

IRM and its COMPLEX CITIES

Constructing IRM in Urban Ecosystem

THE PHILIPPINES holds valuable lessons in the emerging, unique practice of Integrated Risk Management (IRM) in the urban context. The MANATUTI River Basin, which is one of the primary focuses of the Partners for Resilience (P4R) project, is located in the highly urbanized National Capital Region, specifically in Quezon City, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, and Valenzuela (QC-CAMANAVA). The multiple jurisdictions governing the landscape and the complexity of intermingling factors present in the urban context provide a challenging arena for the practice.

The first four targets of the Sendai framework for action directly focus on the decrease of disaster mortality, affected people, economic loss, and damage to critical facilities and services. Meeting the targets is a huge task for highly-urbanized landscapes, where larger, more concentrated populations, investments, and critical facilities are exposed to higher risks. This makes it all the more imperative to perfect the practice of urban IRM.

Being part of the capital region, there is an assumption that the cities of QC-CAMANAVA have sufficient capacity for disaster risk reduction. Although there is already an achieved operational practice and a system put in place, comprehensively addressing vulnerabilities remains a challenge. There has been limited coordination mechanisms incorporated in local development plans not just across the geographic landscape but also across the administrative levels of governance. The urban poor sector and informal settler families are often excluded from the planning process, and are even portrayed as the main contributor to the proliferation of risks.

The urban character of the cities also impedes people's appreciation for IRM practice. While the necessity for disaster risk reduction (DRR) is recognized, local plans and programs are geared more toward disaster preparedness. Moreover, there is difficulty in grasping the interconnection amongst DRR, adapting to climate change and caring for the ecosystem. Most of the urban population are also disjoint from the concept of ecosystem.

SENDAI GLOBAL TARGETS

- (a) Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- (b) Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- (c) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.
- (d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
- (e) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
- (f) Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.
- (g) Substantially increase the availability of and access to multihazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

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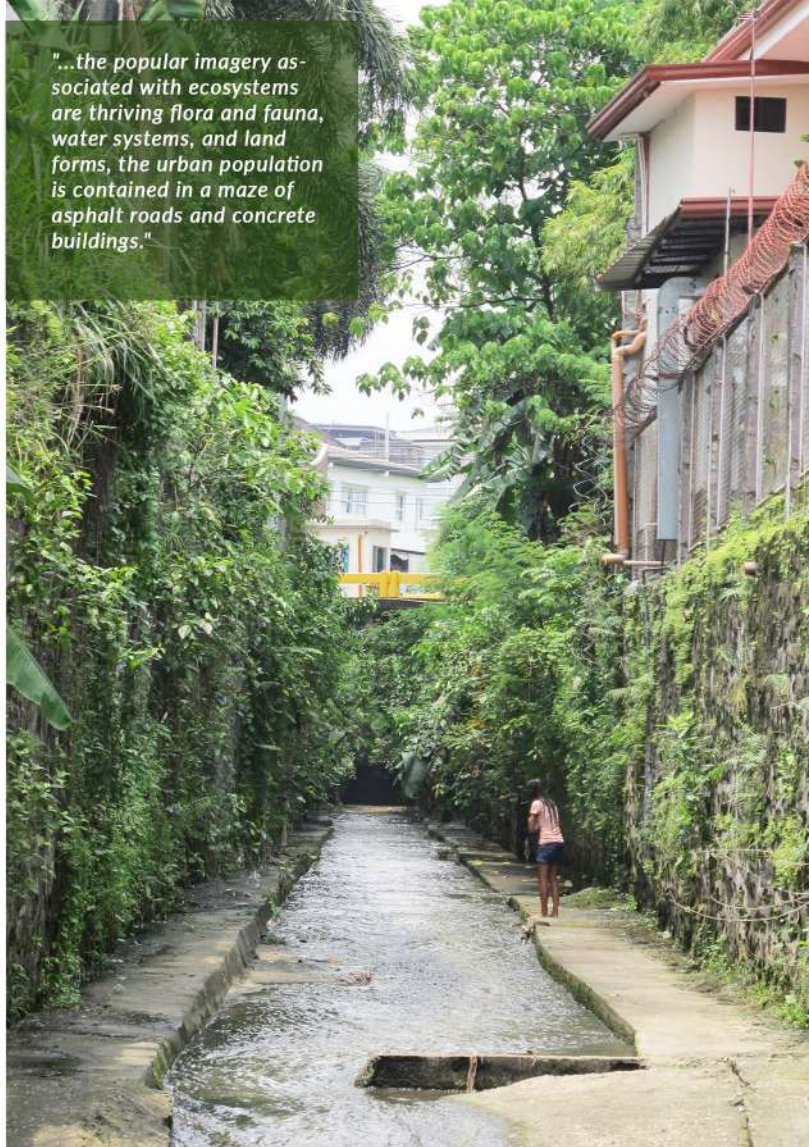
Livelihoods are not based on the ecosystem. While the popular imagery associated with ecosystems is thriving flora and fauna, water systems, and land forms, the urban population is contained in a maze of asphalt roads and concrete buildings. These separate urban dwellers' consciousness from the natural landscape these cities are built on, which also result in the unfamiliarity of what human activities contribute to ecosystem degradation and ultimately, the death of their river system. This in turn continuously decreases the capacity of the ecosystem to fulfill its services, including risk mitigation. And with it being felt less and less by the urban population, their appreciation for ecosystem management further declines.

PfR's intervention through ACCORD and CARE is a collection of activities that reduces risks while trying to identify entry points for the appreciation of the urban ecosystem. These actions range from barangay-level disaster preparedness to watershed reforestation, improving early warning systems and contingency plan, strengthening DRR committees, and doing community drills. These actions enabled the community to do pre-emptive evacuation and better manage emergency situations, while ensuring the safety and upholding the dignity of the affected population. PfR also sought to facilitate the harmonization of Early Warning Systems along the river basin. Together with the national meteorological agency, multistakeholder dialogues were initiated to engage communities, local and national government authorities, and non-government organizations, and to establish linkages among the EWS within the MANATUTI river basin landscape.

Bio-intensive gardens were established in schools to help meet students' nutritional needs. Solid waste management systems significantly improved segregation of waste at the household level, allowing for proper disposal; thus, reducing waste that could clog waterways. These various activities have positive impacts in the areas where they were undertaken, but also have positive effects on the whole landscape. Although successful, these activities have yet to find a solid integration with each other. They are still but pieces to the puzzle of urban IRM.

With the complexity of the urban context, the challenge still is to develop a comprehensive IRM programming that involves the vulnerable and marginalized, and connects risk reduction not just to people's practical concerns such as livelihood but also to the ecosystem cities are built on. Through PfR's second phase, there is an opportunity to enhance and even establish a template for a comprehensive and effective IRM practice. ■

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The Partners for Resilience (PfR) in the Philippines is part of a global alliance present in 10 countries. We are five Netherlands-based humanitarian development, climate, and environmental management organizations - the Netherlands Red Cross, CARE Netherlands, Cordaid, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and Wetlands International - and our local partners. Formed in 2011, PfR advocates for an Integrated Risk Management approach towards reducing natural and other hazards affecting vulnerable communities. This unique approach seeks to complement disaster risk reduction interventions with climate change adaptation and ecosystem management and restoration.

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