

ENABLING SCALED-UP RISK REDUCTION INVESTMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Establishing a comprehensive disaster risk management program to better safeguard against hazards

AT A GLANCE

Country: Philippines

Risks: Floods, Earthquakes, Landslides, Cyclones, Volcanoes

Strengthening institutional systems and the capacity of agencies to build resilience across the country

Facing Multiple Disasters

The Philippines is one of the most natural hazard-prone countries in the world. Disasters in the country can quickly roll back hard-won economic and social development gains. For example, Typhoon Haiyan (one of the most powerful tropical cyclones to ever make landfall) hit the Philippines in November 2013, causing an estimated USD\$12.9 billion in damages and losses, and pushing three million more people below the poverty line. Just a month earlier in October 2013, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Bohol. As a result, several centuries-old heritage structures (administrative buildings, churches, and other historically valuable public facilities) were either fully destroyed or severely damaged. These back-to-back disasters further emphasized the need to mainstream disaster risk management (DRM) across sectors to increase resilience from the many hazards that disrupt livelihoods and halt economic production.

To better safeguard the country against these disasters, it is critical to ramp up the institutional capacity and policies for a comprehensive disaster risk management program and to improve coordination between oversight and implementing agencies through upgraded legislation with disaster risk reduction measures while also building the capacity of government agencies by introducing resilience-building tools and resources. For example, in recognition of the irreplaceable cultural heritage losses from past disasters, the Philippine Department of Tourism sought technical assistance to improve the resilience of heritage structures across the country.

Building a Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Program

Building on the results already achieved under the World Bank's programmatic technical assistance support to the



Pedestrians watch as city workers dredge the riverbed of the Taguig River; Philippines on July 11, 2014. Photo © Dominic Chavez/World Bank.

Philippines' DRM agenda since 2010, the **Japan-World Bank Program for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management in Developing Countries** provided a US\$2 million technical assistance grant for the Philippines with the objective of strengthening DRM institutional systems and sectoral agency capacities to enable phased implementation of risk reduction programs for key public buildings and infrastructure in the country. The team worked with the Department of Public Works and Highways, for example, to ensure that DRM standards were integrated into the first ever revision of the Philippines' National Building Code. The team also engaged with the Department of Tourism to address risk reduction for cultural heritage assets, with the Department of Education to develop retrofitting solutions for at-risk schools in metro Manila, and with the Department of Finance to implement a comprehensive financial protection strategy. These efforts have helped the Philippines to address disaster risks in both the medium and long-term.

The grant supported the development of a cost-benefit analysis and guidelines for seismic retrofitting of schools in Metro Manila. The analysis showed that a small investment could save many lives in the case of an earthquake. For example, by strengthening the most vulnerable 5 percent of school buildings in Metro Manila, the country could potentially save 6,000 lives; doing the same to 40 percent of these buildings could potentially save 19,000 lives. Due in part to this work, the



Left: World Bank Lead Irrigation Engineer, Joop Stoutjesdijk (second from left) talks with employees at the Wawa Taguig pumping station along the Wawa Lake in Taguig. There are 53 pumping stations for the Metro Manila to help reduce the flooding during the raining season. Photo: Dominic Chavez /World Bank. **Right:** Victoriano Simbugan constructs a shed at a livelihood project site in Anahayway village in Leyte province, Philippines. Photo: Dominic Chavez /World Bank.

government of the Philippines is now implementing the World Bank-financed US\$ 300 million Seismic Risk Reduction and Resilience Project, which will retrofit approximately 425 school buildings in Metro Manila.

At the local level, grant funds accelerated the implementation of DRM reforms by building technical and institutional capacity. As a result, approximately 90 percent of provinces have now included resilience measures in their development plans, which are expected to result in investments that are selected, located, and designed to standards minimizing the vulnerability of communities. A joint disaster resilience insurance facility has also been set up by local governments to provide immediate payouts to provinces after disasters, improving the financial response capacity at the local level.

Finally, the grant also provided technical assistance to the Government of the Philippines to develop a disaster risk financing strategy and action plan. The action plan, which was adopted by the government, identified potential mechanisms for reducing financial risk at the sovereign, local, and household levels. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the World Bank have been critical partners of the Government of the Philippines in this effort, and effective coordination and cooperation has been key to achieving impact at scale. As a result of technical assistance projects supported by JICA through the provision of expertise and advisory services with the World Bank, the country has put in place a comprehensive strategy to protect people and assets from harm, while putting in place the necessary financial mechanisms for the country to recover when disasters occur, including insuring public assets.

RESULTS

- **Policy and Strategy Informed:** Risk reduction measures were integrated into the bill for the Philippines Building Act to enable a safer built environment.
- **Improved Cultural Heritage Protection:** Multi-hazard vulnerability assessments were completed for 5 priority cultural heritage sites and a multi-hazard vulnerability assessment methodology was adopted into the Philippines Standards for Conservation.

LESSON LEARNED

A Comprehensive Government Approach Works with a Committed Team

The program demonstrated that a whole-of-government approach is critical for meaningful results in a multi-sectoral engagement on disaster risk management. An engaged, committed core team of counterparts across all relevant sectors within government, including central oversight agencies, were crucial in the achievement of the program's desired outputs and outcomes.