

# Panel 4

## Implications for Governance and Future Study

*“Ha Pagtindog han Bungto: Improvising Local Governance and Actual Utilization of LDRRMFs in Yolanda-Ravaged Leyte and Eastern Samar”*

Perlita M. Frago, PhD  
Dept. of Political Science, UP Diliman

# Background on the Study

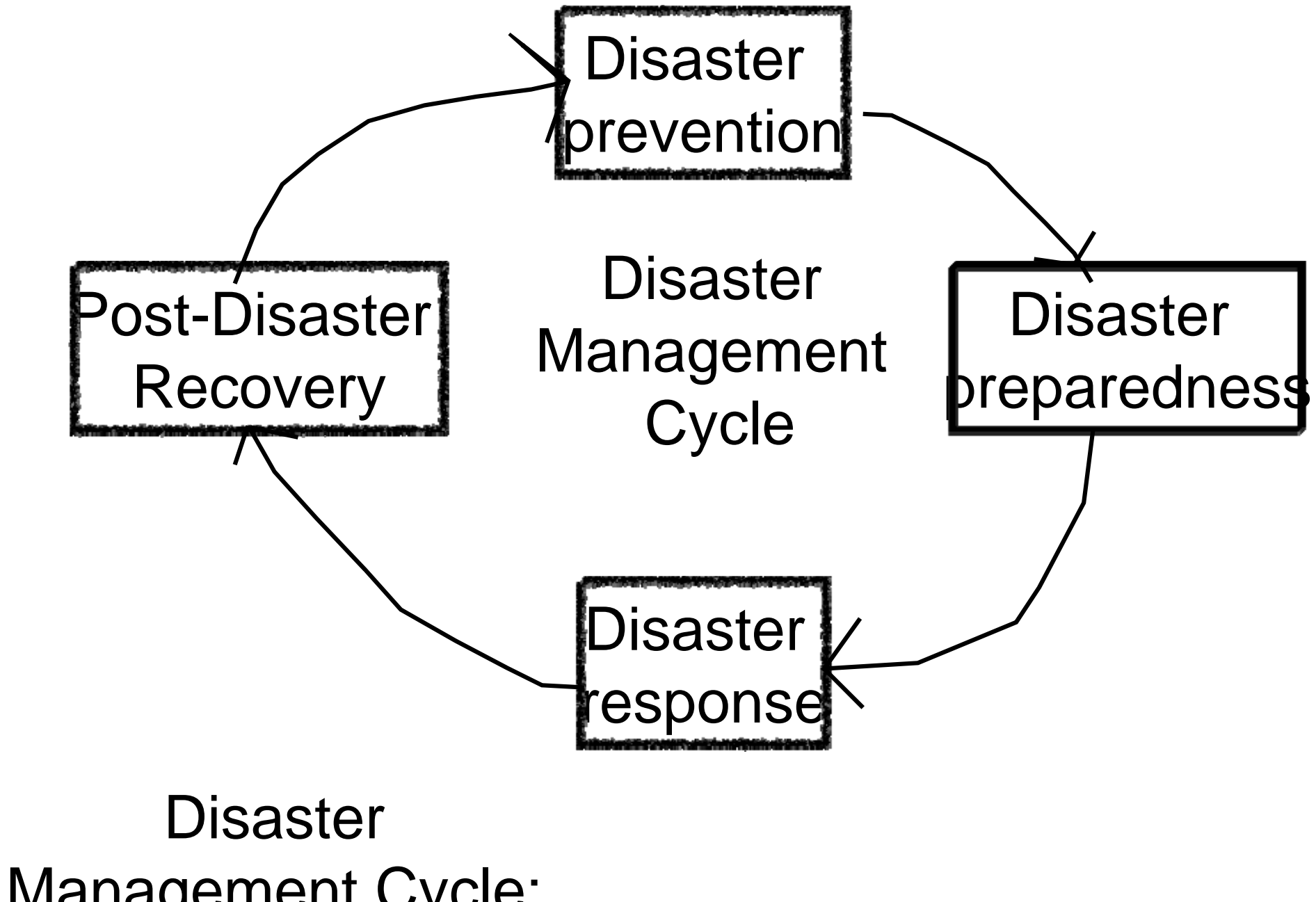
- funded by the UP Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development under its Source of Solutions grant
- focuses more on improvisations and disaster responses of first responders (municipal and barangay officials) in the context of limited and inaccessible resources

# Methodology: Case Study

- documents analysis
- pre-validation workshop on April 7, 2014 with DBM representative, Marikina MDRRM officer, local government specialist from UP NCPAG and community development (fieldwork) specialist from the UP CSWCD
- fieldwork was conducted by the research team from April 9, 2014 to May 9, 2014, semi-structured interviews of 31 key informants (16 municipal officials and 15 barangay officials), participatory observation
- findings were presented thrice: in a public lecture in November 2014, in an International conference during the 40th Anniversary of the UP TWSC, at the PPSA International Conference of 2017

# Why Palo and Balangiga?

- Case study selection was based on the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) data on areas with the highest number of totally damaged houses. This determinant is perceived as the clearest and straightforward indicator of areas that had been hardest hit by Yolanda.
- These NDRRMC data were ranked against NSO data of number of households to get the estimated percentage of totally damaged houses with the highest number of households.
- Municipalities in both provinces were ranked. **Palo in Leyte and Balangiga in Eastern Samar yielded the highest percentage of totally damaged houses.**



# Disaster Response

- “the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce negative health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. Disaster response is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called “disaster relief.”  
(NDRRMC, DBM, DILG, March 25, 2013: 4)

# What is “improvisation”?

- as inevitable (Tierney, 2016)
- as a necessity (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch, 2000; Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2006; Howitt & Leonard, 2006)
- “a way of coping within bounded rationality”; “a cultural artifact, when cultures prefer a spontaneous, improvised managerial style”(Sharkansky & Zalmanovitch, 2000, 322)
-

- “while planning encompasses the normative, ‘what ought to be done,’ improvisation encompasses the emergent or actual, ‘what needs to be done.’” (Kendra & Wachtendorf, 2006, 1)
- “crises require different capabilities from ‘routine’ emergencies. In crises, responders must first quickly diagnose the elements of novelty...then try to improvise response measures to cope with unanticipated dimensions of emergency.” (Howitt & Leonard, 2006, 217)



# Findings

# Common Problems Experienced by Palo and Balangiga

- Inaccessibility of the Quick Response Funds
- Difficulty in evacuating people
- Lack of adequate preparation
- Lack of communication and coordination
- Institutional problems

# Improvisations in Palo

- **Context:** Before the typhoon, the mayor created a task force, and made the municipal hall the center of operations. When the typhoon came the mayor stayed and slept at the municipal hall. She was on top of the situation, she never left the municipal hall and coordinated everything.
- **Vice-Mayor initiated inventory and documentation of survivors, casualties and damages and organized community relief operations.** He complemented the work of the Mayor. While the mayor stayed in the municipal hall, he was in the field.
- **For steady supply of gasoline.** The mayor negotiated with a councilor who owns a gasoline station. Had an arrangement that the gasoline station would be fixed in exchange for the sole utilization of gasoline for the LGU. This was done so they would not run out of gasoline. This arrangement went on for about a week.
- **For steady supply of rice.** Palo had palay grains but needed a rice mill to grind the grains. The mayor asked their agriculturist to look for the least damaged rice mill in the barangays to have it fixed. The mayor had the least damaged rice mill repaired and gave gasoline in exchange for milling of the rice so that barangays will have supply of rice. No longer needed to pay for the milling because gasoline and repair would be the payment.
- **The mayor's signature** was honored in the procurement of goods, payments came later.

# Improvisations in Palo (2)

- **Alternative source of funds.** Palo had to rely on its own source of calamity funds.
- **To facilitate search and retrieval of the dead.** Palo communities looked for their missing family members/relatives
- **To address security and looting problem.** Mayor declared curfews, Vice-Mayor encouraged community watch in their own barangays
- **To do away with red tape.** The mayor was given by the Sanggunian Bayan (SB) blanket authority to receive aid as long as they are Yolanda-related.
- **For lack of enough people to distribute relief goods.** The mayor requested donors to distribute the relief goods themselves. Pointing them to locations of most affected barangays.

# Improvisations in Balangiga

- **Context:** When the super typhoon came, the mayor was in Manila to attend an important meeting. According to him, he was out on a fund-raising trip for the LGU in Manila. He appointed nurse and SB Councilor as his OIC and designated Municipal Engineer as MDRRM officer who dealt with the situation. The municipal hall mainly served as a “hospital” for the wounded and alternative shelter for evacuees.
  - **For immediate purchase of relief goods while the mayor was away.** Through a phone call, the mayor instructed to withhold the 1st week salaries and yearend bonuses of Balangiga SB members in order to have funds to procure initial stocks of relief goods. These salaries and bonuses were reimbursed later.
  - **To expedite the process of procurement.** The mayor, himself, purchased the relief goods. Bidding was waived
  - **For equal distribution of relief goods.** The mayor decided to centralize all distributions of relief goods; all donations were directed to the municipal office which coordinated distribution of relief goods

# Conclusions

- Despite the proactive nature of the law (R.A. 10121) and the presence of local funds to address disasters, responses of these two municipalities were largely improvised and reactive.
- Though there were community responses in Palo they were initiated by municipal officials, while improvisations were driven mainly by the local chief executives in both municipalities.
- Role and process improvisations can be observed in both municipalities. However, more improvisations can be observed in Palo than in Balangiga.

# What lessons can be drawn from this study?

- **Typhoon Yolanda resulted in various interrelated problems. These problems range** from lack of food, clothing and decent shelter to sleep in to related community and health issues such as looting and possible illnesses that may arise from these problems.
- *Presence of improvisations may imply lack of adequate preparation.* Although improvisations are important skills to acquire, their presence may imply lack of planning and preparation for disasters.
- *Responders are victims too despite the promises of the law to make communities* better prepared in times of calamities, in actuality, the communities still heavily relied upon the wisdom, directions and resources of their local government officials. However, these officials were not exempted from the destructions of Yolanda. While they were required to provide answers to the problems of the communities, they themselves had to overcome their own problems.

- **Leadership qualities and experiences of local officials matter.**

Disasters create unique problems each time and no municipality can be too prepared for a disaster. Third and fourth class municipalities, like Palo and Balangiga, respectively, definitely benefited from having experienced local chief executives with unique leadership qualities and ample knowledge to deal with serious phenomena such as disasters.

- **Teamwork is very important, so is community empowerment.**

Addressing super typhoons requires a hybrid approach and necessitates more active involvement from below. It is important to maximize all resources and to empower communities in order to make them more prepared.



- *Designated MDRRM offices, when not institutionalized, handle purely ministerial tasks.* As in both cases in Palo and in Balangiga, respective “MDRRM officers” multi-tasked and were assigned to do ministerial tasks such as making announcements and doing pre-emptive/forced evacuations. They depended more on their Mayor’s instructions.
- *There are advantages in having networks in the national and regional level.* As can be gleaned from the study, both communities benefited from the networks and alliances not only at the local but at the national and international levels as well.

# Implications for Governance and Future study

- Further studies should be conducted to document cases that show the interrelatedness of problems to highlight that they require more coordinated response to address them.
- Comparative case studies can be done to record and map practices of improvisations that if proven to be effective and successful may be replicated and institutionalized.

# Implications for Governance and Future study (2)

- If true empowerment is desired “first responders” must be continuously retooled to create DRRM plans that fit their community. Often, local government units are seen as mere implementers of policy, the disaster risk reduction and management plan is created from the top down that local government officials below cannot deviate from. The Yolanda experience has created the need to rethink this strategy.
- Training and retooling programs on disaster preparedness and response must be evaluated in order to find out if they target key actors (including first responders and media) and contain key themes such as communication of scientific data and and risks.

# Implications for Governance and Future study (3)

- Addressing disasters requires a hybrid approach, communities must be involved in all stages of disaster management. Best community practices should be documented and disseminated to increase awareness of equally vulnerable communities.
- Improve coordination mechanisms between international NGOs and IOs and local NGOs, national government and LGUs to facilitate sharing of information and prevent duplication of efforts in extending disaster relief assistance.
- Further studies on accountability should be conducted to determine whether presence of improvisations imply lack of preparation; to determine the relationship between improvisation and corruption.
- Finally, examine how all these inputs can be incorporated in a more enhanced and improved version of the PDRRM law.