

**Youth Council Participation
in Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction
in Infanta and Makati, Philippines**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Background

Participatory disaster risk reduction (DRR) is becoming an increasingly integral approach in enhancing community disaster resilience as it has the potential to make initiatives more sustainable, integrative, and empowering. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 promotes participatory DRR and states that both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources, and authority to implement actions for disaster risk reduction. In the Philippines, the necessity of participatory DRR is made more prominent by the need to develop and strengthen local disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and reconstruction capacities to complement national capacities. The Philippines is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries and has been consistently among the top five countries with the highest number of reported disaster events in the last eight years.

Tropical cyclones are the most frequently occurring natural hazard, killed and affected the most number of people, and caused the biggest economic damage. An average of 20 tropical cyclones enters the Philippine Area of Responsibility every year, with about eight or nine of them crossing the Philippines. In 2014, Typhoon Haiyan battered central Philippines and broke multiple disaster records, such as most number killed, most number affected, and largest economic damage. A single super-typhoon like Typhoon Haiyan can affect more than 16 million people. This points to the sad reality that a single disaster event could easily impact millions of Filipinos and overwhelm national disaster management capacities. Hence, there is a need to develop and strengthen local disaster prevention, mitigation, response and rehabilitation capacities to complement national capacities.

With the passage of Republic Act 10121 in 2010, the Philippine government has officially adopted Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) as a model to engage communities in DRR undertaking, with the hope that heightened involvement would translate to communities being more responsive and self-managing when emergencies arise.

Analytical research on the capacity of the youth to help reduce the impact of disasters is largely missing. Reliable data on the actual number of young people participating in DRR activities is very limited. Scientific journal articles on the subject rarely provide information on the magnitude of youth involvement in DRR projects and programs. Evidence confirming the value of young people's

participation in DRR should be compiled in order to make the case for youth participation stronger and more convincing. It is very important to increase our knowledge of young people's capacities in order to better understand the roles that they can play in reducing personal and community vulnerability and to effectively design and implement programs that encourage their active involvement.

The Filipino youth have been highly encouraged to participate in politics and governance and the Philippines is the only nation in the world that has a mechanism of involving the youth sector in governance, through the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (Youth Council, SK). The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 encourages the youth to participate in disaster risk reduction and management activities, such as organizing quick response groups, particularly in identified disaster-prone areas, as well as the inclusion of disaster risk reduction and management programs as part of the SK programs and projects.

II. Research Objectives

Given their wide distribution across the country and their ability to integrate DRR into their activities, the SKs may be able to contribute enormously to building a culture of safety and enhancing youth participation in community-based DRR (CBDRR). This doctoral research aims to investigate the potential of the SKs as an effective vehicle for youth participation in CBDRR in the Philippines. The following questions are answered in this thesis:

- How have the SKs responded to the different international frameworks and national policies related to youth participation in DRR?
- How have the SKs interacted with other DRR actors and stakeholders and how can current networks and relationships be enhanced toward more meaningful involvement of the youth in DRR initiatives?
- How effective were past SK DRR activities in contributing to community disaster resilience and what can be done to improve SK DRR activities so that these activities can be more relevant and responsive to the needs of the *barangay*?

To answer the research questions, this study was conducted in two study locations, Infanta Municipality, Quezon Province (rural area) and Makati City, Metro Manila (urban area), both located on Luzon Island in the Philippines, from July 2012 to June 2014. There are significant differences between urban youth councils and rural youth councils. On average, the total annual budget of youth

councils in Infanta is USD 2,700 while for the youth councils in Makati it is USD 83,000, reflecting a sharp contrast between the youth councils. In Makati there are around 20 full-time paid staff in the office of their SK Federation President while there is none in Infanta. Most of the time, many SK chairpersons are actually not residing in Infanta as they are studying in Manila City. The absence of the SK chairpersons from their *barangay* heavily affected the performance of the SK in organizing activities.

III. Key Findings

Table 1 summarizes the comparison between youth council participation in Makati and Infanta based on selected indicators. Urban youth councils in Makati performed better than their rural counterparts in Infanta in all of the CBDRR indicators used in this study, like budget spent on DRR, knowledge of the DRR law, membership in the *Barangay* DRRM Committee and City DRRM Council, social network in DRR, social capital for DRR, and use of social media for DRR.

Although government officials have expressed support for working with the youth in DRR, little has been done to actually involve the youth in DRR initiatives. Most youth council officials and members have been left out of the village DRR committee, youth participation in HFA tasks has been moderate, and steps have not been taken to effectively increase the knowledge of the youth related to DRR and the DRR law. Based on the interviews with village officials, little has been accomplished to consult the youth on how and when they can get involved in DRR activities. This situation is remarkable because although Makati and Infanta are very active and award-winning cities in DRR, the involvement of the youth in DRR at the village level has been limited. Youth Council involvement in other cities less active in DRR can therefore be expected to be even lower. Despite their notable accomplishments in DRR, both Makati and Infanta still have to examine the level of participation of different stakeholder groups, such as the youth sector, to make DRR in their area truly inclusive and participatory, as envisioned by HFA.

There are significant differences between rural SKs in Infanta and urban SKs in Makati in each of the three types of social capital. All the DRR activities conducted by the youth councils in Infanta are autonomous (within each village only). In Makati, youth councils have DRR activities from the street level to the zone level, village level, and city level. In Makati there are around 20 full-time paid staff in the office of their City SK Federation while there is none in Infanta. The SK Federation President of Makati is very active in fulfilling her duties while her counterpart in Infanta has been an absentee

official due to her not actually residing in Infanta while she is studying in Manila City, like several of the other Chairpersons of other youth councils in Infanta. Over all, this is a significant problem for Infanta SKs. This can be a challenge to generate participation, particularly in communities with a low level of social capital.

Table 1 Summary of the comparison between urban and rural SK participation in CBDRR

| Indicators | Makati Youth Councils (urban) | Infanta Youth Councils (rural) |
|--|--|--|
| Participation of Youth Councils in Local-level HFA Implementation | Moderate across most of the 20 HFA tasks (1.87 in scale of 0 to 4) | Moderate across most of the 20 HFA tasks (2.24) |
| Youth Council Funds for DRR Activities | Allocated 4.2% of budget to DRR in 2013, equivalent to USD 3,447 per youth council on average | No budget allocation for DRR |
| Knowledge of Youth Council Officials of the 2010 DRR Law | The average quiz score in Makati is 5.33 out of a perfect score of 9. | The average quiz score in Infanta is 3.58 out of a perfect score of 9. |
| Role of the Youth Council Officials in the <i>Barangay</i> DRRM Committees | Nine out of 22 <i>barangays</i> of Makati that provided a copy of their BDRRMC organizational chart have youth members | No participation |
| Role of the Youth Council Federation in the City/Municipal DRRM Council | Member of the Makati DRR Council, specifically in the Preparedness and Response committees | No participation |
| Social Network in DRR | Broad | Narrow |
| Social Capital for DRR | High bonding, bridging, and linking social capital facilitated by SK coordinators from the City SK Federation Office | Low bonding, bridging, and linking social capital |
| Use of Social Media for DRR | Yes | No |

An array of DRR activities and tasks should be organized to provide young people with ample choices depending on their availability and interest and on the costs and logistics involved.

Recommendations to enhance youth council participation in CBDRR include: including youth participation in CBDRR reference materials; translating international and national DRR priorities and goals related to youth participation in DRR into desired local actions and target results at the *barangay* level; providing step-by-step guidance on how to implement national DRR policies encouraging youth participation and setting up a monitoring mechanism to ensure that provisions in the DRR laws and DRR-related youth policies are implemented; pushing for the membership of its Chairperson in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council; empowering youth councils with continuous capacity-building in DRR knowledge and skills; providing DRR training to SK coordinators so that they can guide the SK officials; requiring SKs to spend at least five percent of their annual funds on DRR; hiring SK coordinators to connect the SK Federation with the *barangay* SKs; complementing community-based activities with involvement in school-based activities, activities organized by external DRR actors like NGOs, and activities involving social media that do not require physical attendance in events; and creating a separate category for Best Youth Councils in the annual *Gawad KALASAG*.

IV. Conclusion

Disaster risk reduction practices need to be inclusive and accessible to be efficient and effective. It is necessary to ensure the engagement of stakeholders, like the youth, in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards. The youth possess significant qualities that could serve as a significant resource for households and communities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. Their knowledge, creativity, energy, enthusiasm, and social networks could be used during all phases of the disaster risk management cycle to help themselves and others. They also have the ability to share and apply this information within their households, in school, and in the wider community. Excluding the youth from DRR processes threatens their safety from disasters and neglects a valuable resource for risk communication, education, advocacy, and action-oriented risk reduction activities. The evidence confirming the value of young people's participation in DRR is getting stronger.

The findings of this study can be expressed in Figure 1. In order to have enhanced youth participation in CBDRR, four items need to be present: (1) legal mandate to participate which comes from national policies and international frameworks subscribed to by the Philippines; (2) DRR networks that youth councils can join, and connection to other DRR stakeholders; (3) the capacity to participate through the provision of adequate resources and support, which can be in the form of SK budget for DRR, SK

coordinators, social capital, or information; and (4) opportunities to participate, which can be regular annual events like trainings and meetings. All these four elements will lead to youth council participation in CBDRR. To provide feedback to the youth councils on the effectiveness and relevance of their DRR activities, regular evaluation should be conducted. But in order to do this, the youth councils must first work on improving the documentation and reporting of their accomplishments. This study recommends the establishment of a separate Gawad KALASAG category for Best Youth Councils. As Gawad KALASAG is an annual event, evaluation will therefore be done regularly. In Figure 1, the elements needed for enhanced youth council participation in DRR are arranged according to the consecutive flow of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a logical framework. By itemizing the inputs, processes, and outcomes, urban and rural youth councils can decide their strategy in improving their participation in CBDRR in their *barangay*, taking into consideration the availability of resources.

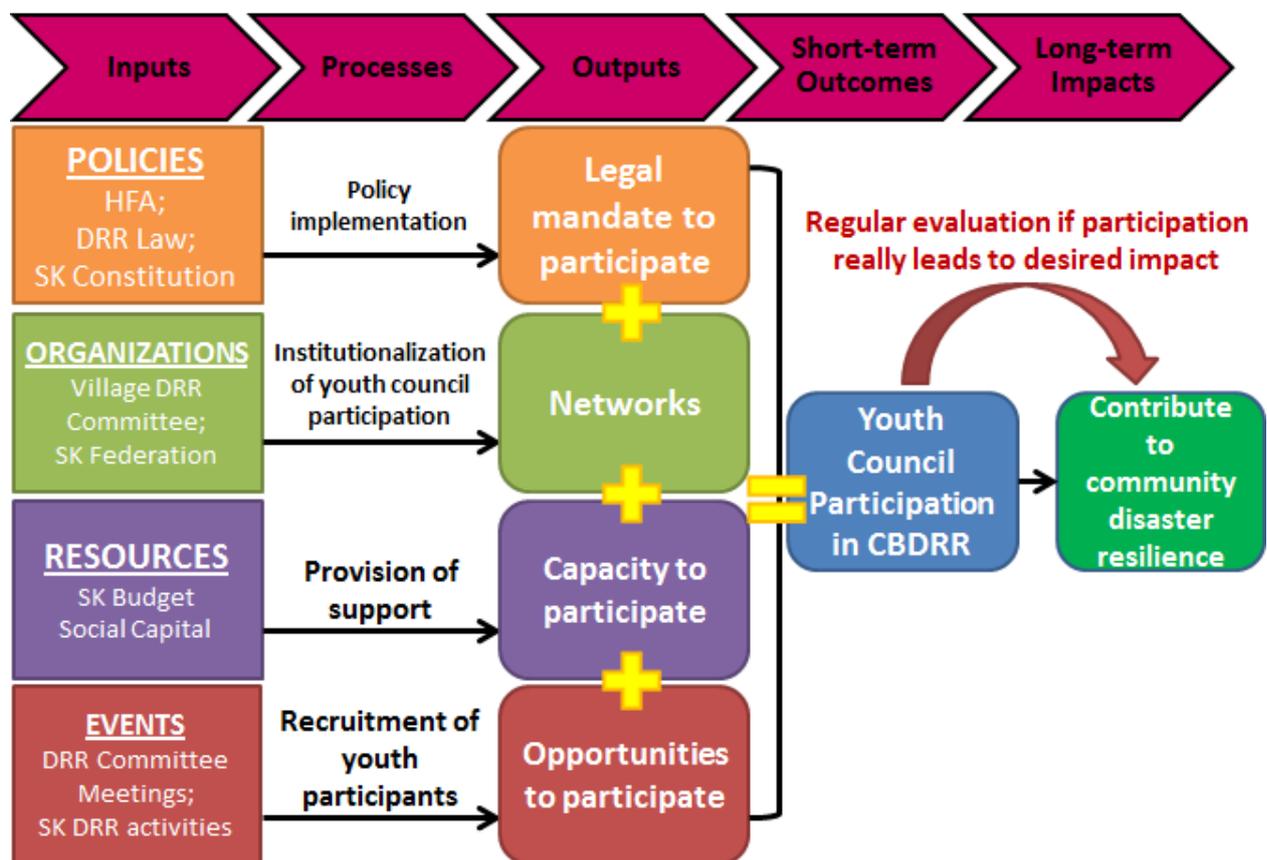


Figure 1 Enhanced Youth Council participation in CBDRR

When young people learn and practice DRR “the benefits stream is integrated into the rest of their adult lives, yielding a higher benefit than when adults acquire the same skills, and embedding the changed behavior early enough for it to be passed on to subsequent generations.” Therefore there is

a very strong economic case for enhancing and expanding young people's engagement in DRR. The Philippines already has the necessary policies and organizational networks in place for youth participation in DRR. What is needed now is fulfilling the actual involvement of the youth in DRR for the Philippines to benefit from their potentially significant contribution.

The findings of this research are expected to fill a major gap in existing knowledge about youth participation in CBDRR in the Philippines and provide the much-needed evidence base for the formulation and implementation of future policies to enable and improve youth participation in DRR. The urban and rural case studies presented in this thesis try to contribute to empirical research on the visibility and significance of the roles of young people in DRR.