

Building a Culture of Disaster Preparedness for the Philippines

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Abstract

A culture of disaster preparedness needs to be reinforced in all sectors of society. This paper focuses on the investments needed for disaster preparedness, referred to as the state by which an entity is ready for the vagaries of disaster. This presupposes that steps needed to prevent or ward off the occurrence of a disaster have been observed, that the capabilities for emergency preparedness as well as those needed to minimize damage resulting from the disaster have been mastered, and that such mastery provides the ability to respond fully to the different phases of the disaster process in a calm, controlled manner.

To reach a level of mastery, disaster preparedness must be well ingrained into the culture of a given society. For it to be part of a country's fabric, it must be inculcated at an early age and nurtured through adulthood. The educational system therefore plays a key role in the transformation. Then, as more and more people become better educated in disaster preparedness, communities become more aware of how to protect themselves from potential damage due to disaster. In this way, individuals become more empowered and less traumatized when faced with danger. Implementing strategies from all sectors of society are explicated for disaster preparedness to be a way of life and to be the responsibility of individuals to do their share in disaster mitigation efforts as part of that preparedness.

Key Words- Culture of disaster preparedness, investments needed, inculcated early, implementing strategies, key role in the transformation, disaster mitigation, more empowered.

Introduction

No nation is truly ready to grapple with the physical, financial, and psychological damage brought by natural catastrophes. Within a ten-year period, disasters such as hurricane Katrina, Fukushima earthquake, Aceh tsunami, as well as typhoon Haiyan, jolted the whole world. All of a sudden, people are confronted with calamities previously unimagined, making any disaster risk management plan appear inadequate. Todhunter (2011) attributes this to the mentality of preparing for disasters based on the likelihood it will happen rather than preparing for disasters that may possibly happen.

Countries with greater resources are able to prepare for disasters in a more systematic manner as compared with those with less resources (Cuevas, 2011). Developing countries, precisely because they are trying to grow their economy, are at odds on where to allocate limited financial resources. With the onslaught of more frequent and intense disasters, there is pressure to channel resources to disaster risk and reduction management (DRRM). Evidently, not all are able to prepare their DRRM plans especially at