



The Philippines: understanding humanitarian networks

ALNAP Case Study

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Seven questions about networks

This case study is part of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in the Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) and Asia Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) research project exploring national level humanitarian networks in Asia. The objective of this research is to improve the knowledge base on networks in the humanitarian system. In particular, the research aims to increase our understanding of networking by national NGOs working on disaster and crisis response in Asia.

An important motivation for this work is to understand the current nature of networking at a national level, to capture instances of success, and to draw conclusions about how these successes could be replicated elsewhere. The particular research questions the project addresses are as follows:

1. In what ways are organisations currently engaged in networking at a national level?
2. What form do these networks take and what functions are networks perceived as fulfilling – what functions should they be fulfilling?
3. How does the involvement of national organisations differ from international organisations in national level networks and coordination mechanisms?
4. How do networks on disaster and crisis response relate to networks on other relevant issues, such as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and development agendas?
5. How are national networks linked to other networks at regional and international levels?
6. What leads to the emergence of networked forms of action?
7. What are the key challenges and opportunities for national level humanitarian networks?

Networks have been describe as the ‘intellectual centrepiece’ of our age (Kahler, 2009), and as such there are a broad range of theoretical and conceptual approaches to their study. At the same time, there has been relatively little formal analysis of: national level inter-organisation humanitarian networks; their role in the broader humanitarian system; and the factors that contribute to their success. In this paper, humanitarian networks are defined as *ongoing, voluntary, and dynamic relationships between autonomous organizations, with a recognizable membership and explicit purpose or goal, focused on improving humanitarian performance or reducing the impact of disasters and conflict.*

Because there is much more literature on inter-organisation networks than national humanitarian networks, this research has drawn on a range of frameworks and approaches to describe networks. It uses these to build on the experiences and reflections of those working with and through national NGO networks. Importantly, this research also reflects the need for cooperation from network participants in researching networks.

Theories of networks

Existing theoretical approaches have been used to inform the categorisation and analysis of the information gathered; in particular using a modified version of the Network Functions Approach. The idea of thinking about networks in terms of their functions (plus considering the relationship between network form and function) has been used in a number of similar efforts to look predominantly at research and policy networks in the development and humanitarian fields (Hearn & Mendizabal, 2011; Mendizabal, 2006a; Ramalingam et al, 2008). The analysis also draws on other theoretical approaches to networks, including from Social Network Analysis and Network Governance Theory, but is driven primarily by the data gathered through the cases studies, rather than any given theoretical approach.

Why the Philippines?

The first of three case study countries, the Philippines, was chosen because it exemplified the criteria identified for suitable case studies: a country with a high level of vulnerability, but also advanced national and international response structures. Furthermore, initial scoping research through ADRRN identified a number of active networks, some of which had been documented elsewhere. Finally, there was enthusiasm from network members to participate in the research.

The findings of this case study will also be used to inform the analysis of the subsequent two cases, to determine the extent to which particular themes are present in other contexts, strengthening the suitability of the research findings to be used to make generalisable statements. Full details of the research project and its approach can be found on the ALNAP website.

The big picture

This case study examines the nature of national level networks in the Philippines, and is the first of three case studies as part of a larger research collaboration between ALNAP and ADRRN. The Philippines, an archipelago in South-East Asia with a population of nearly 100 million, is perhaps the most disaster vulnerable country in the world, exposed to a variety of natural hazards including storms, typhoons, floods (and associated hazards such as landslips), as well as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and droughts (GFDRR, 2009). Recent large-scale disasters have included typhoons Ketsana (2009) and Washi (2011) which hit the Manila and northern Mindanao areas respectively. These typhoons are in addition to countless smaller disasters and the ongoing conflict and related displacement on the island of Mindanao.

In response to such high levels of vulnerability, national and international response structures have developed in the country, including the presence of the UN cluster system, and recently renewed national legislation with a greater focus on DRR and local ownership of response. These humanitarian response structures have evolved in a wider context of decentralised power and high levels of civil society engagement in political processes.

Formal and informal networks are a prominent feature in the response and risk reduction landscape of the Philippines, with many national and local NGOs working in and through networks, in turn supported by international agencies. The research looked at seven networks currently active in the Philippines:

- Building Disaster Resilient Communities Learning Circle (BDRC-LC)
- Citizens Disaster Response Network (CDRN)
- Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR)
- DRR Network Philippines (DRRNet Philippines)
- The Humanitarian Relief Consortium (HRC)
- Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN)
- The Philippines International NGO Network (PINGON)¹

This case study describes the range of network functions undertaken by these networks, using an adapted version of the Network Functions Approach, before highlighting some of the key themes emerging from the research. These themes include the particular features of networks engaged in advocacy and knowledge management, as well as the role of international actors in national networks, and finally the role of networks in bringing actors together at the

¹ It should be noted that the PINGON is a national network of INGOS.

edge of the humanitarian system. It concludes by noting key challenges and opportunities for Filipino networks.

The research for this case study included a thorough desk review of relevant literature, as well as in-country research between April 15th and April 24th 2012. Semi-structured interviews and group discussions were conducted with 22 office holders from the networks listed above, international actors working in the country, and government representatives.

People power, democracy and civil society

The Republic of the Philippines occupies an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands at the eastern limit of the South China Sea, and is home to a diverse population of nearly 100 million people. It has a GDP of US \$4,000 per capita, and achieves a HDI score of 0.644, placing it at number 112 out of 187 states and territories (UNDP, 2011).

A Spanish colony from the 16th to the turn of the 20th century, the Philippines then became a colony of the United States, gaining independence in 1946 after a period of occupation by the Japanese during the Second World War. Independence was followed by a period of rapid economic growth, but also characterised by political instability and limitations on democratic and personal freedoms, culminating in the imposition of Marshall Law 1965. Central to the genesis of contemporary Filipino political and democratic culture – including the prominence of networks and network governance – is the ‘People Power Revolution’ of the mid-1980s, which saw a sustained campaign of non-violent civil resistance against the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos, leading to elections and the restoration of democracy. As the dictatorship fell, ‘so arose a plethora of local NGOs, many of whom had emerged from the churches where social activists had found a home during the martial law period’ (Neame et al, 2009: 2). Subsequently in 2001, the ‘EDSA Revolution,’ or ‘People Power II’ similarly ousted President Joseph Estrada from the presidency. These events have doubtless increased the stake many feel civil society has in the stewardship of political and social change in the Philippines.

Humanitarian context

The Philippines is no stranger to humanitarian crises, either resulting from natural hazards or as a consequence of violent conflict and lawlessness.² Various structures have evolved to respond and mitigate the effects of these, originating from within the government and civil society, with international humanitarian architecture present and active in the country. The

² A ongoing problem is violent clan feuds, known locally as *rido*

next section will briefly explore the nature of the risks facing the Philippines, and the response architecture within which networks operate.

Hazards and vulnerability

The Philippines is perhaps the most disaster-prone country in the world. Located on the western rim of the Pacific, and spanning a continental plate boundary, it is vulnerable to a variety of natural hazards, including storms, typhoons, floods (and associated hazards such as landslides), as well as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and droughts (GFDRR, 2009). In 2011 it recorded the largest number of natural disasters for any country (at 33), including the Severe Tropical Storm Washi (known locally as Sendong), which struck northern Mindanao in December 2011, and became the second largest disaster of the year globally, behind only the Japanese Earthquake Tsunami (CRED, 2012).³

Compounding the country's exposure to a range of natural hazards is the persistent vulnerability of large sections of the population. Although poverty rates have been falling in recent years, around one quarter of the population are recorded as living below the official poverty line (World Bank, 2012). Two factors contributing to this vulnerability are environmental degradation and rapid urbanisation. Massive depletion of natural resources and the destruction of the environment has increased the risk of flash flooding, landslides and drought as a result of declining forest cover (GFDRR, 2009). At the same time, rapid urbanisation has led to the proliferation of unplanned settlements, particularly in hazard-prone areas (ibid). Finally, the long-running violent conflict between the state and Islamic separatist groups on the Southern island of Mindanao has created persistent humanitarian need, in situations of limited access for both national and international actors. Fighting escalated in 2008 after a decade-long peace process between the government and rebel Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) collapsed. The two sides signed a truce in July 2009, the implementation of which is still ongoing, with large populations still displaced (at least 1,200 people as of December 2012⁴).

The DRRM Act and political structures

As with all sovereign states, primary responsibility for disaster management, response and risk reduction lies with the governing authorities, and the institutions of the Filipino state have

³ As measured by number of deaths

⁴ [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/A01DB3AC980C9A22C125772600312329?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/A01DB3AC980C9A22C125772600312329?OpenDocument)

become increasingly active in both response and DRR activities at the national and local level. The Philippines Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (the DRRM Act) is the key legal statute of relevance to DRR and response, representing a paradigm shift from an approach limited to reactive management of disasters, to a wider recognition of the need for a holistic approach to reducing risks and responding during emergencies (Luna, 2011). The law's evolution was protracted and multifaceted, with networks playing an instrumental role – particularly DRRNet Philippines. Since the passing of the law, attention has turned to implementation and rollout. The particular role networks played in pushing for such change will be considered below.

Under the DRRM Act, oversight of disaster management and DRR is vested within the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), comprising relevant departments of government at different levels, as well as civil society organisations (for which there is the provision of four seats), and the private sector (for which there is one seat). This structure is then broadly replicated at the regional and local level, with further councils at these levels pulling together a range of stakeholders, including from civil society. Although capacity issues at both the national and local level are doubtless impeding the speed at which these new structures become fully functional, the new legislation appears to be almost universally seen as representing a positive step in the approach to disaster management and response at the national level. Important features of the new structures include:

- The recognition at the state level of a holistic approach to DRR and response – bringing the approach of the state into that long advocated for by representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the country.
- The recognition of a distinction between those tasked with oversight of response, and those implementing a response, and the key role for local government as 'first responders'.
- The inclusive approach to oversight, with a wide range of stakeholders included in the structures of the councils from the national level down (Agsaoay-Sano, 2011).

It is important to note that the structure of the DRRM councils, at both the national and local level, assumes some level of self-organisation, coordination and collaboration between civil society actors (and the private sector), during response and on an ongoing basis. At all levels, four seats are reserved on councils for CSO actors, with the onus for the selection of representatives lying with the CSOs themselves. Many see representation through networks as being the vehicle to achieve engagement in national structures and ensure united positions from the CSO community, although without formal association. As a representative from the NDRRMC

put it, for the councils to work, NGOs will need 'self-organised networks, in order to make interactions more straightforward.'⁵

In relation to mechanisms for the coordination of international humanitarian action, government is again the central interlocutor: however, the degree to which this role is fulfilled varies, particularly within regional structures. The Philippines was one of the first countries to adopt the cluster approach as part of the humanitarian reform process, with the creation of clusters initiated in 2007. There is a fully functioning Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Clusters at the national and sub-national level. The Filipino Government leads eight clusters, supported by the relevant cluster lead agency.⁶

In response to the initiation of the cluster system in the Philippines, international NGOs formed the Philippines International NGO Network (the PINGON). The PINGON serves as a mechanism to share information between its members, and between the network and other national and international bodies involved in humanitarian response and DRR, as well as undertaking an advocacy function, especially in relation to the Government of the Philippines and the UN system. It also plays a role in promoting greater collaboration and complementarity, mobilising resources to improve the capacities of its members, and working to improve standards of programming. The PINGON (represented by its member agencies) forms the main channel for interaction with international coordination mechanisms at the national level, with international NGO members acting as a conduit between the international system and their national NGO partners.

With a range of new structures and agencies being created or implemented within a relatively short period of time, it is perhaps unsurprising that there has been some delay in uptake, and that the penetration of new coordination architecture beyond Manila is taking time. Local Government Units lack capacity, and many national and local NGOs – particularly those without representation in Manila – have little exposure to the cluster system. The figure below outlines an idealised picture of the coordination architecture at the field level during an emergency, as visualised by OCHA during the recent Cyclone Washi response, including an explicit role for a network of NGOs.

⁵ Interview with NDRRMC representative 23/04/2012

⁶ In May 2011, the NDRRMC and the HCT together formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) on Humanitarian Assistance, comprising key humanitarian partners. OCHA co-chairs with OCD to ensure regular interaction and improve inter-cluster coordination for preparedness activities. This structure has since been replicated at the sub-national level (OCHA, 2012).



An issue raised by both national and international actors consulted as part of this research was that the capacity of state actors at the local level, particularly Local Government Units, would need to be enhanced if they were to be able to fulfil the role envisaged for them. Furthermore, although there is a high level of cooperation and networking within local and national civil society actors, the forums through which these links should take place are not always clear, and many individual organisations still have a very limited understanding of specific coordination mechanisms, in particular the clusters. There is, however, enthusiasm for the role networks can play in improving coordination during emergencies, and more generally in aiding the rollout of the DRRM Act, particularly by enhancing capacities at the local level.

Networking in the Philippines

Networked modes of action and organisation appear to be ingrained in modern Filipino social and political culture. When asked why networked forms of organisation had emerged within the humanitarian and disaster response sphere, a recurrent theme in the interviews was the underlying political and cultural context. Within this context, collaboration and networked forms of organisation were seen as crucial to achieving social and political change at the national and local level. There are now a range of networks and collaborations working in pursuit of social and economic development goals, as well as specific issue-based networks. The

networks work to both support and build the capacity of their members, and to act as agents on their behalf, particular in advocacy and representation to the state.⁷

As noted above, the struggle to secure democratic principles within the Philippines post-independence has been an important factor in the dynamism of civil society, and the willingness of civil society actors to engage with politics and governance at the national and local level. In the words of one examination of Filipino civil society: ‘at certain historic moments, activist CSOs have demonstrated their power to compel government to make a change. They have contributed in a big way in mass movements that caused the fall of unaccountable governments ... They have come a long way to be recognised as an alternative voice in Philippine society’ (Serrano, 2009: 7). These successes, and the ability to mobilise action from the level of ‘people’s organisations’ in Filipino society, are based on networked models and mutual accountabilities that have allowed decentralised actors to have such impact at a national level (Polack et al, 2010).

Central to this process has been the introduction of the *Local Government Code of 1991*, which not only made a provision of decentralisation of power from central to local government, but also increased the prominence of people’s organisations, NGOs, and other manifestation of civil society within Filipino society (Bautista, 2011; Consuelo & Lopa, 2003; Luna, 2011; Serrano, 2009). Bautista (2011) has argued that ‘the legislation specifically promotes the establishment and operation of people’s NGOs as active partners in the pursuit of local autonomy ... building joint ventures, alliances, and cooperative arrangements between Local Government Units (LGUs), civil society, and business groups’. These people’s NGOs have reinforced and expanded the role of networks of state and non-state actors, to the extent that ‘the rise of network governance in the Philippines has reshaped the way power is brokered and resources are allocated to different sectors of society’ (Bautista, 2005, p29). It is within this context that we should understand the plethora of networks and collaborative initiatives working both on social and economic development issues, and specifically in relation to disaster response and risk reduction.

Humanitarian networks in the Philippines

Even taking in to account the context outlined above – in particular the high vulnerability and risk profile of the country and the prevalence of networked models of governance – the wide variety and sheer number of networks working on humanitarian response and risk

⁷ The research did not include a detail mapping or analysis of these networks, but examples include Philippine Sustainable Development Network, National Secretariat for Social Action and Aksyon Klima.

reduction issues is notable. The research did not seek to map the full extent of humanitarian networks in the country, nor to capture the extent of informal networking activities, but rather to identify the most relevant and successful networks, as perceived by a range of national and international actors. There was also a focus on explicit networks, rather than informal networking activities.

A descriptive table outlining the purpose, structure and functions of the networks studied can be found in annex, while this section synthesises the data collected across the various networks examined and presents an overview of the findings by function. This is followed by a discussion of the key trends identified, and finally the challenges and opportunities for future networking in the Philippines.

Overall, the organisations consulted for this research (whether international, national, or local) placed a high value on the use of networks and networked forms of actions and saw networks as beneficial to improving the effectiveness of responses. The benefits of networks were seen to hold both for individual organisations, and for the national level system as a whole (constituting government, business and the third sector).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these benefits were closely linked to the descriptions offered for the emergence and evolution of networks. As described above, networked, cooperative action is central to Filipino society. The relationship between the state and civil society has been described as an example of network governance, and the networked action of people's organisations has twice brought down governments. In this context, working through networks was universally seen as a natural, almost inevitable course of action. The most frequently cited reasons for the emergence of specific networks, and for organisations to engage with them were:

- **To gain exposure and/or credibility** – for local organisations this means being able to build relationships at the national level and increase social capital, while for larger (national or international) organisations, this reflected a desire to remain – and be seen to remain – grounded in the needs of vulnerable communities.
- **In response to specific external stimulus, be they opportunities or threats** – within the dynamism of informal networking and interactions between Filipino humanitarian actors, many of the more formalised networks have emerged in response to a particular change in the external context, for instance a specific shock, or a change in the policy context.⁸

⁸ An example of the former can be seen in the Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN), and its recent extension into MERN+ during the Cyclone Washi response. A clear example of a network forming in response to a change in the policy context is the emergence of the PINGON, which formed in anticipation of the introduction of a Humanitarian Country Team in the Philippines.

- **To improve access to resources** – despite the transaction costs associated with membership of networks, many organisations saw them as an important channel through which to access resources. Conversely, many international actors saw networks of Filipino NGOs as an increasingly fast and effective way to distribute resources.
- **To consolidate the exchange of knowledge and experience.** The act of networking between organisations working on similar issues was seen *a priori* as an important opportunity for learning, and the desire to consolidate and enhance these interactions was identified as driving the formalisation of networks. This is particularly relevant for local organisations for which networks provide an opportunity for exchange outside their locale.

Looking more specifically at the different functions performed by Filipino networks, there is again a diverse picture with a range of networks performing different functions, to different degrees and to different ends. The following presents general observations about the way different functions are performed by the variety of networks operating in the Philippines.

- **Community building:** the community building function can perhaps best be seen as forming the foundations upon which other functions can grow. Building a shared vision and cohesive, mutually supportive communities among stakeholders, characterised by strong ties and high levels of trust is crucial for any network to succeed. Community building and, in particular, the need to establish trust was cited as important in relation to almost all networks. Responses from the interviews underpin the extent to which function appears to follow form – with the structure of the network, its procedures and terms of reference supporting the norms and values that underpin the community.
- **Convening:** the degree to which a network can be considered to be conducting a convening function rests to a large degree on the extent to which different actors involved can be considered different or similar. MERN, for instance, convenes actors with similar humanitarian and peace building goals, but draws them from across the political and religious spectrum. CDRN, on the other hand, brings together community organisations that are similar in many ways, but which otherwise have little interaction. The approach of DRRNet has been successful in bringing together actors from the local, national and international NGOs, as well as the private sector, government and the military, either within the network, as supporters, or as part of policy processes. Both DRRNet and MERN are comparatively large networks. with weak boundaries to membership, and no-formal secretariat supporting the network.

- **Amplification and advocacy:** the central role of DRRNet Philippines, advocacy, and the amplification of policy and best practice, were also cited in relation to almost all networks as a function they were or should be fulfilling. The experiences and lessons of DRRNet are explored in more detail below, but there are other examples of networks performing this function, even where it may not be the primary purpose of the network. This is true particularly in relation to networks whose primary function is knowledge management, but who also engage in advocacy and outreach to promote best practice outside of the immediate network; CDRN and BDRC-LC both approach their advocacy work from this perspective.
- **Knowledge management and learning:** along with the amplification and advocacy function, knowledge management (KM) was among the most immediately recognised of the functions. However, there was less agreement on the nature and substance of KM, particularly for those networks such as DRRNet and Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR), for which their original purpose did not concentrate on KM. The Philippines has been at the forefront of developing disaster management practice, particularly the value of community-led approaches, and there are examples of networks being used to capture and embed knowledge, notably in CNDR and more recently the Building Disaster Resilient Communities – Learning Circle (BDRC-LC). Knowledge management and learning are discussed in more detail in the next section.
- **Resource mobilisation:** for national and local NGOs, who still struggle to gain institutional (as opposed to project-based) funding, and who are unable to directly access many sources of international funding, the possibilities for resource mobilisation through networks are highly sought. There are, of course, instances of networks fulfilling a resource mobilisation function – CNDR draws funding in fees and other contributions from its members; and Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN) members use single agency funding to support network activities. Despite this, working through networks inevitably has an associated cost⁹ that must be borne and, to date, the majority of the networks considered during the research were dependent on external funding, and would not be sustainable without this support. The funds came from a small number of INGOs; a relationship described by the head of one community organisation as ‘a blessing and a curse’.
- **Implementation:** a feature of national humanitarian networks that emerged during the background research for this study was their role in directly implementing relief

⁹ There is an absolute cost regardless of whether this is outweighed by the efficiencies the network creates. This study did not attempt a cost-benefit analysis of working through networks.

services during emergencies, and this was borne out by examples gathered from Filipino networks. This took a range of forms:

- **Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR)** has delivered both response and DRR projects managed from within its secretariat on behalf of its members. These have utilised funding from its membership as well as donors such as ECHO, and been delivered in partnership with NGOs.
- **Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN)** has successfully brought together different parts of its membership to develop proposals for emergency response activities in Mindanao. Due to the network not having a legal personality, these have been conducted under a lead agency, which then distributes specific funds to other parts of the network.
- **Building Disaster Resilient Communities – Learning Circle (BDRC-LC)** has worked closely with Christian Aid to form the Christian Aid Rapid Response Assessment Team (CARRAT), drawing on staff from the network's members in different regions of the Philippines who can be rapidly deployed to disaster effected areas (Nightingale, 2012).
- **Humanitarian Relief Consortium (HRC)** is a consortium formed specifically with the intention of using networks between organisations to increase response capacities and performance. This goes beyond resource mobilisation and seeks to provide comprehensive services to affected populations throughout the country, most notably during the recent Cyclone Washi response.

Key features of networking in the Philippines

The picture above is diverse and multifaceted, and demonstrates a vibrant range of networks performing a wide variety of functions. Rather than attempt to assess and rank the success with which different networks fulfill these functions, the next section looks at specific functions of networks in the Philippines, and describes in more detail the form and structure of the networks fulfilling them, discussing also possible reasons for success.

Networks for change: DRRNet Philippines

As has been stated above, advocacy – primarily directed at government – was consistently cited as a key function of national humanitarian networks in the Philippines. A wide range of those consulted saw the potential or actual role of networks in developing consensus on

advocacy targets and amplifying the impact of an individual organisation's advocacy and change strategies. Almost all networks cited advocacy as a function they perform. It is perhaps also the area of disaster response and risk reduction policy where networks can be seen to have had the most tangible success in the Philippines, with DRRNet Philippines widely credited as being a crucial advocate for the change in national DRRM law.

Convened in the summer of 2008, DRRNet Philippines is a large and influential network, formed with the goal of pushing the Philippines' Congress for a new legal framework incorporating internationally acceptable norms in DRRM and Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM).¹⁰ With a long history of community engagement, and people's organisations engaging in disaster response and risk reduction, DRRNet Philippines was born out of a frustrations at the outdated and reactive nature of national DRRM law.¹¹

A conglomeration of over 300 NGOs, CSOs, community groups and people's organisations working on disaster management and reduction issues at either the national or local level, DRRNet Philippines sees itself as a network of Filipino organisations built up from grassroots organisations to advocate for change at a national level. To date, the network has carried out extensive activities without the support of a dedicated secretariat, instead relying on a core group of 'co-convenors', providing support in-kind, representing the network in various fora and presenting agreed positions.

Undoubtedly a national-level network, DRRNet Philippines is equally the product of symbiotic relationships with key international NGOs who have been instrumental in convening the network and providing funding and technical input. Agencies including Oxfam, Christian Aid, World Vision and Plan International have played a crucial role in establishing and sustaining DRRNet Philippines, while at the same time remaining at a distance from its everyday governance and activities. This relationship with the international NGOs, receiving support and resources while maintaining its independence and autonomy, must be seen as a factor in the network's success, but as a cost in terms of network sustainability.

Further exploring the factors of success for the network, relational and interpersonal aspects were repeatedly cited as an important characteristic of the network, which have allowed it to operate in a relatively informal and flexible manner, and on a low resource base. High levels of mutual trust between co-convenors allowed for representation on behalf of the network to be made in the widest range of fora. Much of this trust was a product of existing

¹⁰ The act was passed in 2010 and is currently being implemented at national to local level

¹¹ DRRNet Philippines was not the first collective attempt to change legislation around disaster. The Philippines Disaster Management Forum (PDMF) was formed in 2000 with similar aims, but dissipated without success after elections in 2004. Whether the move from a 'forum' to a 'network' contributed to the later success of DRRNet Philippines was not tested, although the collective networked nature of action in DRRNet was cited repeatedly as an important factor of success.

relationships between individuals, but also stems from consensus-based decision-making and the equality of members within the network despite different resource inputs.

The aim of achieving a new law for DRRM in the Philippines provided an extremely well-defined target around which DRRNet Philippines was able to focus its activities, and around which the membership was able to build agreement and consensus and, in turn, advocate for change. The concrete nature of this target was seen as crucial to creating cohesion within the network, which otherwise risked being a disparate group of heterogeneous actors.¹²

While having a clear and well-defined aim, and coalescing around a specific target for change, DRRNet Philippines has also brought together a broad range of stakeholders, whether or not formally associated with the network. Central to this has been a recognition that although the goal of the network is agreed and clear, the rationale and motivation for individual organisations to pursue these aims through the network varies.

Finally, the role of contextual and enabling factors cannot be ignored. In the case of the successful efforts of Filipino networks to advocate for a change in national DRR provision, the impact of Cyclone Ketsana, and its role in raising the profile of the debate among key actors in the Philippines government was identified as being an important external stimulus contributing to the profile of DRR agendas at government level.

Knowledge and learning in networks: CDRN and BDRC-LC

Knowledge management (KM), learning, and the timely exchange of relevant information were cited in relation to the activities of all the national networks examined during the case study. Research from a range of sectors shows networks to be important to processes of knowledge creation, diffusion, absorption, and use (Phelps, Heidl, & Wadhwa, 2012), and this was supported by the views of the majority of those involved in Filipino humanitarian networks, who saw both formal and informal networks as important for knowledge transfer. Within the responses, however, there was some divergence in the types of activity that constituted KM, and about the success of networks in managing the exchange of knowledge and information.

Learning in the broad sense, as well as the more systematic creation, collection and distribution of experience and understanding within networks and beyond, were both cited as

¹² This was a central consideration of those active within the network when moving on from their success in advocating for the passage of DRRM Law and looking to ensuring its effective implementation, particularly at a local level. This evolution was identified as a high-risk point for the network, with a natural dissipation of energy. The new strategic objectives for the network (effective implementation of the DRRM law; knowledge management mechanisms for DRRM and related issues; and strengthened networking and partnerships with all relevant stakeholders) reflect a need to consolidate and increase value internally in order to be able to continue external advocacy.

key activities that networks should engage in. These functions were mentioned in relation to almost all networks looked at, either as a function they currently performed, or an area where they should be doing more. While this function was widely seen as important, the efforts of two specific Filipino networks to promote knowledge sharing and learning stand out and are particularly instructive and discussed below, with examples from other networks. Suggestions as to the factors for success are also discussed.

Learning and knowledge management are central to the aims of CDRN, and have been since it was founded in the early 1980s. Although the network has evolved over time, it emerged as an effort to build the credibility of community-based and development-focused disaster response practices. At the heart of CDRN is the belief that vulnerable communities should be the main actors in disaster response and not treated merely as passive 'victims' who need outside assistance (Delica, 1993). This belief has been distilled by CDRN (and the network's coordinating organisation CDRC) under the concept of Citizenry-based and Development-oriented Disaster Response (CBDO-DR). This has provided the network with a defined focus, and CDRN has fulfilled a range of functions in order to refine, develop and promote the concept, with learning and the promotion of knowledge around CBDO-DR as the persistent theme.

A particular feature of CDRN is its relatively formal, centralised structure, and its bounded and close-knit members. It is a network of 17 regional organisations, and the network's coordinating and secretarial functions are fulfilled by CDRC, based in Manila, which also forms the face of the network nationally and internationally. Citizens Disaster Response Centre (CDRC) is a NGO whose activities span disaster preparedness and mitigation, emergency response to rehabilitation, conducting research, and advocacy and public information. Although CDRC does not directly fund CDRN members, it subsidises the network through its investment in the organisational structures, in turn with international funding from the German NGO Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. The network is governed by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from member organisation, with a rotating chairperson.

CDRN brings together a range of autonomous regional affiliates, dispersed across the length and breadth of the Philippines archipelago, which would have little opportunity to interact without the facilitation of the network. Although the strongest links within the network remain between individual affiliates and CDRC – giving the network a hub and spokes structure – an important function of the network is community building in order to improve the exchange of experiences and learning by bringing members together. This also helps ensure the network remains relevant to its membership.

Within the close-knit and intimate community of CDRN, the network undertakes a range of activities to promote knowledge sharing and learning on issues selected from within the membership, all related to community-based disaster management. This includes trainings and trainings of trainers, aimed at diffusing good practices outwards towards regional affiliates and the people's organisations that they are, in turn, networked with. Conversely, CDRN also invests resources to capture experiences and case studies from individual members and affiliates, which are then shared within the network and beyond. Finally, the network is highly conscious of using its relatively small size to maintain an open, honest and informal dialogue for both explicit and tacit knowledge exchange, resulting in what one respondent referred to as combination of 'information and inspiration'.

Although a much younger network, the Building Disaster Resilience Communities Learning Circle (BDRC-LC), like CDRN, has a high degree of focus in the areas of practice it is concerned with, and in turn also has a small, close-knit membership. BDRC-LC aims to provide a platform for learning and peer-support amongst Christian Aid partners, in order to be able to draw on a wide range of experiences of response and risk reduction. The learning circle was established in 2009 as part of the larger Christian Aid's BDRC project, itself within a DFID-funded global capacity-building and learning initiative aimed at supporting local partner organisations 'to strengthen communities' capacity to manage and recover from external shocks, as well as prepare for and reduce risks of future disasters' (Neame et al., 2009). In the context of the Philippines, this goal was seen as particularly relevant given the increasing experience of local organisations affected by and responding to disaster events, while remaining primarily developmentally focused. With the promotion of learning and access to knowledge fundamental to the BDRC-LC, it's little surprise that the network is shaped to fulfil these functions in a range of ways.

The BDRC-LC commenced in late 2009 with a 12-day course on DRR, based on prior research to identify gaps in knowledge, technology and skills among participants. Christian Aid's evaluation findings noted the perceived success in enabling learning from network members who participated, and bringing together otherwise diffuse organisations has continued to be a key strategy for the exchange of knowledge, and exposure to external expertise and training (Neame et al., 2009). Other initiatives have included the collation and publication of best practices, giving local partners and communities an opportunity to share experiences from their own localised risk reduction projects. This multifaceted process – mobilising resources to bring in outside knowledge and recognising the value in members' experience – appears important to the quality of the whole. During interviews with Christian Aid staff, the importance of differentiating between learning, KM and information exchange was also seen as important for

maintaining clarity of purpose. Of the experiences of CDRN and the BDRC-LC, three notable features stand out:

- The extent to which the KM and learning function appears to be closely related to network form, with successful KM and learning activities being shaped to the particular nature of the network – in this case two relatively closed and structured networks. This is not to suggest that this function *requires* a closed network form, but rather to note the important relationship between form and function that has been highlighted elsewhere (Hearn & Mendizabal, 2011; Mendizabal, 2006b).
- Another feature the two networks share is the high degree of focus in the networks' aims and purpose – CBDO-DR in the case of CDRN, and the exchange of learning between Christian Aid partners in the case of BDRC-LC. It appears that this focus has for both networks proved a strong base for both community building and the capture and exchange of knowledge.
- The flows of information and knowledge in both networks are multifaceted and dynamic – including both the capture and dissemination of good practices between members, facilitated through the network. This dynamism is an important network feature, and appears to improve the content of exchanges, keep the content fresh, and improve network sustainability

The experiences of CDRN and the BDRC-LC are not the only successful examples of KM and learning functions being fulfilled in the country. CNDR's distribution of donated Microsoft SharePoint licenses in order to build a cross-sectoral KM platform on DRR and response issues is a notable example of a technology-based KM solution being led by a humanitarian network in the Philippines. Perhaps surprisingly, this was one of the few technology-led approaches to KM identified, and the use of the internet for KM and learning appears to be underdeveloped, in part because of the still limited penetration of consistent internet access outside of the Metro-Manila area.¹³

A final point to note here is the importance of informal and tacit knowledge exchange. These unstructured exchanges clearly do not respect the boundaries and divisions between formal, named networks, and instead take place in the wider context of networking between individuals working on humanitarian and disaster issues in the Philippines. These knowledge exchanges were beyond the scope of this research though, nonetheless, they were highlighted as important

¹³ The lack of resilience in internet services during disasters was noted as being a disadvantage by one interviewee, who favoured the comparable robustness of mobile phone networks.

by respondents, and should be seen as forming an ongoing backdrop to the more formalised activities undertaken by specific networks.

From partnerships to networks

As described above BDRC-LC is a network initiated by – and closely linked to – an international NGO, Christian Aid. It shares this feature with the Humanitarian Response Consortium (initiated by Oxfam GB), and MERN (initiated by Save the Children US). Although other networks active in the Philippines have a close relationship with international actors (particularly DRRNet), these three networks are notable in their response focus, and the way in which they demonstrate that INGOs are pursuing new forms of networked collaboration to boost response capacities at the national and local level.

Within Christian Aid partners, the success and goodwill of BDRC-LC has led to the formation of the Christian Aid Rapid Response Assessment Team (CARRAT). Providing surge capacity across the Philippines, the CARRAT draws on the network of partner organisations allowing technical expertise and resources to be strategically deployed during response. For Christian Aid – a non-operational agency working solely through partners – this provides an opportunity to boost the capacity of a lead implementing partner during a response, and boost skills and capacities in the longer term. Evaluation findings of the Cyclones Ketsana response noted the positive role played by the CARRAT mechanism, particularly in the initial emergency phase, and the initiative has since been expanded. Looking broadly at examples of their work through partners to reduce the risk and impact of disasters in the Philippines, Christian Aid highlighted ‘the importance of moving beyond bilateral partnerships to consider the “ecosystem” of actors in a given context, and to consider how international agencies can support and strengthen networks between diverse actors’ (Nightingale, 2012).

Similar efforts have been undertaken amongst Oxfam partners as part of the HRC, which seek to collectively develop the capacity of local, development-orientated NGOs, and support them to implement emergency programmes without international surge capacities, in all but the largest disasters. A smaller grouping of five local organisations, the HRC is part of a strategic drive by Oxfam to gradually extricate itself from operational humanitarian response. In order to do this, it has recognised the need to focus on capacity development of local actors, developing and strengthening partnerships with key players, and transferring skills and knowledge (Oxfam: 2010).

Internally, Oxfam has highlighted the role the HRC can play in moving away from a relationship between local NGOs and the international system, characterised as ‘humanitarian contractorship.’ Although it provides the consortium (and its members) with critical funding, Oxfam

describes the HRC as ‘a “humanitarian broker”, helping those NGOs obtain funding to continue their growth, while remaining ready to respond to disasters beyond the capacity of local partners to cope with alone’ (Cairns, 2012). From this perspective the HRC is an example of an INGO promoting collaborative relationships between national organisations as a route to increasing their sustainability.

Convened with the aim of improving effective coordination and collaboration between Filipino organisations responding to the ongoing Mindanao conflict, MERN is another example of an INGO using networked forms of action to improve humanitarian responses. Formed in 2003, MERN was established to bring together a range of national organisations to improve the accountability and delivery of humanitarian aid and development programs across the island of Mindanao, through effective coordination and collaboration. MERN aims to function as a platform where organisations can share data, information, and analysis, in order to coordinate response plans and effectively allocate resources. Currently consisting of over 50 members across Mindanao, in addition to playing a role in coordinating response and mobilising resources between national NGOs, MERN also provides an important link between the international system and national actors, for instance through MERN representatives’ engagement in the clusters during the recent Washi response.

These three response-focused networks share a number of features. Firstly, international actors were instrumental in their emergence as explicit networks from within the highly-linked and collaborative context of the Filipino humanitarian community. In the case of BDRCLC’s CARRAT, and the HRC, it is clear that such collaboration would not have emerged without the involvement of the respective INGOs. In all cases, the resources available from INGOs have been and continue to be crucial to the functioning of the network, and more generally for the members’ activities. Equally, however, all three initiatives seek to go beyond contractor/client relationships that typify much partnership between national and international agencies.

All three networks aim to increase the resilience of the wider system by building response capacity within local development actors, and to decrease the need for technical assistance from overseas. A large part of this is being achieved through the function the networks perform – for instance community building, resource mobilisation, and knowledge management and learning. Importantly, the form of all three networks serve to support national level ownership and buy-in to the network, with governance functions divested to national member organisations, and day-to-day running embedded in member agencies rather than separate secretariats, ensuring an ongoing tangible commitment of time and resources from within the membership.

Networks at the edge

A final theme emerging from the case study research, and one that perhaps inevitably tested the scope and resources of the research, related to the way in which actors towards the periphery of the humanitarian system, most notably the private sector, have used networks to facilitate increased engagement with DRR and response.

As a mapping exercise conducted for ASEAN on DRR policy, stakeholders in the Philippines noted; ‘as part of their corporate social responsibility, Philippine business organisations have ventured into the provision of social and economic services, and contributed significant resources during disaster emergency and recovery’ and CNDR is in part a consequence of this ongoing engagement (Luna, 2011).

CNDR is not the only network bringing together private sector actors around disaster issues. The Private Sector Disaster Management Network (PSDMN) – which was not looked at in detail in this research – brings together over 100 companies, foundations and other private actors, and aims to coordinate efforts of the private sector, government, and CSOs, describing itself as the private sector extension of government coordination efforts. The role of the private sector in DRR and response in the Philippines may in part be explained within the wider phenomena of ‘networks governance’ which Bautista (2011) has described as prevalent in the Philippines, and as an expression of the vibrancy of civil society in the country. Many in the NGO community saw the involvement of the private sector as legitimate and positive, with networks providing a central route for managing this involvement.

In addition to the private sector, other networks of actors at the edge of the formal system were suggested as important in their own right, including Catholic diocese and other networks of church-affiliated groups. The Rotary Club was also cited by one respondent as an important conduit for private flows of assistance outside the formal system. An exploration of these was outside the scope of this research (and may have failed to meet the adopted definition of network), but the presence of such networks remains significant.

Challenges and opportunities

As the first of three case studies, no conclusions are presented here, and will instead be drawn from the comparison between the different networks covered in the three country case studies. However, looking to the future for networks in the Philippines, three features emerge:

Sustainability

All the networks looked at except the PINGON (an INGO network) and CNDR (a private sector network) rely on external funding to support their activities, most frequently through the support of INGOs. So far, these relationships have proved successful, with INGOs keen to take a

'hands-off' approach to managing networks, or to provide specific inputs rather than ongoing support. A more interventionist approach to national networks from INGOs may have limited the sense of ownership and engagement from national actors, something seen as important to the credibility and sustainability of national networks.

In some respects, the wider humanitarian system can be seen as channelling resources internationally in response to need, and from this perspective the international support for national networks does not appear unusual. But in a context where national NGOs are still limited in their access to institutional rather than project-based funding, their ability to sustain networks through voluntary contributions from members will also be curtailed. This has not been wholly negative, and the scarcity of core funding has perhaps contributed to networks remaining lean, and relying on the efforts of members rather than autonomous secretariats, which risk networks becoming detached from the membership. This mode of funding also leaves lingering questions about the sustainability of networks if key international partners' interest were to diminish.

Linking networks and coordination

As outlined above, networks in the Philippines fulfil a broad range of functions at a range of points in the disaster cycle, from response to preparedness and risk reduction. Although just one aspect of the functions networks can perform, there is perhaps valuable scope in expanding the role national NGO networks can play in improving coordination between different types of actors operating in the Philippines – particularly national NGOs and the UN system, where INGOs currently act as a broker between the two groups.

From the perspective of the UN, there appears to be interest in exploring engagement with networks as a route for improved coordination with national NGOs, and to improve the timely collection and exchange of information. A recent joint cluster training by ADRRN and OCHA delivered in Manila also responded to increased interest from national NGOs in the cluster system, in addition to enthusiastic if sporadic engagement during the Cyclone Washi response.

Although there is much work to be done, and the limits for such collaboration are unclear, the experience of MERN, and the MERN+ grouping formed in Northern Mindanao during the Washi response, may provide lessons for future initiatives. For these to be successful they will need to create sufficient structures to provide clear protocols during emergencies, while recognising that networks are not coordination mechanisms and require a level of dynamism and flexibility.

Building international network links

Finally, the research sought to identify how national networks are linked to other networks at the regional and international level, but found only limited examples. Despite this, a significant minority of those interviewed expressed a desire to improve links and collaborations with actors outside the Philippines. This included ADRRN members (and was an issue discussed at the 2012 ADRRN Assembly in Phnom Penh), but also others who are not members of ADRRN. The motivations behind this stemmed largely from a desire to boost opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and experience – network members and coordinators felt they had valuable insights to share, and also a desire to access knowledge from elsewhere.

Some examples were identified, particularly in relation to international DRR Global Action Networks, and some respondents noted the inter-state ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), as providing a catalyst for greater regional collaboration by CSO actors.

There are no easy routes for creating such regional and global linkages, and the transaction costs for international networks are that much higher than for efforts focused on the national level – even in a large and geographically diverse country such as the Philippines. The lack of secretariat functions for many networks provides a further challenge. It was noted, however, that a number of networks had specific members who could provide an international link, and it may be possible to exploit these linkages to explore greater network-to-network collaboration.

Annex: Network Structures in the Philippines

Network	Purpose and goals	Membership	Structure	Core Functions
Building Disaster Resilient Communities Learning Circle (BDRC-LC)	The BDRC-LC is a network for sharing experiences and learning across Christian Aid partner organisations in the Philippines. Formed in 2008, it has evolved to have an increased focus on response, for instance providing surge capacity across member agencies for emergency assessments, through the CARRAT.	12 organisations, including Christian Aid, mainly local organisations with a specific geographic focus, working on disaster resilience and response, but some with a predominately development focus.	Informal structures, without a central organising body, instead the affiliation with CA forms the nexus of relationships in the network. Two members are empowered to make decisions on behalf of network if required.	The primary function of the network is KM, itself built on the fulfilment of the community building function. The network also performs an amplification and advocacy function based on the experiences of members. Latterly, the network has also performed has performed a resource mobilisation function through the CARRAT.
Citizens Disaster Response Network (CDRN)	CDRN was founded in 1984 in order to bring together and support community-based and citizen-led organisations working on disaster response and risk reduction. In particular, from the outset, the network has sought to develop and promote Citizen-Based and Development-Orientated Disaster Response (CBDODR, across different programme areas and hazard types.	17 regional centres across the Philippines, each connected to their own network of people's and community organisations.	A close-knit network of autonomous regional CBOs and people's centres. Governed by a steering committee of member representatives, with a secretariat housed in the Citizens Disaster Response Centre in Manila, which also represents the network at the national level. It is externally funded.	The network fulfils a range of activities in pursuit of a KM function around the CBDODR approach. In addition the network fulfils a community building function, amongst its membership, and to promote DRR approaches though local level networks. CDRN also conducts advocacy activities and has sought to convene actors beyond the network to promote CBDODR, for example through trainings. The network does not provide resources to members, but attempts to raise fund collaboratively.
Corporate Network for	CNDR was formed in 1990 with the goal of helping to build the	Around 51 members, representing a range of the some	Members make an annual membership contribution to	Community building and convening of diverse private

Disaster Response (CNDR)	capacity of the business sector and communities to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters.	of the largest private sector organisations and federations in the Philippines, including both national businesses and subsidiaries of multinational corporations.	support the core activities of the network, which they can supplement, either with further contributions or in-kind support. Dedicated secretariat to oversee implementation.	sector actors interested in disaster response and DRR. In addition to the mobilisation of resources from these actors, the secretariat has overseen the delivery of goods and services for preparedness and response. Also has stream of work to promote KM and information exchange between a range of actors.
DRR Network Philippines (DRRNet Philippines)	DRRNet Philippines was convened in 2008 with the explicit aim of changing the legal framework governing disaster risk management and response in the Philippines. Since this was achieved in 2010, the goals of the network have evolved to include the effective implementation of the DRRM law, to increase knowledge management across the membership; and to strengthened networking and partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.	A conglomeration of over 300 NGOs, CSOs, community groups and people's organisations working on disaster management and reduction issues at either the national or local level. Around 15 core members (co-convenors), including representatives from others networks (such as CNDR and CDRC). Oxfam and World Vision's national foundation are also co-convenors.	Structured around a core groups of co-convenors, many of whom are based in the Manila area. Role of lead convenor rotates amongst group. Support in resources and in-kind from membership and INGOS, no membership fee. Looking to establish separate secretariat.	The network came together around the fulfilment of an advocacy function built on the community within the network, and through convening a wider group of stakeholders. Now looking to include resource mobilisation for the implementation of the law at the local level, as well as a KM function.
Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN)	Originally initiated by Save the Children, MERN was established to bring together a range of national organisations to improve the accountability and delivery of humanitarian aid and development programmes	Currently consisting of over 50 members across the Mindanao island and involved in a range of humanitarian response activities. Comprising Muslim, Christian and secular organisations. MERN's	A loose network without a dedicated secretariat. MERN is divided into three geographical areas, each with a rotating lead member, of which one performs the role of overall lead for a given period.	Primarily established to share information and analysis, MERN is engaged in a range of coordination activities. It has also worked to mobilise resources to build the capacity of its members and to directly

	across the island of Mindanao, through effective coordination and collaboration. MERN aims to function as a platform where organisations can share data, information, and analysis in order to coordinate response plans and effectively allocate resources.	membership has been expanded during specific emergencies to improve its ability to coordinate activities (called 'MERN Plus')		implement the delivery of goods and services.
The Humanitarian Relief Consortium (HRC)	The HRC is an Oxfam-initiated effort that seeks to collectively develop the capacity of local, development-orientated NGOs, and support them to implement emergency programs in response to disasters. The network also aims to conduct advocacy around the need for DRR, minimum standards and accountability in response, and a gender-sensitive approach.	Five NGOs working as partners to Oxfam in the Philippines.	Programme Management Committee made up of HRC members including Oxfam as an affiliate. With detailed Standard Operating Procedures for response activities. Secretariat currently provided by Oxfam but in future will be provided by the coordinating agency.	In addition to implementation of response activities in emergencies, the network provides a resource mobilisation function (from Oxfam and others) channelling resources for both response and to develop technical capacities, the latter also requiring elements of KM. The network also conducts advocacy on relevant issues, particularly at the local level.
The Philippines International NGO Network (PINGON)	PINGON is a coordinating body composed of international NGOs working in the Philippines in service of marginalised and vulnerable sectors and groups in the Philippines. Though individual members of the network have varied mandates and provide a wide variety of services, PINGON is particularly focused on humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction.	21 International NGOs working in the Philippines, with varied mandates and providing a variety of services beyond humanitarian relief.	Very informal, with a simple Terms of Reference, and a rotation between organisations chairing the group.	Exchange of relevant information between its members, and between the network and other bodies. Mobilisation of resources amongst its members both during emergencies and to boost capacities or members and partners. Advocating for improved response standards and on other issues.

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