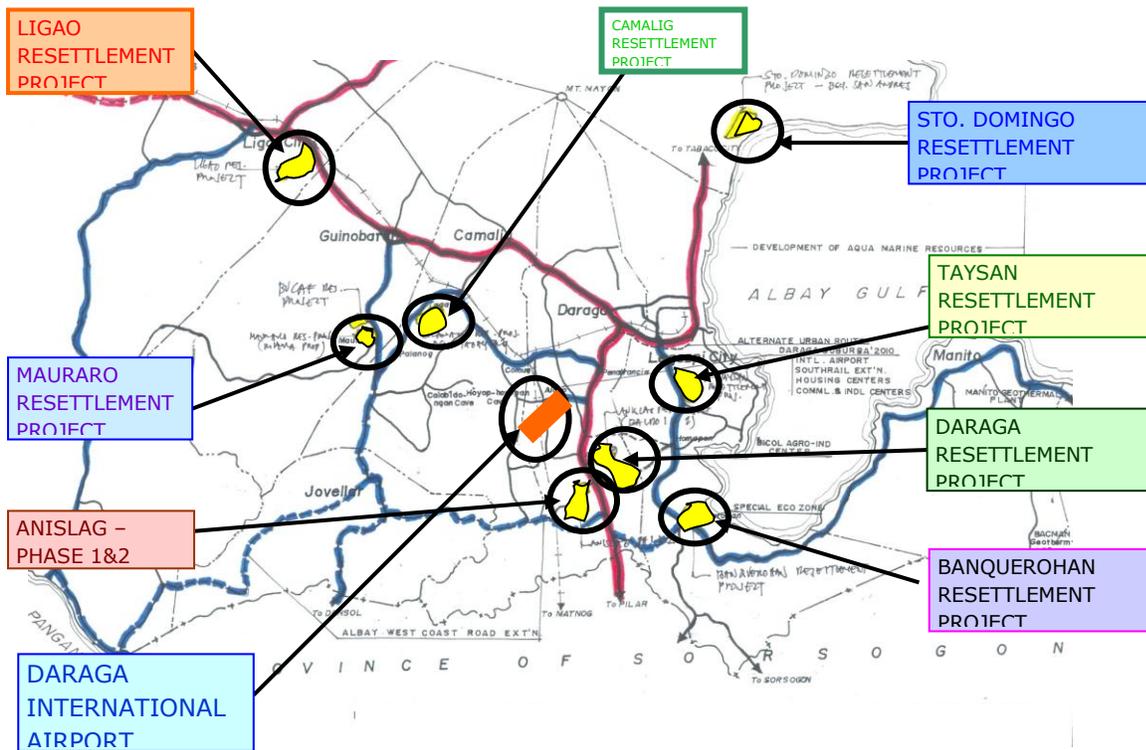
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<sup>1</sup> The Filipino tradition of helping each other.

### Amore Resettlement Village: The Building of a New Community

The Amore Transitory Housing Camp (now renamed Amore Village because of the negative connotation of transitory housing) is located in Brgy. Anislag in Daraga, 11 kilometers from the center of Daraga. The land is owned by the provincial government and OC is responsible for managing the resettlement, including the mobilization of resources to build permanent shelter for 132 families, 116 of whom came from Brgy. Banyag and 16 from Brgy. Tagas in Daraga. Other families that were displaced by the flashflood from the two barangays were dispersed and lived in other resettlement areas.

Figure 7. Resettlement Project Sites



Source: Daep, n.d. Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office

**Table 4. Family Displacement and Resettlement in Amore**

	<b>Communities Assisted by OC</b>	
	<b>Barangay Banyag</b>	<b>Barangay Tagas</b>
Total Households Prior to Disaster	960	1,530
Population	5,827	8,521
No. of displaced families	418	473
No. of families in Amore	116	16

Source: Operation Compassion

Located at the other side of Amore is a bigger resettlement area provided by the government, with housing projects supported by the Vicentian Sisters, the Catholic-based Gawad Kalinga, Compassion International, the Community Organization for People’s Empowerment (COPE) and the government’s Department of Social Welfare and Development: 1,725 families have been resettled with permanent housing in this area. While the provincial government provided the land, humanitarian organizations provided housing and related services.

The initial residents of Amore were fifty families who moved to the place in April, 2007. At first they lived in tents provided by the government welfare agency and European Union. In May, 2007, a second batch of 60 families arrived. Later, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided funding for the building of temporary housing that can last for two-three years. The evacuees were mobilized to build this, which was composed of 11 bunkhouses with ten units each, a common source of piped water, and public toilets and baths located around the bunkhouses. There are 22 families who are part of Amore but who do not live in the village because the temporary housing built was sufficient only for 110 families. They either rented apartments in the town, lived with relatives or went back to the buried community and put up temporary shelter.

When OC came to Amore with the families, they envisioned rebuilding a holistic community where the people themselves would be participants in the rebuilding process. There were several meetings to decide on the management of aspects of the temporary housing. The community members organized themselves into the Amore People Organization (APO). A team leader was elected from each bunkhouse composed of ten families each. The team leader served as the representative of the families in the committee of leaders. From among the 13 team

leaders, they elected the chairman, the vice-chairman, secretary and the treasurer. An OC community development worker lived in Amore and facilitated the organizational activities.

### **The Sambahayan Housing Program**

While community development activities were taking place, the foundation of a telecommunications company entered into a partnership with OC for a housing project. The foundation's executive director was interested in disaster risk management and adopted a housing program as its corporate social responsibility. The foundation promised to finance the housing for the 130 families and gave an initial amount of 2 million pesos. However, the financial support stopped when there was a change in the foundation's leadership. The new foundation officials changed its thrust from disaster risk management to youth and sports development. With no funds coming from the foundation, the point person of the foundation raised funds from personal donations. The combined amount was able to put up 14 duplexes for 28 housing units.

With the corporate foundation backing out, OC had no recourse but to carry on what had been started. They called the housing program *Samahayan in Albay*. *Sambahayan* is a Filipino value that encapsulates love, care and compassion for one another. OC believes in the resilient spirit of the Albay residents in renewing their lives. OC helps in building homes where love, respect, acceptance and protection are experienced by each member or *kasambahay*. It is envisioned that each *kasambahay* will be given a role to fulfill in rebuilding their lives. Homes will in turn build a community of responsible, self-sufficient and contributors in society. (OC-b, n.d.)

Unlike housing design in the adjacent resettlement, the basic housing design in Amore is a two-story duplex, with each unit having a 40 square meter floor area. The design was done in consultation with residents. OC describes its housing design framework as:

...not only concerned with giving them shelter, but rather, in providing them a new life. A renewed life to heal wounds, inspire hope and reinvigorate faith. That is why this housing program, although affordable, is of high quality. A two-storey house... with separate rooms for parents and the children to avoid

early exposure to sex and temptation of incestuous relations. Also, there is an area for business to aid in their financial needs. (OC- b, n.d.)

The construction of the housing units was done by the residents themselves. The design of the house and the housing policies were formulated by the residents, with the OC workers as facilitators. The 120 families were divided into two priority groups composed of 60 families each. The 60 families who first came to Amore were prioritized. They were divided into six teams with ten members each. Each team had to construct five duplexes. Each family contributed a member who would provide labor for the construction. For each day of work, the family worker got a kilo of rice and 50 pesos (approximately US \$ 1). In cases where the family could not send a family member to work, it hired a laborer as its contribution. So far, 28 units have been put up by the first 60 family workers. It was agreed that the first 60 families would occupy their units once the 30 duplexes are completed (6 teams x 5 duplex each team). The cost per unit now is 120,000 pesos or approximately US \$ 3,200. Recently, the government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) entered into a memorandum of agreement with OC that it would provide 70,000 pesos for each of the 100 families: this is the maximum amount that it can give for housing disaster-affected families.

Meanwhile, OC is mobilizing resources so that the housing project can continue. It has to raise 50,000 pesos per housing unit or 5 million pesos (US\$ 108,695), which is 42% of the total housing costs. With the DSWD promising to provide the bulk of the funds for the permanent housing, the Amore People Organization has started to prepare for the resumption of construction activities.

### **Guts and Gaps in Amore and OC**

Using the Community Development framework in disaster risk reduction, much can be gleaned from the experience of the Amore community and OC as a humanitarian organization facilitating post-disaster development work. Considering Community Development fields such as education, organizing and resource and disaster risk management, the experience in Amore shows that there were sincere attempts or guts to bring the three together, but there were also gaps in effectively undertaking them.

### ***Community Education***

In community education, OC has a very clear perspective of the participatory approaches and values relevant in undertaking community development in Amore. It puts a premium on the development of people's capacities and resilience and the need to have greater faith, hope unity among the community, the sense of trust and discipline, and involvement in the process of rebuilding the community. These values were inculcated in small group meetings and community assemblies. The community leaders and most of the residents are very well versed in these values. This is shown in their volunteerism in several community activities and their participation in the housing construction. One can easily observe friendliness and a sense of happiness among the people, despite their poverty. Among Filipinos, this is resilience - the ability to cope with difficult situations and be happy even in the midst of problems.

There are gaps as well. There are a minority of members of the community who seem to have not grasped the community values. The latter are described by the leaders as the "oppositionists". They are very critical in informal discussions but do not say a word during meetings. They make a small thing an issue, leading to division among the residents. There are those who violently start a fight against the community leaders. Among the concerns that the "oppositionists" raise are the delay in the completion of the housing project, the perceived closeness of the community leaders to OC, and their disagreement with some of the rules and regulations pertaining to the construction of the houses. They were questioning why they should be the one to construct the house

Residents have productive skills in carpentry, construction, baking and cooking, weaving, driving, trading and small-scale entrepreneurship. The community leaders have skills in planning community activities and mobilizing the members. However, there is a need for the enhancement of community development skills such as assessment and documentation, facilitation, conflict management and human relations, policy development and monitoring, and organizing. These skills have to be developed for all, and not just among the leaders.

### ***Community Organizing***

The community is organized. Each bunkhouse has ten families that compose a small group with an elected group leader. From the 13 small group leaders, the residents elected the four officers namely the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer. In each small group, there is also a

secretary, treasurer and committee members for health and sanitation, education, peace and order, housing and finance. Communication and mobilization in the organization is facilitated through this set-up. However, most of the communications are verbal, making it more vulnerable to misunderstanding, misquotation, and forgetfulness.

Although the organization is functioning, there are no by-laws yet. Rules are formulated as the need arises, such as the procedures for election, and the housing policy.

In August, 2006, the Chairman of the Amore People Organization was elected as the President of the Albay Mabuhay Village Federation. This is a network of 14 organizations in the resettlement areas in Brgy. Anislag. It aims to assist local organizations in facilitating resources and processes for the benefit of the families living in the resettlement areas. The federation worked for the change of the name of the place from resettlement to a village, which was approved by the provincial council. In collaboration with the provincial government, the federation sponsored training programs on haircutting and gardening. They had swine vaccination and castration services.

A community development worker assigned by OC, a social worker by profession, lives in the community and does community assessment and integration, assists the groups and the people's organization, facilitates the development of policies, and serves as liaison officer between the community and OC in overseeing the housing project.

### ***Community Resource and Disaster Risk Management***

The education and organizing activities in Amore are not ends by themselves. They are instruments in developing people's capacities to improve their well-being and welfare. A basic component of welfare is survival and security from socio-economic, political, physical and environmental threats. The relocation removed the risk of being engulfed again by the flood and debris from Mayon Volcano. The new village is much safer, located at a higher elevation, with no river to flood or erode land, and no mountain and landslides.

The new location, however, brought new challenges and risks. The village is still within the typhoon belt and the new design new two-storey duplex houses are at risk from strong winds. In their present temporary housing, the people complain about the lack of privacy as they can hear their neighbors' voices and noise. This is one reason why they want the housing project to be completed.

When the families survived the flashflood in 2006, they had nothing but their clothes; some had not even those. They lost their houses, lands, investments and other properties. They were thankful that they lived, though many lost their relatives. Now, as one visits their temporary housing, one can notice the growing normalcy in their lives. They have acquired basic household implements, with some having televisions and refrigerators. Electricity and water are provided free by the government. Among the former middle-income families, the new situation is far less convenient. However, for some, even the temporary housing is a lot better than the shanty houses they had before, and are they thankful that they have the chance to own a house in the near future.

The disaster and its memory have affected the residents' mental health. They told how they get nervous at the sound of rain. They still dream about it and tears came to their eyes when they related their stories. One said that she could not look at the place where she used to live every time the vehicle she was riding on passed through it.

The physical displacement of the families has also dislocated them economically. Whereas before, they could just walk into town proper, now they have to spend no less than a dollar in going to and from town. Those who were engaged in trading and vending lost their capital and could not start anew because the market is far away. Everybody agrees that employment and new sources of livelihood are the most crucial need at this point in time.

OC's community development work focuses on capacity building, organizing, and the housing program. The scheme for housing construction where the people themselves build their own home has multiple advantages in alleviating socio-economic and mental stress. Socially, a sense of community is created as they work together in teams. Economically, the workers are given a minimal amount and food for work that can help sustain their daily needs. Mentally, building their own house keeps them busy and keeps them away from reminiscing about the past that triggers self-pity. There seems to be a community feast when construction is taking place. As the men work on the house, the women are vending food or providing assistance to the workers and the children playing all around. There is a sense of fulfillment instilled for they know that the houses they are building will become their homes once completed. As OC says, "building homes... restoring dignity" (OC-b,n.d.).

## **Community Development Strategies for Risk Reduction**

The families who survived the flashflood were thankful that they were saved. However, there faced other risks as survivors. The new risks they face and the community development risk reduction strategies are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Disaster Risks and Reduction Strategies**

<b>Disaster Risks</b>	<b>Risk Reduction Strategies</b>
Physical risks due to vulnerable location of the former community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The former community has been zoned by the local government unit as a vulnerable area and not fit for habitation</li> <li>▪ Resettlement to new area</li> <li>▪ Families remain in the former area during daytime and when the weather is fine</li> </ul>
Break up of neighborliness and other social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resettling families coming from the same community</li> <li>▪ Clustering of the families and formation of people's organization</li> <li>▪ Training and value orientation seminars</li> <li>▪ Formation of teams in constructing the houses</li> </ul>
Psycho-social stresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Counseling services provided by the NGO staff</li> <li>▪ Value formation activities such as team building and bible studies</li> <li>▪ Working together in housing construction</li> <li>▪ Community gathering and celebration</li> <li>▪ Formation of a music band group among the youth</li> </ul>
Economic dislocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Credit facility started by the government welfare agency</li> <li>▪ Food for work and allowances for working in construction</li> <li>▪ Government subsidy for the cost of water and electricity</li> </ul>
Confusion in community politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integration of the residents in the new village</li> <li>▪ Strong coordination with the local government unit, the NGO and the community</li> <li>▪ Formation of the people's organization and involvement of people in decision making</li> <li>▪ Community leadership development</li> </ul>

## **Roles of Humanitarian Organizations in Community Development**

Theoretically, communities are said to be empowered when they themselves are the ones making the decisions affecting their lives. Initially, external organizations have a major role in the process of empowerment, and gradually reduce their role as the people are able to decide and perform tasks. In the case of communities that are ravaged by disasters, the process of

empowerment can take longer due to the socio-economic, emotional and mental healing that should be addressed.

In the case of Amore and OC, they have been partners for less than two years. OC adopts a participatory approach by facilitating decision making among the people. However, there is a need to develop the leaders' and the people's organization's capacity to manage their own affairs. Understandably, the leaders still look up to the OC leadership in terms of strategizing what is to be done in the community and in mobilizing resources so that the housing projects can be completed. Still feeling the sense of loss, the partnership serves as a concrete and visible manifestation of caring and compassion. It is also a concretization of the disaster risk reduction principle that the less vulnerable must assist the more weak.

The experience shows the need for humanitarian organizations in mobilizing material and financial resources to meet the basic needs of disaster victims, but with an empowering perspective in the process of giving. Receiving aid like dole outs helps alleviate emergency needs, but can create more devastating effects such as dependency and powerlessness. Producing services with the direct inputs of the disaster-affected families is both physically and inwardly rewarding. It symbolizes the rebuilding of their lives with their own will.

Collaboration and faithfulness to commitments made by humanitarian organizations are core values that have to be respected and put into action. Both the Amore community and OC looked forward to the commitment made by the corporate foundation to take care of the housing program, but this was not fulfilled, resulting in the people becoming restless and confused. Disappointment like this creates distrust and greater uncertainty among those whose lives have been de-stabilized by disasters. It is pertinent to remember that these families are very vulnerable and human errors can aggravate the very volatile socio-psychological make-up of disaster victims. Recently, the government released finance for the housing program. The construction of the houses was resumed and the people were again mobilized. Although the funds came from an external source, this is an expected responsibility of the government agency. The people were not receiving them as a dole that instills dependency. Reducing risks among the families already affected by disasters is a right of the people and a responsibility of the state and humanitarian organizations in ensuring human security.

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