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**Integration of public administration and the science of disasters**

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## **CREATING AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS FOR NATURAL DISASTERS – ROLE OF CIVIL SERVICE – UNGP – IPASD CSCAN PROJECT**

I feel privileged to participate although in absentia to the Expert Group Meeting on Environment and Disaster Reduction: Gender Perspective after having attended the UN Sasakawa Award Ceremony in Geneva where the Global Fire Monitoring Group of Germany was awarded the Laureate award and also before this meeting I was in Bangkok for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Consultative Council Meeting of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center where I serve as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees.

In 1994 at Yokohama, during the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, we declared to commit ourselves to save lives and build safer communities. ISDR, the UN body which came after IDNDR now believes that we can't save lives if we don't build safer communities. Safer communities means protecting, promoting and preventing hazards to the environment as means to disaster risk reduction. And for the first time the Gender Perspective is being brought in, thanks to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations the organizers of this meeting.

As a woman I bring legitimacy to participate and to speak on the subject of the role of Civil Service in a project now in place in the Philippines the Crustal Stress and Community Awareness (CSCAN) a global program integrating public administration and the science of disasters.

In 1997, together with the Administrator of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology I, as Chair of the Civil Service Commission attended the UN IPASD meeting in Beijing. The meeting was quite stimulating having served as Chair of the Mt. Pinatubo Commission for 1993-1995 in my capacity as Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. We were aware then and more so now that the scientific information on disaster must be translated at a level the community can understand. This is the role of public administration to decide and act after being oriented by the observation of the scientists and provided critical and strategic information on the nature of hazards.

In November 2000, three years after the visit to Beijing where we learned the Qui Long experience where thousands of lives were saved due to the important role of Civil Servants as well as the application of a simple and indigenous technology of earthquake monitoring using Crustal stress recording, UN Sasakawa awardee Dr. Huang of China with the team of scientists led by Dr. Jean Chu came to Manila to introduce CSCAN and so 10 stations were set up in Luzon. The 10 stations were selected on the basis of vulnerability to earthquakes and risk assessments. This is the first time the technology has been introduced outside of China.

This project can be looked up from the dimensions of motivation, opportunity and

capacity for disaster mitigation. Indeed, when we deal with environment and disasters, we must consider all forms of natural and man made hazard and this knowledge serves as motivation to develop initiatives and opportunities to lessen the risks of these hazards thus reducing the effects and impact on the people and their communities. Since women and children suffer the most when disasters occur it is critical to lessen the vulnerability of these women and children.

In this particular project, I am currently involved in, my task is to develop and implement social technologies which will motivate the community people to be aware of the potential risks of earthquakes and to have the opportunity to participate in observing natural phenomena which may be indicators of forthcoming earthquakes. The participants are engaged in awareness session by showing a video documentary “a Sense of Disaster” which serves as the opportunity for group discussion and then they recall their own experiences when the earthquake occurred in the past. In the process, they come to the realization that they can prepare themselves against any vulnerability if the community is aware of the earthquake risk.

The women narrated their own stories of how they were concerned for their children and other family member. In the same vein, the men too shared their experiences.

This community awareness serves as the impetus for organizing preparedness seminars some of which have been undertaken in the past but limited to floods and fires. Now they realize that with the earthquake monitoring in place, they now have the technology which with the information derived is analyzed by the Philippine Institute of Vulcanology with the assistance of the Chinese scientists in Beijing will give the opportunity to predict the possible occurrence of earthquakes. Some scientists are understandably skeptical of this technology but I personally believe that it can save lives and build safer communities. Indeed, a disaster mitigation initiative.

Since the project started in November 2000 with the installation of the 10 stations in Northern and Southern Luzon and Metro Manila, we have found the necessity to involve the provincial level officials, the city, the municipal and the barangays. In one region in Northern Luzon, the Regional Development Council came up with a resolution recommending setting up additional two stations. In other words, they have come to the conclusion that earthquake prediction can lessen their vulnerability.

In some areas, the earthquake monitoring stations are located in schools where science students themselves under supervision of science teachers do the recording. In a particular station in Lingayen, Pangasinan, an engineer is assuming responsibility for the monitoring. In another city of Batangas, a social worker does the job. Even security guards in government offices are trained to record on weekends as the technology is user friendly.

A one week mission was undertaken by the 4 Chinese scientists led by Dr. Jean

Chu to contact relevant and high level officials of the Philippines to assess their motivation and willingness to actively participate in CSCAN activities for 2001 and beyond. In addition, they came to conduct a preliminary evaluation of how the present CSCAN network is functioning and to assess the next appropriate and critical steps for the UNGP-IPASD to take action on so as to produce substantive results for the Philippines in strengthening disaster mitigation.

With the active support of the UNDP office in Manila, a series of high level meetings were arranged which I personally facilitated.

Contacts with the Department of Social Welfare and Development proved positive as the new secretary views as significant its shift in policy direction from relief and rehabilitation to preparedness and prevention. DSWD will focus on the social preparedness in the mitigation effort.

The Department of National Defense is fully supportive of the CSCAN initiative. From the logistical and technical side, DND Secretary is extending his support for the CSCAN network in Visayas and Mindanao, the two other regions outside of Luzon.

The Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary committed his willingness to participate in any new initiatives to extend the CSCAN and has provided the needed logistical support of its regional offices.

The Department of Science and Technology sees CSCAN as an interesting initiative in recognizing signals that might precede large and sudden natural disasters

The Development Academy of the Philippines sees that they can contribute to the social preparedness of the CSCAN initiation. The strength of this institution lies in its ability to conduct country-wide training and to sustain long term development of local capacities.

The ultimate goal of the UNGP-IPASD in the Philippines is to help strengthen the disaster mitigation capacity of the country, in the area of earthquake monitoring..

But first we must create the awareness for preparedness. The various departments are part of the network to make this happen. Thus the role of civil service in this effort.

Integration of public administration and science of disasters is not an easy task. Scientists must be open to share the information they have. Public administrators have the enduring roles to implement the laws, manage public affairs and deliver public services. Failing to do so would make it impossible to save lives and build safer communities.

It augurs well for public administrators to appreciate the contribution of science and technology and for the scientists to appreciate the magnitude of the task of disaster

reduction in the hands of public administration. Indeed, we must break the learned helplessness of communities and develop a new civic culture of preparedness and risk management and reduction. This is critical to make integration of public administration and the science of disasters a reality.

The UNGP-IPASD is such a modest attempt. I am convinced that we have been empowered in the process and can innovate so we can have the capabilities to protect and prepare ourselves for a disaster like an earthquake.

I am sure the Environment and Disasters – A Gender Perspective Experts Group Meeting provided all with the motivation, opportunity and capacity to tell our story and share our views on the subject. In my view, civil service has a role to play.

It has happened and will continue to happen. It is work in progress.

The quality of any work in disaster risk reduction rests on the people who are involved. They must realize that people matter most. Women particularly have their unique contribution as many of them are occupying positions in public office. The Philvolcs staff monitoring the project is a woman. Many of those trained to monitor the project are women.

Creating Awareness and Preparedness for Natural Disaster – the Crustal stress community awareness project is making this possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to interface with you in absentia.

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