

Dipping into the depths of social capital in Isabela



There is always a demand for improving capacities. However, except for learning-on-the-job and occasional mentoring in government, there is not much opportunity to systematically learn to support strategic directions.

Take disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), and climate change adaptation (CCA), for example. These are highly technical and specialized knowledge areas. Who would have all these competencies to influence the scope and quality of comprehensive local development planning?

Not the staff of DILG-Isabela—at least, initially.



How would local development programs and projects be rights-based, gender-fair, and pro-poor, while reducing or mitigating disaster risks? Big question with nebulous concepts and no operational content, DILG staff would insist.

But for PD Elpidio A. Durwin of DILG-Isabela, the thirst for improving capacities and competencies on DRRM/CCA in the Department has to be quenched—not through the usual training stream from internal budgets, which were always not enough—but by looking into reservoirs of resources from partners.

That partner, UN Habitat, came at the right time.



UN Habitat assisted selected cities in Cagayan Valley in 2011. But beyond these cities, other LGUs and DILG-Isabela itself, needed to learn DRRM/CCA as well. DILG cannot be left behind in these knowledge areas, because a blind person cannot lead another blind person, reasoned PD Durwin.

And so the idea was broached to UN Habitat: how about training LGU officials and staff, multi-sectoral representatives, and DILG personnel on making comprehensive development plans (CDPs) DRRM/CCA-responsive, rights-based, pro-poor, and gender-sensitive?

With a concept note prepared by Ruperto Maribbay, then a Cluster Leader in DILG Isabela and overall resource person on CDPs, UN HABITAT approved the proposal and provided counterpart funds to train 140 participants from LGUs, civil society and DILG in 2011.

Now LGU and DILG staff in Isabela are demonstrating initial seeds of competency, producing vulnerability and adaptation analyses (VAA) based on sex-disaggregated data; and generating appropriate 3-year strategies, programs and projects, as well as local indicators to track success, progress and risks.

And what triggered this? Just good relationships with UN Habitat, backed with good reputation from DILG, reasonable demand from LGUs, and a dose of optimism, creativity and persistence, ends PD Durwin.