# COMMUNITY DISASTER MANAGEMENT
## AS AN AREA OF STUDY AND PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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## THE CHANGING SCENE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

C ommunity Development (CD) theory and practice change in time. When CD was first introduced in the 1950s from the west, it was anchored on the functional perspective that development can take place through consensus building and partnership between the government and the local people. Thus, CD became a very popular way of engaging the people in implementing community projects planned from above.

In the 1970s, a new perspective on CD evolved which put emphasis on structural analysis and on community organizing as an approach in confronting and challenging the status quo. Adopting the conflict perspective to induce social change for development, CD proponents provided an alternative perspective and methodology to mainstream thought and practice.

This was done through organizing communities and sectors to challenge the Marcos dictatorship. Community development programs integrated CO and other participatory strategies as a venue or entry point for organizing. In preparation for the eventual transformation of the socio-economic and political structures, initiatives were carried out which adopted the tenets of the alternative paradigm.

With non-governmental organizations spearheading the propagation and practice of socio-economic work, the organized communities became the venue for alternative health and educational systems, science and technology, and new methods of production and distribution of goods and benefits. In some areas, the people instituted reforms for bringing peace and justice in their communities.

From being too political in the 70's and early 80's, a shift in focus took place after the ouster of the dictator. With Marcos gone, the call for sustained growth and strength in sustaining the organizing efforts received lesser response among the communities.

Socio-economic work became the rallying focus of organizing. New centers and arenas of power, in addition to the political one, such as economic empowerment were pushed. Those who were less concerned with the political agenda started to undertake social services and economic projects, but using the organizing and empowering concepts. At the same time, the support for organizing projects became lean as funding institutions became more interested in projects that provide tangible and material impact for the local communities.

But unlike the small, pragmatic and petty community projects that simply aimed to cushion the misery of the people, the socio-economic works by the organized groups were ideologically and politically motivated, aimed at empowering the local communities in developing the basic services and the economic base. These found ways through

community resource management for the upland, foothills, floodplains and coastal agro-resource zones. Many activists who had training in the natural, basic and applied sciences pushed for socio-economic transformation of these communities.

When natural disasters, one after the other, struck the country in the 90's, a community-based approach was adopted mostly by non-governmental organizations in facing the new challenge. Suddenly, a number of NGOs which were undertaking organizing and socio-economic projects in their areas were confronted with disasters brought by earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruption and lahar flow. The communities and people whom they had assisted or organized were being isolated, destroyed or, at worst, vanished from the surface. At the same time, the massive disaster prompted other development NGOs to focus on disaster relief operation and rehabilitation.

*Devastation wrought by earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruption and lahar flow struck the country in the 90s, prompting development NGOs to focus on relief and rehabilitation efforts.*

In a paper that reviews community development as a practice and as an academic discipline, three fields of CD were put forward, namely: Community Education (CEd), Community Organizing (CO) and Community Resources Management (CRM) (Luna, 1998). Two of the areas of CRM relate to the environment, namely Community Environmental Management (CEM) and Community Disaster Management (CDM). This paper provides an initial framework for the integration of CDM as an area of study and practice in Community Development.

## NATURAL EVENTS AS A RESOURCE OR AS A HAZARD

Community Resource Management, being a field of study and practice in Community Development, must be based on a framework that can explain the interrelationship between natural events and the environment in a locality. An ecological framework distinguishes between natural events and their interpretation as natural hazards or resources. Natural events are considered resources if these events occur within a normal range of magnitude and frequency. When these events occur beyond the normal measure, then these events are considered extremes. These extremes become natural hazards if they pose a danger to human life and property. For example, a severe earthquake in a remote and unpopulated area is not a hazard but only an extreme natural event. The conflict between the natural event system and the human system results in a natural hazard. (Smith, 1992; 9-10)

Any physical or environmental element relevant to human survival, like rainfall, can occur within an acceptable range of variation for the magnitude that is within the shaded zone (See Figure 1). At this point, insignificant damage occurs because the variation of the environmental element falls within the expected performance. When the variability exceeds the "threshold beyond the normal band of tolerance", the environmental element becomes a hazard because it creates stresses to society.

**Figure 1. Ecological Framework on Hazards and Resources**
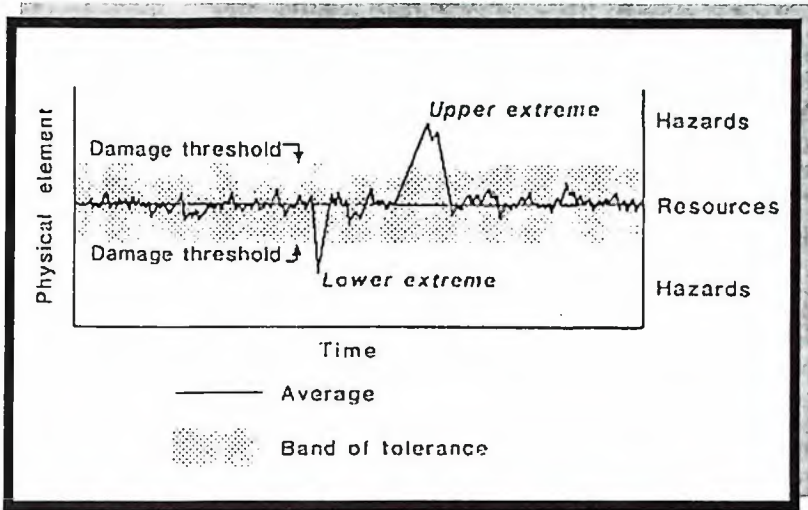


*Source: Smith, 1992, modifying framework of Hewitt and Burton (1971)*

There is a very thin line between resources and hazards. In reality, environment is "neutral and it is only human location, action and perception which identify resources and hazard within the natural events". Both physical exposure to the environmental element and human vulnerability are main factors that determine human sensitivity to environmental hazards (Smith, 1992: 10-11).

## DISASTER AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Disaster has always been full of drama. It changes lives and communities as well. It can instill selfless giving among the people and move them to volunteerism. It goes to the news headlines. It becomes the subject of stories that are passed on and relayed as similar events take place. Everybody would always have a story to contribute, affirming the social attributes of disaster in a community.

My own story about disaster has not only affected my views on disaster— it has also kindled my interest in this field, hoping to better understand the phenomenon that is shaping many communities today.

On July 16, 1990, *I was having a meeting with my three CD practicum students at the PRRM office in Munoz, Nueva Ecija when we suddenly felt the wall and the floor trembling. Remembering the 1969 earthquake that caused hundreds of deaths in the Ruby Tower apartment, my instant reaction was to stand up and go out of the door which was just at my side. Upon standing up, the chandelier fell right on the seat where I was sitting. Outside, I was moving like Travolta dancing "Saturday Night Fever" involuntarily, with my feet stamping wide apart for balance, alternately keeping my eyes on the ground for possible breaks, and on the air for possible electric wire or debris that might fall.*

*When the trembling stopped, we sighed with relief because no one among us was hurt and the property losses in the office were not that much. There was a temporary news blackout, but we heard that in the nearby Central Luzon State University (CLSU), just about a kilometer away from us, the library collapsed and one of the deans died. Later in the afternoon, we learned that Munoz; Nueva Ecija itself was the epicenter of the earthquake. A four-story building in Cabanatuan fell to the ground. That night, I could not sleep. I was thinking of the wall near me that might fall on me in case of aftershocks, which, we were told, were usually stronger and more dangerous. More than that, I was very worried about my own family, my wife and three sons back in Metro Manila.*

*The next morning, I went to see the school building that collapsed in Cabanatuan City. It was a gruesome sight. I could not believe what I was seeing. A combination of fear, anger, pity and anxiety overcame me as I witnessed the rescuers trying to penetrate the massive floor beams that had been compressed to the ground. Inside were hundreds of high school students while outside were panicking parents waiting for bodies being recovered. As I watched, I said, "if I had slower reflexes, I would have been one of the casualties as the chandelier that fell on my seat would have directly hit me on the head."*

The 1990 earthquake caught the attention of both national and international bodies, not only because of the human drama in it, nor because Baguio City was devastated by it, but because the 1990s had been declared by the United Nations as the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction. Some Filipinos even joked that we are up to date in terms of trends, disaster included. It somehow signaled the regiments of disasters to come forth on Philippine soil and waters in the last decade of the century: Mt. Pinatubo eruption, flash floods in Ormoc, the eruption of Mt. Mayon, a tidal wave in Mindoro, continuing lahar flow in Central Luzon, El Nino, and now La Nina. I need not mention the sea tragedies, with the latest Sulpicio Lines ship sinking just recently.

The social complexities ramifying from disaster events point to the fact that disaster is indeed a social phenomenon. While it is common to designate disaster in terms of their physical agents, natural events "have social consequences only as a result of the actions of human beings and societies" (Dynes, 1992: 15).



SCHOOL TURNED EVACUATION CENTER, *the St Scholastica Academy Evacuation Center in San Fernando shelters the evacuees.*

Because of the need to produce economic goods and services from the utilization of the nation's resources, the risks or possibilities of a disaster are often not given prime consideration in planning. For example, it is very alarming that massive construction is allowed in reclaimed areas such as Manila Bay. While it is true that the area can generate substantial income due to the high price of the land, the risks involved in developing areas like this are ignored.

The same is true in most of the middle class residential communities now invading the picturesque but unstable mountainside. The interests of developers for immediate gains, as well as the buyers' and residents' desire for more aesthetically located homes, put aside the dangers these locations pose to the occupants, as well as to those who will be affected in the lowland. The situation has become worse due to deforestation, quarrying and mining operations along the watersheds, totally unmindful of possible consequences like the Ormoc flash flood in 1991.

The growth of population and the shortage of land have also pushed the poor further and further to marginal lands such as ravines, steep slopes or even riverbeds and banks (OUNDRC, 1977; 14). In both urban and rural communities, it is not surprising to hear about babies falling into the waters because their houses protrude over the river, or of clusters of lightly constructed houses being washed away by strong currents.

The most vulnerable individuals and groups — the poor, children and the elderly, those with disabilities, indigenous people, women, and communities marginalized by the uneven and exploitative utilization of environmental resources usually end up as victims of disasters. In a "no-disaster situation", these people are already much in need. What more when disaster comes!

In addition to the disasters triggered by natural events, there are man-made disasters that place people and

communities in greater misery. These include the displaced communities caught in armed conflict, those forcefully placed in hamlets, the demolished and dislocated settlements, the victims of arson done to clear the land of squatters, and the struggling peasants being dispossessed of their land to give way to land conversion.

All these are communities that the discipline of Community Development wishes to address.

## COMMUNITY DISASTER MANAGEMENT AS A RESPONSE TO DISASTER

The increasing dangers to the world environment posed by natural hazards require modern disaster management framework and processes. As a comprehensive and continuous activity, disaster management should not be confined to periodic reactions to individual disaster events. Rather, those in charge of disaster management have to deal with a wide range of policy, planning, organizational, operational concerns and other related matters on a continuing basis. (Thomson, 1992 in Carter, 1992; XIX).

> *Local communities are those social units where there is the greatest potential for impact.... as a collectivity has greater resources to respond to the social disruption than do individuals, groups and organizations.... local communities are likely to become involved in responding to disasters prior to the involvement of social units in the larger society or international system.... In addition, the local community is a generic form of social organization in every society, since it has a territorial base and is organized to "solve" certain problems for that population.* (Dynes, 1992; 16)

The view that disaster is a social rather than natural phenomenon has implications in addressing the need for disaster reduction (Dynes, 1992:5).

⇨ Prevention and mitigation must stress social, rather than physical solutions.

⇨ Disaster planning is not primarily the search for the implementation of technological solutions.

⇨ The emphasis on the social allows for the opportunity for pro-active, rather than reactive strategies. It is possible to take actions prior to the appearance of the physical agent.

⇨ The emphasis in planning can be on internal, rather than on external factors. The potential threat is not "out there", but resides in the "internal" flaws within the social system.

⇨ Occurrences of disasters have to be considered as part of the nation's development process.

Disaster affects various levels of social units – individual, group, organizational, community, society and international – with increasing structural complexity. (Drabek, 1986, cited by Dynes, 1992; 16). It is argued that the focus of planning and action, in order to have the greatest potential impact in enhancing disaster reduction, would be the community level.

In the same manner that community development processes have been adopted and integrated in the management of community resources, as in the case of community-based coastal resource management, social forestry, primary health care and the like, the same methods have been used, with the corresponding modifications, to fit the particularities of the disaster situation.

Anchored on the same principles of participation, empowerment and people-centered development, the processes of community analysis, community education and conscientization, community organization and mobilization, and participatory planning have been integrated in the disaster management processes such as, emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

Unlike in the past where responses to disaster were associated with relief bags that only resulted in a dole out mentality and greater dependency, there have been several efforts, especially by non-governmental organizations, to break away from these practices. It is maintained that relief operations have a significant role in a particular stage of disaster management. However, it is only an emergency response and ultimately, it is the rehabilitation and development of self-propelling communities that stands as the paramount goal.

In practice, disaster victims have learned to organize themselves as survivors and partners in development (Luna, 1997). Support institutions have established networks to facilitate coordination and resource mobilization. Recently, initiatives to organize individuals involved in disaster management were done in preparation for greater recognition of the disaster management sector and practitioners.



*Community analysis, community education and conscientization, community organization and mobilization and participatory planning have been integrated in disaster management processes.*

These processes are integrated in phases that comprise the disaster management cycle or continuum (Garcia, 1994; 3-4):
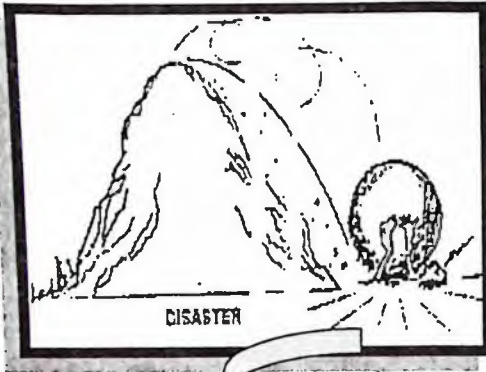
*PHASES OF THE DISASTER*



DISASTER

### DISASTER

A serious destruction of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources.

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Activities undertaken immediately following a disaster. It includes damage and needs assessment, immediate relief, rescue, and debris clearance.

### RECONSTRUCTION

Return of the community to the pre-disaster situation, which includes replacement of infrastructure, lifeline facilities and putting order in the physical environment, utilizing post–disaster assistance to improve long– term development prospects.

### REHABILITATION

Activities that are undertaken to help the victims return to "normal" life and be re-integrated into the regular community functions. It includes restoration of repairable public utilities, basic services, housing and resettlement inclusive of provision of new livelihood activities.

### DEVELOPMENT

Relationship of disaster-related factors with national development planning. This planning should include mitigation measures and should consider potentials for increased disaster risk.

## *MANAGEMENT CYCLE OR CONTINUUM*

### PREVENTION

Measures that actually stop disasters from occurring, e.g. artificially producing rain to prevent drought.


PREVENTION

### MITIGATION

Measures to reduce the impact of disaster, e.g., constructing sabo dams to control lahar flow.


MITIGATION
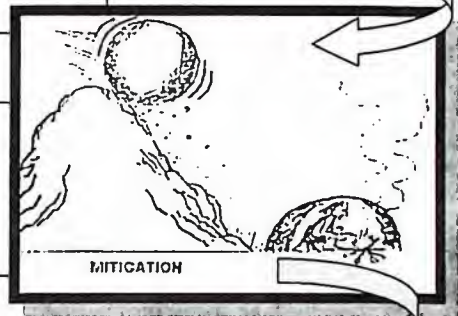
### PREPAREDNESS

Measures taken to be able to deal with threats when it occurs, e.g., warning and evacuation. Such measures are usually aimed at minimizing loss of life, disruption of critical services, and damage.


PREPAREDNESS
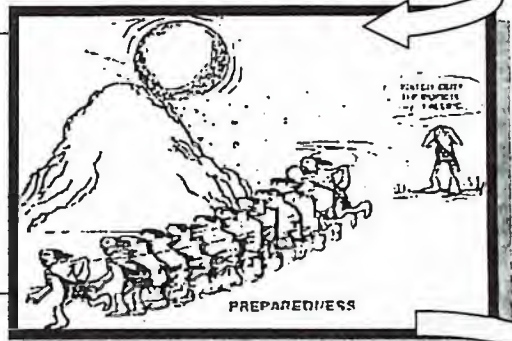
### WARNING

Information given to the public when a threat has been identified and assessed as about to affect a particular disaster area.


WARNING

In summary, the increasing vulnerability of people and communities, aggravated by the economic and financial crisis, is pushing people and communities to disaster. Adopting participatory approaches and responses to disaster have been made more appropriate through the community disaster management framework being practiced in the Philippines today.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Community Development Education (CDE) refers to formal academic training and studies in community development.

At the Department of Community Development (DCD), College of Social Work and Community Development, community disaster management (CDM) is incorporated in the Field Instruction Program. However, no course exists on CDM, except its inclusion as a topic in some courses in social realities, community organizing, planning and administration, and community resources management.

The incorporation of CDM in community development education evolved from the fact that Community Development concepts, principles and processes such as community education and awareness building, community organizing, community mobilization, and community planning and resource management have been integrated in managing community disasters.

Disaster being a social phenomenon means that the human system and the community are significant factors in the occurrence, prevention and mitigation of disasters. A disaster can alter the formation, growth, sustenance and expansion of communities. Comparing a community to a collective organism with many parts, unmanaged disaster can result in pre-mature division, destruction or dissolution. If the community is able to withstand the hazards because of

a certain level of capacity, then such experience becomes an enabling factor that can reduce its vulnerability to future disasters.

For this reason, it is imperative to understand the phenomenon so that the methods of interventions in the community can be assessed, documented, improved, modified, disseminated and applied to enhance the development of the community.

*Community Disaster Management and the Field Instruction Program.*    It was in 1990 when the Department of Community Development ventured into community disaster management.    From the experiences in incorporating CDM in its Field Instruction Program, four schemes have been practiced, namely:

**a. Self-Initiated Program.**    The 1990 earthquake prompted the College to launch its own Relief and Rehabilitation Program in Brgy. Estrella, Rizal, Nueva Ecija, where it undertook site selection, community assessment, resource generation, relief operations and rehabilitation work.    During the first semester of 1990-1991, alternative classes were conducted, focusing on disaster management. Students, faculty and staff volunteers were sent to the project site to assist in the operations. In the second semester, social work and community development students were fielded in the community.

The program documentation and evaluation reported that primarily as an academic institution, the College

*... Acted more like a private voluntary development agent when it sent reconnaissance teams to two of the worst hit provinces... Armed with plenty of good intentions but backed up by limited resources, the CSWCD appears to have committed itself to an impossible mission. Unable to tie up with a partner development agency to help defray field costs and also unable to raise enough funds to continue the program on its own, the CSWCD was forced to terminate the program prematurely...*

... The CSWCD experience shows that community empowerment is a key concept and an integral component of disaster management. Communities which hardly get their rightful share of basic facilities and services during normal times become even more isolated from access to relief and rehabilitation assistance during times of widespread calamity.... The CSWCD found out that some two weeks after the earthquake, the barangay had not yet received any relief assistance. An empowered community would not simply have waited it out but would have exerted some effort to gain access to relief goods and services coming into the province." (Fernandez, 1994; 66- 69.)



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT *is a key concept and an integral component of disaster management.*

b. **In Partnership with NGOs.** Partnership with the NGOs was done with the latter serving as field placements for Bachelor in Science and Community Development and Masters in Community Development students enrolled in practicum courses. Among these NGOs are the following:

*Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement*

When the earthquake struck in 1990, the PRRM was already a partner of the CSWCD. Three undergraduate students were fielded in Nueva Ecija under the supervision of this writer. Before the earthquake, the students were involved in PRRM's rural democratization program for the farmers. This program was also shaken when the earthquake shook Central and Northern Luzon, isolating some villages in the nearby municipality, namely Caranglan. PRRM-Nueva Ecija refocused the program, took the initiative to reach the communities, and mobilized volunteers for relief and rehabilitation.

Later, the students reported that initially, they did not know how to go about the task of doing relief. They said that they had been oriented to political and socio-economic work, but had no background in handling relief operations.

However, by using their stock knowledge in community organizing and development, they were able to systematize the work of forming community core groups to facilitate operations and, in succeeding activities, in mobilizing resources. It was reported that the work was a very tiring and draining job. They were faced with actual dangers they never expected, like being stranded in the community because of landslides. Despite these and the lack of formal training in disaster management, they learned a lot from the process as they used basic community organizing principles and processes in doing relief operations (Cagioia, de la Cruz and Rosales, 1990).

*Philippine Peasant Institute*
*Project Development Initiative*

These two NGOs jointly implemented a resettlement cum agrarian reform program in Brgy. Bulawen, Palauig, Zambales for those displaced by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. Based on the conceptual development framework that:

Agrarian Reform = Land Transfer + Support Services + Social Infrastructure Building

the program distributed 429 hectare of land covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program to the beneficiaries. It also promoted and implemented sustainable programs primarily on food production, health, marketing and income generation, as well as a model agrarian reform community and relocation site (Tanchuling, 1995; 3-5).

The students had the opportunity to learn about partnership between the NGOs and the government, particularly the Department of Agrarian Reform with whom the implementing NGOs had an agreement. It showed that if there is political will in distributing land and in providing support services to the peasants, then, the goals of the agrarian program can be achieved.

*Citizens' Disaster Response Center*
*(CDRC) - CONCERN*

Even prior to the 1990 disaster decade, the Department of Community Development faculty and the Office of Continuing Education of the College had already established links with the CDRC and CONCERN, an NGO providing services to farmers in Central Luzon. When the earthquake and the Mt. Pinatubo disaster struck Central Luzon, BSCD students were fielded in peasant communities to assist in rehabilitation efforts.

The partnership with the NGOs had given the students and the faculty of the Department varied exposures and experiences in disaster management. At the same time, the students and faculty provided inputs in terms of organizing, research, training and mobilizing skills that were incorporated in the disaster management processes.

Management wise, this partnership relieved the Department from the financial and material burden of undertaking and maintaining community-based programs. *However, since the NGOs managed these programs, the DCD could not have a direct hand on programs that could enable the students to achieve other learning goals. Other knowledge and skills in community development could not be addressed by the partner NGO because of their specific program contents and processes.*

For example, there was a case when practicum students were given clerical and documentation tasks by the NGO, instead of more exposures in community organizing and mobilization. In cases like these, the faculty supervisor

had to make arrangements with the NGO so that the students could be given work assignments where they could maximize learning. This situation is easier to manage in a College- or Department-initiated program. The faculty project leader and the faculty supervisor can jointly program activities for student involvement in such a way that project and academic objectives could be met simultaneously.

**c. In Partnership with the University's *Pahinungod* Program.** When the University established a community volunteers and service learning program, the *Pahinungod*, the DCD linked up with this Office for placement in communities affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in Pampanga and Tarlac.

The *Pahinungod* Office provided material assistance to communities through its extensive linkages with various governmental, non-governmental, academic, alumni and international entities. At the same time, the students fielded in the communities received logistics support from the *Pahinungod* program.

The students placed in Pahinungod were fielded in evacuation areas being assisted by the Pampanga Social Action Center. Graduate and undergraduate students were also fielded in Capas, Tarlac. Since this is a recent experience, an evaluation of the partnership would be necessary to be able to synthesize the lessons from it.

**d. In Collaboration with a Participatory Action Research.** Dr. Angelito Manalili, a DCD faculty, led a Participatory Community Disaster Management Project on evacuation and resettlement areas covered by the Pampanga Social Action Center. Funded by the Mt. Pinatubo Disaster Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, the action research engaged graduates and undergraduates in undertaking participatory management of the evacuation and resettlement.

*Training in Community Disaster Management (CDM).* Capability building among disaster workers has been extensively accomplished through informal training.

As already mentioned, there is no existing formal course or subject that is regularly offered in the academe on Disaster Management, except for occasional seminars or training courses. Ironically, the materials and the training modules that exist today on disaster management are already voluminous. It might be hard to accept but the fact is, the experiences, researches and extension activities accumulated in the field have not yet been translated into academic courses that can systematize the teaching and dissemination of community disaster management concepts and processes.

It can be argued that since NGOs, government agencies, the church and other organizations are already doing training on community disaster management, formal training by the academe will just duplicate their work. This argument does not take into account the nature of training being done on the one hand by the above organizations, and on the other, by the academe. The implementing organizations normally train workers on the operations and transfer of knowledge, skills and attitude on disaster management. This is different from academic teaching that involve not just the presentation of concepts and process, but the analysis, the critique, the questioning and the synthesis of practice and theory. Instead of simply being taught the guidelines and mechanics of disaster management, teaching in the academe also means doing research to validate concepts and analyze processes to improve practice. While university people have contributed by doing extension and research work, their output have not yet been integrated in the Community Development curriculum. Doing this can help in refining both the theory and practice of disaster management.

For this reason, community disaster management courses can be developed for the undergraduate and graduate levels*. The undergraduate course can focus on

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* As a response to this, a graduate CD seminar course on Community Disaster Management was piloted by Prof. Luna in the second semester of AY 1998-1999.

direct CDM practice while the graduate can focus on the management of CDM programs.

## THE CDM CHALLENGES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As an academic discipline and a practice, Community Development is concerned with the welfare, formation, growth, reintegration and rehabilitation of communities through participatory processes. Institutionalizing the practice and study of community disaster management is a·way of institutionalizing disaster prevention, mitigation and reduction. This poses several challenges to Community Development, as described by the acronym, DISASTERS.

D    *Decreasing vulnerabilities of the communities by increasing the people's capacities.* The growing uncertainties in the physical, environmental, social, economic, and political situation are causing more people and communities to become more vulnerable to disasters. What is needed is to equip people with the various means to increase their capacities through organizing, socio-economic work, environmental awareness, education and the like.

I    *Integrating indigenous and local knowledge in responding to community disasters*. The people have their own way of understanding, forecasting, warning, and responding to disasters. Many of them are often described as irrational, if not superstitious. Yet, in a lot of circumstances, they were effective. Innovations in responding to community disasters have to begin with "where the people are " as a basic principle in community organizing.

S    *Systematizing the system, procedures and operations for community disaster management.* Involvement in CDM is physically, mentally and emotionally draining. This is the reason why there are

programs and services for caregivers. The task of systematizing processes is meant to ensure efficiency and good stewardship of the resources – funds, time, materials, information and technology. But more than this is the ease and welfare the people and caregivers will have if the systems are all working in place.

A   *Advocating and mobilizing resources for disaster concerns.* Development work has come to a point where interest groups have had to make themselves visible and loud in order for their agenda to be heard. External support for the affected communities is crucial in winning the latter's case. The advocacy role of the academe in the successful fight · against a potential disastrous cement plant in Bolinao is a good example of what the academe can contribute for communities threatened by disaster (Ferrer and Luna,1997).

S   *Strengthening the interdisciplinary linkages and complementation.* The responses to disaster require the joint efforts of the various disciplines and professions — psychologists, social workers, community development workers, sociologists, teachers, economists, mass media people, biologists, geologists, engineers, meteorologists, etc. This complementation is imperative to ensure more socially and technically appropriate responses, programs and innovations.

T   *Translating national commitment into concrete plans of action that can operationalize CDM at the various levels.* Since disasters strike local communities, it is the local institutions and organizations at the provincial, municipal, barangay, and cluster levels that can best undertake and sustain disaster-related activities. Incorporating local concerns in the higher local planning bodies is also a way of drawing greater attention and resources for the affected communities.

E   *Empowering the communities to enable them to influence decisions, policies and programs concerning disaster.* Communities become vulnerable when their people are alienated from the developments taking place around them. When they do not have any control over their situation because decisions are imposed from somewhere, they become victims of circumstances.

R   *Reorienting the perspectives on disaster response from being palliative and reactive to being preventive and aggressive.* Dole-out strategies, which have their roots in the provision of relief goods after a disaster event, has to be put aside. For example, relief operations have to be anchored in a perspective of an appropriate emergency response. Creating a disaster-conscious culture among the communities, the government, the NGOs and other institutions impel the various sectors to be more preventive and to have sustainable disaster response strategies.

S   *Synthesizing experiences and learning toward improving theory and practice in community disaster management.* Disaster workers tend to be action-oriented, always wanting to respond to the crisis situations. The tasks of documenting, studying, analyzing and synthesizing the experiences to generate learning, are usually neglected. This is a need that can be addressed by researchers and academics in the Community Development discipline.

Meeting these challenges is not an easy task. It requires resources, political will, conflict resolutions and systems for action. Not everything can be done all at the same time. Somewhere, somehow, there has to be a beginning. Taking a small courageous step is a hundred fold better than dreaming without doing.

There have been some steps done in Community Development for integrating community disaster management through research, teaching and actual practice. The challenge now for the academe is the provision of support in the process of cruising so that the small steps can be transformed into giant leaps. These leaps should be able to transcend the gaps between spaces, hierarchies, theories and practice. Hold on.

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