

Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

Developing a Coordination Protocol for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management



People in many Jesuit institutions are doing great work in disaster risk reduction and management. Having a protocol taps and develops the great potential for magis as more people are reached, networks are broadened, impact multiplied, and response is deepened. A protocol for coordination amongst people provides a system of decision making and action that outlines procedures and actions to be followed in a particular situation. This protocol document is a work in progress to guide Jesuit collaborative action for disaster risk reduction and management.

WHY A PROTOCOL IS NEEDED

With the increasing incidence of more intense storms and other natural hazards, public and private stakeholders are actively seeking opportunities to respond to needs. Given the number of recent disasters that resulted after extreme weather events such as typhoons Haiyan and Nargis, people are beginning to look beyond disaster response and relief and are increasingly working towards longer-term programs of activities and adaptations. But often, people do not always know where to begin, where assistance is most critical, who else is responding, and how actions are sustained in an effective manner.

It needs to be noted too that each weather event is different and has specific impact in a given landscape and on the needed adaptation and preparedness of the local culture. Each country is organized differently in their cities and remote areas. Some countries may be less prone to disasters while other countries may have governments that are highly involved.

Jesuits in various institutions in specific provinces are also responding differently within their capacities and contexts. Internationally, the Society of Jesus wants to reach and coordinate with those in the best position to respond locally. Most Jesuit involvement has not come from scientific analyses of the problems or from policy development and planning but from involvement with livelihood and efforts in enterprise and leadership development. This is often what post disaster activities “revert” back to after a period of relief. The challenge is to develop capacity and training with community leaders and local officials to take greater responsibility for improved community adaptation and response.

The disaster management cycle is generally described as having four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery with an increasing realization of a fifth phase or redesign. Beyond an overall approach, Jesuit people need more specific guidance to enable collaborative action.

REFINING THE JCAP PROTOCOL FOR COLLABORATIVE AND RESPONSIVE ACTION

The JCAP protocol outlines steps for Jesuits within JCAP in responding to disasters that impact the lives of people and communities in this part of the world. Our responses to catastrophic events are collaborative in nature, joining local efforts and guiding important international support. This process is ongoing with other organisations and we are learning from experience of Jesuit people on the ground. The effort is also to find ways to collaborate across different phases in disaster risk reduction and management that demand a wider range of coordination beyond disaster relief.

The proposed coordination protocol framework has five phases with a time reference relating to the disaster event:

1. ORDINARY TIME - DISASTER MITIGATION AND PREPAREDNESS

Mitigation involves the plans and preparations to help reduce or eliminate the effects of a disaster. Preparations include setting up management structures and the communication and decision tools to be implemented should a disaster happen. Pre-disaster event preparedness also assumes that community review and risk assessment are done that takes into account local, area-specific factors for effective evacuation strategies and other preparedness actions. Local government planning and training take place during this phase. Mitigation and preparedness actions include:

- Hazard and vulnerability assessment
- Development of local disaster preparedness plans that includes sharing weather bulletins and early warning systems and mapping of safe routes and safe evacuation centers
- Knowledge of logistical infrastructure and contact points
- Development and implementation of communication protocols
- Availability of financial instruments such as insurance, savings schemes, and loans
- Appropriate and coherent land use planning and zoning

Mitigation and preparedness actions are best done during ordinary time. In our region’s tropical context, ordinary time occurs during the months before the rainy season.

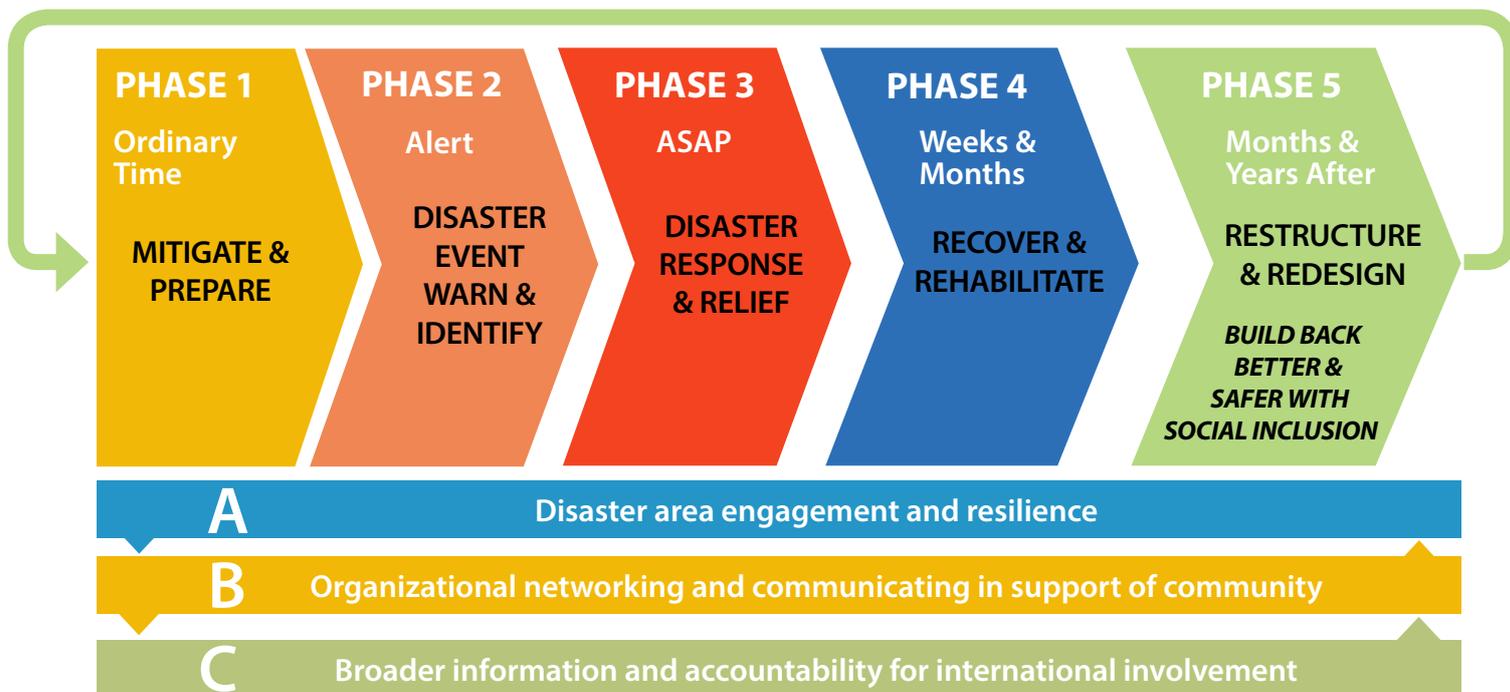
2. ALERT - DISASTER EVENT WARNING AND IDENTIFICATION

Before disaster strikes, there is a period of 3 to 6 days when warnings of the threat and the potential impact of the extreme weather event are provided. Information is critical during this warning period to understand the magnitude of the disaster. Based on information from agencies providing weather projections and population exposure data, this is the time to begin developing scenarios that can help organizations provide alerts and plan their initial response activities:

- Where are the areas directly affected by the event?
- How many people are likely to be affected?
- What resources are available?
- Where are the key centers of action and their preparedness?
- What infrastructure is likely to be compromised and will hamper response efforts?

It is likely that communications from the disaster area will break down and at this point, supporting partners should focus on mobilizing people and resources that will be needed in the immediate post- disaster relief operations. Government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development for the Philippines, may have the ability to pre-position relief goods to get them to

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areas in need as quickly as possible. Civil society and other assisting organizations may still need to mobilize its network to gather the necessary goods.

The development of a platform for area-specific monitoring is critical to providing the information necessary to assist in decision-making during a disaster event.

3. ASAP - RESPONSE AND RELIEF

Immediately after a disaster hits, the focus is on developing a plan to guide people's response and relief activities. This involves identifying coordination points, communication systems, and an initial assessment of needs and the strategy for meeting these needs.

In the first two weeks after a disaster, the initial response is generally focused on relief. First-responders are those affected by the disaster, survivors who are practicing self-rescue. There is an expanding circle of response: from volunteers and local government agencies to regional and national government, and often, international assistance. However, it may take from 3 days to 1 week for outside assistance to reach local areas, and in worst-case scenarios, up to 2 weeks. After Haiyan, it took about five days for outside assistance to get to Tacloban; it was longer for the more distant municipalities who were then expected to reach the barangays.

4. WEEKS AND MONTHS AFTER THE DISASTER - RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION

Although relief operations phase may extend to weeks and months (depending on the disaster), it often segues into more long-term activities for recovery and reconstruction. The distinction is important so that assumptions of what are initially temporary and

transitional do not become permanent solutions without further assessment.

Long-term resettlement and return to normalcy will require new strategies, but often funding is missing in this stage. Communication is key to securing additional funding. Reports and other communication tools help to share information and stories about the people affected by the disaster, provide an account of initiatives being taken, and apprise on the recovery and rehabilitation needs required in the long term.

5. MONTHS AND YEARS AFTER THE DISASTER - RESTRUCTURE AND REDESIGN

Restructure and redesign focus on ensuring that the effects of the disaster inform future plans, so as to "build back safer and better with a local social economy." This stage is a return to mitigation, where lessons learned during the disaster event and emergency preparedness plans are updated or crafted to improve response and recovery and to strategically reduce risks. Actions during this phase include reviewing and revising:

- Building standards, where they exist, and developing new standards as needed
- Zoning plans and policies, to determine whether it is appropriate for people to return to their original locations, and to prevent temporary housing arrangements from becoming default permanent housing solutions
- Economic development programs, to verify whether it is feasible and sustainable for people to go back to pre-disaster food production and livelihood strategies
- Networking and organizing to share capacities and build alliances and agreements between organizations involving government and international agencies

THE ABCS OF RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Many of the local and national disaster resource mobilizations within the country are adequate. It is when extreme events occur resulting in a national calamity that calls for international support.

Jesuit resource mobilization can be both national and international as we have in many places the benefit of institution and apostolic outreach, as well as communications and networks. Xavier Network (la Red Xavier) is a key partner in international disaster collaboration. **(A)** The protocol seeks to integrate Jesuit area disaster engagement on the ground networking with national and international organizations in support of the communities affected.

Organizations mobilize **(B)** their networks of donors and volunteers to help in disaster response. Communication therefore becomes critical in making potential donors aware of what are the specific needs. Social media is effective in getting messages out to a large number of people in a short amount of time. To facilitate donations and support, a clear and simple process is needed for donors to make contributions.

(C) A transparent and accountable system for monitoring and reporting funds is very important, so that donations are properly documented, official receipts are issued as needed, and donors are kept informed of developments. This is also crucial for securing long-term resources needed during post-disaster rehabilitation, restructure and redesign. International awareness has to recognize the long-term problem is tied not only to climate change impact through more extreme weather events but also to livelihoods and secure tenure of homes. These are critical in reducing the social impact of disasters.

BUILDING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION, A GLOBAL RE-ASSESSMENT OF DONOR EXPECTATIONS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.

There is a need for a fundamental re-adjustment in focusing of resources and expectations for the most critical areas. Typhoon Yolanda reveals the deprivation that has existed for many decades and is continuing despite all the pouring in of resources. It is not simply a matter of relief and building houses. A much greater capacity is needed to build social and economic inclusion. Key elements that need understanding and action:

1. **Access to land** – Land allocation for safe housing within reach of work allowing for all the basic needs to be delivered to a family remains the basic challenge particularly for coastal towns and urban areas.
2. **Sustaining local social economy** – Incorporation of the poor as part of the formal economy ensures their

social inclusion in the economic recovery; where the value of labour and practices of shared cropping are seen and not simply a mechanization of agriculture and use of pesticides as development.

3. **Building capacity in local government** – Local disaster risk reduction and management councils and networks should not only be focused on communicating messages of warning but must have the ability to animate adaptations on the ground. This task has been grossly assumed. Only by further utilization of plans can the necessary changes be built in.
4. **Livelihood and entrepreneurship** – Development of a diversity of options for livelihood and enterprise that are practical, appropriate and linked to markets are especially needed for recovering communities and local economies. Farming and fishing are not easy to go back to in a context of a degraded and resource-depleted land and seascape.

This protocol is presently part of a review activity in the Philippine Province and can hopefully be used and improved by other Provinces in their areas of concern given the appropriateness of context and emerging networks. It is presently focused on floods and landslides but easily adapted to facilitate collaboration in the case of earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, volcanic eruptions, and droughts.

Already Jesuit organizations in Indonesia, Australia and Japan have a national capacity and a social network by which they can reflect on these problems and develop a social engagement. Meanwhile, countries like Myanmar (and Timor Leste in terms of drought) need greater support after a disaster; at this stage Jesuit resources need to immediately focus back on livelihood and food security.

God is Creator of the universe and all life, and in disaster risk reduction we are challenged to experience through our faith how to embrace “natural” disasters. We are learning humbly that we are embracing not an “act of God” but human vulnerability and mortality as part of an ongoing Creation. At the same time, it is beginning to dawn on us that we are partly a trigger of our own suffering through climate change. In our faith, we slowly come to understand that the crucified Christ silently accompanies those who suffer. We need to be able to communicate this while expressing deep hope for humanity, knowing God’s fidelity to us. This is why today we seek a much deeper response of compassion and reconciliation on Earth.