

The Western Visayas Regional Planning Summit

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Introduction

In just a span of two years, Western Visayas, Philippines suffered severe damages in life and properties caused by Typhoon Frank and the MV Solar 1 Oil spill tragedy.

Despite the economic growth experienced by local governments and communities during these years, these gains have been washed away by flood and rains. These calamities made the regional and local leaders realize that the global issues of climate change, the imminent rise in sea levels and the occurrence of natural and man-made disasters have placed a lot of challenges to regional and local development.

The call for resiliency post a big challenge to local and national governance to a country that needs to wrestle with issues of poverty, unmanaged population growth poor environmental management, inequitable resource management, unfavorable global challenges. Environmental degradation, resource depletion and environmentally-destructive human activities are among the identified major problems in the region and their underlying causes related to economic and governance issues.

The region's future livability depends upon developing a more sustainable approach to ensuring environmental quality, creating social well-being and achieving enduring economic prosperity. The responsibility for shaping a sustainable future is widely spread among governments, business, social and community organizations, and the public. While some actions will be the responsibility of the government, achieving regional sustainability will require a collective regional effort.

Under the theme "Weathering Uncertainties: Building a Resilient Region," the Western Visayas Regional Planning Summit 2009 was convened to answer the need of creating a united future, drawing on many stakeholders by intentional planning, collectively forming the needed partnerships to take these plans into action

Summit Objectives

The main intent of the summit is to address the challenges of MIG and WV towards a more collaborative and creative's partnerships for planning and implementation of a resilient region.

- Identify and arrive at consensus on the bioregional challenges of the MIG and WV region
- Share experiences in addressing sustainability and governance issues
- Discussion on emerging creative trends in regional planning such as disaster risk management and climate change
- Identify priority policy issues, areas of collaboration and partnership among business sector, academe, international donor agencies, organizations, national government and non-government organizations in addressing issues of sustainable development

Lead Convenors and Organizers

Metro Iloilo-Guimaras Economic Development Council (MIGEDC)

Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG)

National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV)

Central Philippines University (CPU)

Canadian Urban Institute (CUI)

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Summit Proceedings

The activity started at 9:45 am with a doxology that set the tone for the summit. It was followed by the welcome remarks of Director Evelyn A. Trompeta, Regional Director of the Department of Interior and Local Government VI and Mayor Jerry P. Treñas, Chairperson of MIGEDC.

Director Trompeta acknowledged the presence of Mayor Jerry Treñas, Gov. Daisy P. Avance-Fuentes, Undersecretary Salvador Sarabia, Gov. Sally Perez and Mr. Francis Gentoral, among others. She presented the importance and relevance of the summit and reminded the participants that the region had the “best of times and the worst of times.”

Mayor Treñas as Chairperson of MIGEDC extended a warm welcome to the guests and participants. He acknowledged the efforts started and sustained by the MIGEDC together with their partners in maintaining the regional planning efforts towards regional growth and development. He stressed that the multi-sectoral collaboration through MIGEDC will address disaster management in our region and move towards sustaining a resilient region.

Mr. Jay Presaldo gave the overview of the summit making reference to the “Power of One” forum in December 2007, where the participants shared their experiences in governance issues, best practices and identified priorities that eventually led to policy recommendations.

The 5-5-5 Sessions

The 555 sessions started with the presentation of Mr. Bienvenido Lipayon, OIC Regional Director, Environmental Management Bureau, DENR VI on “Adapting to Climate Change”. He gave a report on the accomplishments of his agency and the mitigating measures they have taken in relation to climate change.

Mr. Kistoffer Berse, Manager, Knowledge Management Team, Earthquake and Megacities Initiatives (EMI) Inc. talked about “Managing and Reducing Disaster Risks”. EMI was organized as a not-for-profit organization in the Philippines, but operates globally. It is a scientific organization whose purpose is to advance the knowledge, experience, and practice of disaster risk reduction in megacities and fast growing metropolises.

Mr. Berse presented the conceptual framework behind EMI’s approach and programs including the Disaster Risk Management Master Plan (DRMMP), an analytical model used by EMI in linking Disaster Risk Management (DRM) to local government planning strategies and processes.

He identified five key challenges in Urban Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):(1) knowledge and awareness; (2) grievance and policy weaknesses; (3) gaps in emergency preparedness and response; (4) lack of capacity; and (5) lack of tools and methods. He also identified five key lessons learned from the experience; namely, (1) DRR projects require a significant amount of planning and coordination with a full multi-disciplinary team, which is integrated with a local team; (2) Structured participatory approaches build ownership and improve inter-institutional coordination; (3) DRM must take a holistic approach with strong emphasis on analysis and diagnosis phase; (4) DRM must incorporate tools for risk communication, risk-based decision

making, benchmarking and evaluation; and (5) the new engagement of local authorities in DRM presents excellent opportunities for major capital investments in DRR.

Moreover, he presented five key recommendations: (1) to attain more favorable legal and institutional arrangements; (2) to integrate RR in land use planning and urban development; (3) to promote urban redevelopment as a powerful tool to reduce urban risk; (4) to generate resources and incentives; and (5) to develop a culture of prevention.

There were three resource persons under the topic “Addressing Disasters in the Region”: Engr. Evan Anthony Arias, Senior Planning, Province of Guimaras, Engr. Jose Al Fruto, Project Coordinator, Iloilo Flood Control Project, DPWH 6 and Hon. Raul Bañas, Executive Director, Task Force Bangon Panay and Presidential Assistant for Western Visayas.

Engr. Arias presented the Oil Spill Disaster in Guimaras Island that happened on August 11, 2006 when the tanker MT Solar I chartered by Petron Corp with two million liters of bunker fuel for Zamboanga sank off the coasts of Nueva Valencia town in Guimaras Island. The oil spill adversely affected the habitat and diversity of marine fauna and flora.

As a response to this disaster, the LGU declared the Province of Guimaras under a state of calamity and created “Task Force Sunrise” composed of provincial and municipal government departments. All provincial and municipal government resources were immediately mobilized to provide relief assistance to affected families. Community members were also mobilized in undertaking preventive and mitigating measures.

A rapid damage assessment was undertaken in partnership with national government agencies and the academe, the output of which served as the basis in formulating the Rehabilitation Framework.

Engr. Jose Al Fruto presented the Iloilo Flood Control Project (IFCP). He gave a brief history and development of the project since 1994. He stressed the following objectives of the project: (1) to mitigate the flood damage and soil inundation with the aim of creating a more sustainable urban community and of providing a safer and a more pleasant living condition for the people in the urban areas of Iloilo City and the Municipality of Pavia and its immediate vicinity; (2) to create a more dynamic regional economy by providing an environment-friendly urban center. The project includes the improvement of Jaro River, Iloilo River, Dungon Creek, Bo. Obrero/ Mansaya Creek, Rizal Creek, Tigum River, Aganan River and the construction of Lapaz Floodway.

Engr. Fruto identified the following challenges: a) relocation of Project affected families; b) cleaning up of JBIC portfolio; and c) budgetary constraints. To date the project has achieved the following: (1) full relocation of project affected families; (2) non-structural activities greatly enhanced the smooth implementation of civil works; (3) civil works being managed with the full cooperation and assistance of the local governments of Iloilo city and Pavia; (4) flood control project complementing other major infrastructure projects (e.g., radial roads, proposed circumferential road); (5) people becoming champions of the project, which resulted in resolutions passed by all sectors of society, PO’s, NGO’s, LGU’s, academe, business sector resulting to the non-cancellation of the project thus ensuring the sustainability of the flood

control facilities; (6) implementation of the operation and maintenance plan; (7) continuing implementation of complementary projects/activities; and (8) secondary drainage systems.

Honorable Raul Bañas, Executive Director, Task Force Bangon Panay and Presidential Assistant for Western Visayas, informed the body that he submitted P1.8B budget for the Typhoon Frank Rehabilitation program of the affected areas of the region. He apprised the body of the status of the funds. He also announced that he will be holding office at NEDA building in Iloilo city.

PA Bañas shared the many lessons learned from the Typhoon Frank disaster such as the virtue of humility that despite the advances of science and knowledge we cannot control nature; the effects and big damage of the flood (664 died) was aggravated because of man-made practices; leaders should play a key role; there were many heroic deeds; in a massive disaster, relief and rehabilitation should not be the function of government alone; LGUs should make a report of the damage and document the disaster and come up with a rehabilitation plan; due to damaged communication system, reports were late and very much delayed; due to the magnitude of the flood, the rehabilitation fund was not enough; and not all barangays operationalized their disaster preparedness plan.

From the lessons of typhoon Frank, PA Bañas recommended the following: (1) relief/disaster plan should be put in place; (2) LGU should implement the plan; (3) there is hope for all of us to rise above the disaster, if we work as a community.

Hon. Daisy P. Avance-Fuentes, Governor, Province of South Cotabato and Chairperson, Allah Valley Landscape Development Alliance talked about "Promoting Environmental Resource Sustainability through the Allah Valley Landscape Development Alliance".

The Allah Valley Landscape covers the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato, comprising of 1 city and 10 municipalities with a total land area of 252,034 has.. It is a critical source of water used for 22,000 hectares farm irrigation in the Provinces of South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat. It is a major agricultural production area that supports rice and corn in lowlands as well as growing production of pineapple and banana in the uplands. Its uplands and mountain ranges are unique and rich in biodiversity and homeland of indigenous cultural peoples (Tbolis, Maguindanaons, Blaans). It has also rich mineral sources such as gold, copper and silver.

The Allah Valley Land Development Alliance (AVLDA) was created to address the pressing problems being experienced in the Allah Valley in a cooperative and coherent manner. Its primary function as an alliance is the protection and management of the Allah Valley Landscape through interventions anchored on environmental, economic, social, cultural and organizational development and institution building using an integrated approach. At the helm of its organizational structure is the Board of Directors, composed of the local government officials and regional directors of the different line agencies.

The Alliance is a coordinating, policy making, and integrated planning body organized to respond and address environment problems by undertaking trans-political boundary coherent actions. She classified the challenges faced by AVLDA as: (1) environmental problems that include flash floods and flooding, siltation/sedimentation of rivers, braiding rivers, riverbank erosion and migration; (2) governance and policy issues involving weak enforcement of environmental laws, disintegrated LGU plans and programs and lack of private sector and community involvement;

(3) disruption of development projects and poverty as a consequence of destruction of infrastructure facilities due to flash floods, flooding of farm and settlement areas resulting to health and security problems ,and productive lands turning into river bed.

Among the challenges faced by AVLDA are: (1) very high cost of containing the impact of flashfloods; (2) climate change, e.g., occurrence of frequent heavy rains and typhoons; (3) high cost of infrastructure requirements; (4) difficulty to generate external funding support; (5) sustaining the involvement of people in watershed management; and (6) harmonizing practices of indigenous peoples with DENR laws in protected areas.

She shared lessons learned from the Alliance experience, among others: unity among many local leaders in watershed areas is possible; multi-sectoral approach led by the LGUs in environmental management can be institutionalized; addressing watershed disaster problems require long term engagements of stakeholders; local leaders must have serious commitment to undertake environmental programs; involvement of private sectors, civic groups and communities is necessary; process of watershed governance creates community empowerment; need good technical and management staff to run the alliance; need to generate updated land cover and other thematic maps as planning tools; need to conduct technical studies to support programs, plans and policies; and LGUs should have good environmental and natural resources programs, relying less from national government.

Mr. Andrew Farncombe, Vice President for International Partnership, CUI talked about “Weathering Uncertainties through Regional Planning”. He presented the case of Metro Vancouver, comparing its situation 60 years ago and how it is now. The following reasons explained why Metro Vancouver was chosen as a model for good urban governance.

- 1) Vancouver has been a long-time participant in the CUI cooperation program with MIG. It’s metro governance model has strongly influenced the establishment of MIDC and MIGEDC
- 2) Vancouver is a global benchmark in urban region sustainability. It is a city region where inter-municipal and inter-governmental collaboration has led to some excellent decisions, and where long-range decision-making for sustainability usually wins over short-term political gains.
- 3) Metro Vancouver was the same size as the MIG region. Sixty years ago, Vancouver was the same size as MIG at just over half a million population.
- 4) There are a lot of parallels in terms of having: a) marine-based environment constrained by mountainous terrain, b) fertile but finite agricultural lands, and c) an economy based on resources, tourism, services, education, and increasingly high-technology.

He discussed nine decisions made by Metro Vancouver which played critical roles in its evolution towards sustainable growth and development, to wit:

- 1) 1948 flood prompted the creation of regional planning board;
- 2) Saving of Strathcona marked the beginning of community engagement (1968;)
- 3) Creating the green zone which involved the agricultural land reserve (1973), a regional parks system (1966), protection of the watersheds (1926), and an urban containment boundary (1970s onwards);
- 4) Planning for the livable region (1975 -1996), which culminated in the implementation of four priority projects in 1996: protecting the green zone; building of complete

- communities; establishment of a compact metropolitan region; and increasing transportation choices of commuters;
- 5) Culture-led downtown revitalization (1986 onwards);
 - 6) Making the private automobile the lowest transportation priority (1990);
 - 7) Linking growth management and transportation planning (1990 onwards), and linking growth management and transportation planning – creating the greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (1999);
 - 8) Emphasizing the public realm; and
 - 9) A commitment to long-term planning for sustainability (2000s) -- tackling climate change.

Mr. Fancombe shared valuable lessons learned from these experiences, which include making regional governance and intergovernmental collaboration work, protecting local foodlands, ignoring watersheds at your peril (think bio-region), planning with future generations in mind, cultural promotion drives regeneration, constrain the automobile but keep people and goods moving, shaping your growth patterns through transportation investments, always consider the importance of good design, and think low carbon future now.

The Keynote Speech

Secretary Gozun started her presentation by highlighting the rich resources and potentials of the Philippines. Among others, the country is one of the 18 mega-diversity countries in the world containing two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity; 5th in the world in number of plant species; 5th in the world in mammal endemism; and 4th in the world in bird endemism. She also indicated that the Philippines is one of the hottest 'hot spots' in habitat destruction in the world. She showed that in 1990, the forest cover was still 70%.

However in 1999, there was a drastic decline of forest cover to 18.3% with a projection that this will continue to decline to 6.6% by 2010 if we don't take action; otherwise forest cover might improve to 19%. She provided regional statistics on decreasing land cover, soil erosion, mangrove and coral reefs destruction, declining water resources, water bodies and groundwater sources, decreasing water quality, increasing water pollution and its economic impacts on health, fishery productivity and tourism.

In addition, she discussed the implications of improper waste management and solid waste in particular, identified sources of air pollution, e.g., traffic, and its adverse health impacts as well as its cost to society. More importantly, she emphasized the damaging effects of climate change and global warming. She closed her presentation by inviting everyone to participate in the observance of the Earth Hour on March 28, 2009.

The Leaders' Forum

In the Leaders' Forum in the afternoon, discussants from the local and national government were invited to talk on the topic "From Moderate to Rough: Leadership Challenges and Governance Solutions in Times of Crisis". The discussants are: Honorable Jerry P. Treñas,

Chairperson, MIGEDC and Mayor of Iloilo City, Hon. JC Rahman A. Nava, Congressman, Province of Guimaras, Hon. Salvador Sarabia, Undersecretary, Department of Tourism, Dr. Alice Joan Ferrer, Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development, UP Visayas, Dir. Ricardo Calderon, Regional Director, of DENR 6. Atty. Raul Anlocotan, Chief of Plan and Policy Formulation Division, NEDA 6 and Mr. Andres Tionko, Executive Director, Panay Rural Development Center Inc. Mr. Nathaniel G. Samson, Moderator, raised the following questions to the discussants:

- 1) Can you tell us common leadership challenges and governance solutions you have encountered and applied in times of crisis?
 - Cong. Nava believes that a crisis can make or break leadership because his capacity to address the crisis will test his leadership skill and his ability to mobilize limited resources. It is also very important to involve the community but the question is “how one as a leader can rally the community to support and cooperate?”
 - Mayor Treñas shares the same experience, especially with the flood of such magnitude. The challenge is how to mobilize resources of other national agencies and the private sector. The test of leadership is getting everyone involved to stand up to the challenge.
 - Mr. Tionko pointed out that the common problem in crisis situation is the reactive mindset of the civil society. Adopting a proactive mindset will greatly reduce the damage brought about by the hazard.

- 2) How exactly were you able to manage the consensus among the agencies attached to your offices or the offices under you and what suggestions do you make to the LGU on building that consensus so that as one you will be able to respond to the problems/challenges facing the region?
 - Dr. Ferrer mentioned UPV’s involvement in addressing disaster in the region that included the Semirara oil spill, Guimaras oil spill and the landslide at the back of the administration building in Miagao. As an academic institution, UPV takes a lead role in the research projects that will eventually provide policy recommendations on this matter.
 - Atty. Anlocotan recommended effective planning and database management. LGUs are not very keen in enumerating disasters which occurred in their particular community. In Disaster Risk Management (DRM), we need to keep stock and inventory the incidents that occurred in the previous years, and incorporate this in the development plan prepared by cities, provinces and municipalities.

- 3) Are there specific suggestions on how to rally the people and the community leaders to recognize the need for a database and keeping stock with this information?
 - Atty. Anlocotan suggested to interview senior citizens in the different municipalities in order to document incidents of disaster. This will be the starting point for the data base.

- 4) Wasn't it difficult to rally people in the whole region particularly the leaders beyond a unified immediate response given the different concerns that were cropping up at this time of crisis?
- Dir. Calderon shared the insight of Cong. Nava that "true leaders are tested during the times of crisis". The role of the LGU in preparedness mobilization is very crucial. In addition to formal leaders, there are also informal leaders; one has to be mindful about communication, coordination, and tapping of resources both from the inside and the outside sources. This should be used as basis for scientific decisions.
- 5) How can we encourage leaders of different organizations to see beyond their immediate needs and priorities and to invest and participate in collaborative initiatives like Disaster Management?
- USEC Sarabia said that LGUs should lead in development efforts. Traditional approach in tourism - that is counting the warm bodies that come into the country or bringing in visitors should be complemented by a proactive approach. We should look at tourism from the macro perspective, tourism is involves politics, economics, socio-cultural, technology and peace and order.
- 6) As a leader, what creative ways have you found effective in encouraging involvement of other groups for disaster management response and mitigation?
- Mayor Treñas announced that Iloilo City with MIGEDC was able to get a commitment from the World Bank for the Disaster Relief Management Project in the amount of \$300,000 . It is very important for a leader to source out funds from external agencies. The private sector should be tapped as partners. There is no national program that supports LGUs Disaster Risk Management.
- 7) Are there new experiments that you have tried which worked?
- Cong. Nava suggested that the LGU should assume the role of a coordinator and a collaborator and to do some trafficking of all those who intend to support and help. It boils down on how you assess the situation, reset their assessment of the situation and the needs that should be addressed of the said situation. There is also a need to tap several agencies that will contribute to such. In the case of the Guimaras Oil Spill, a rapid assessment of the situation was made using GIS and the participation of all sectors were tapped including the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) the farmers, water refilling station owners, pumpboat owners, and everybody who have a stake in Guimaras.
- 8) Other than the database that we have considered to be very important, what system should be in place prior to the disaster and what feedback mechanism should be in place so that we will be able to incorporate the lessons we have learned and all the things we have been sharing and discussing this afternoon?

- Atty. Anlocotan said that there was no system to rescue victims because they have to stay at the rooftops for several hours until the water subsides. There was no drinking water, no light, and no telephone connection. He suggested that individuals must be grouped together in a community to respond immediately in times of disaster. The food needed should be that which do not need cooking.
- Dir. Calderon reiterated a proactive attitude. Geo hazards areas should be incorporated in the plan. DENR has a geo-hazard study to be shared with LGUs to guide them in the formulation of their development plans.

Open Forum

The Leader's Forum was followed by an open forum. Major comments and questions taken up are as follows:

- On disaster planning – focused not only during but also before and after the disaster.
- On “Kaingin” in upland areas – what action should be taken to curb the practice?
- On the possibility of constructing a second floor of the BJMP in Ungka, Jaro – Mayor Treñas committed to address the matter.

Synthesis

Mr. Jose Roni Peñalosa, MIGEDC Executive Director gave a synthesis of all the papers presented. The Summit was closed by a message from Hon. Felipe Nava, Governor of the Province of Guimaras and Co-chair of MIGEDC. He thanked the participants for coming and challenged them to formulate and implement a comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Plan in their municipalities.

The Summit ended at around 5:00 pm.