Headline: Climate change and Geographic Information Systems

Byline: Amado de Jesus

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Next to climate change, poor planning is getting the flak when it comes to environmental disasters.

Poor planning is blamed for many things that have gone wrong in our country. From flooding to bad site location to poor land development and design, the list goes on. Corrupt politicians and incompetent developers who are responsible are clever enough to steer away from the blame game. In the end, the people are the losers because they are the ones who bear the consequences of bad decisions.

One major reason some of our communities are not planned well is that we lack a good operational link between government and qualified, competent professional groups working with public-spirited community workers in both the planning and execution stages of community projects.

Projects designed without the community in mind often end up unsuccessful because the people making critical decisions often serve something other than the public interest, and their priorities differ from those of the community.

Another major reason our communities are not planned well is the lack of vital information needed by planners and policy makers. The government and the private sector can benefit from new studies that can greatly help our coastal towns and cities in this archipelago located within the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Thanks to a new technology called Geographic Information Systems or GIS, planners and stakeholders in planning communities can now use precise information for knowing, interpreting and visualizing data that reveal relationships, patterns and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports and charts.

What is GIS?

The US Geological Survey (USGS) defines GIS as a computer system that captures, stores, analyzes and shows geographical information, such as data identified according to location.

GIS is a tool that can be used to design new communities, understand the impact of new development, anticipate the effects of climate change or to identify existing sites for developing parks.

GIS is useful for scientific investigations, resource management and development planning. Emergency planners can easily calculate emergency response times in the event of a natural disaster. It can also locate wetlands needing protection from pollution.

Benefits of GIS

GIS is said to bring in savings of 10 to 30 percent in operational expenses through less fuel-use and staff-time, improved customer service and more efficient scheduling.

Better decisions like real estate site selection, evacuation planning, conservation, natural resources extraction, etc., are also possible benefits of the system.

GIS-based maps and visualizations would be a great help in understanding situations through a type of language that improves communication between teams, departments, disciplines, professional fields, organizations and the public.

Getting the academe and students interested in the data will speed up community involvement.



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