In late November and December 2015, the LGA took on the challenge in organizing an event that gathered together all Local Government Operations Officers assigned in municipalities in a knowledge-sharing activity to reignite the appreciation of their roles as Local Governance Experts, Innovators, Network Builders, and Knowledge Managers. The primary objective was to revitalize the field personnel and inspire them to be more creative in performing their assigned functions and maximize the potentials of their strategic positions as MLGOOs and cluster leaders.

Dealing with the limitation of securing a large venue for the more than 1,400 participants, the available finances and manpower, the 2-day activity was conducted in two (2) clusters for the Luzon group and one (1) cluster each for the Visayas and Mindanao.

Experts and practitioners in the field of network-building, knowledge management, effective communication, leadership and coaching, and personal development were invited to share insights and updates on the current trends and how these can be applied in advancing reforms for good governance and inclusive growth. The activity also served as a venue for the participants to interact with their peers from different regions and share their experiences in mobilizing CSO engagement, spearheading program implementation, and influencing transformation in their locality through the sharing during the breakout sessions.
A very important element of the activity was the opportunity for the participants to express their thoughts and concerns regarding their work through the freedom wall which were tackled by the higher-ups during the session Ugnayan with Top Management. SILG Mel Senen Sarmiento and USLG Austere Panadero along with some bureau and regional directors saw to it that they were present in all clusters to touch base, as the SILG puts it, “with the life force of the Department.”

Highlighting the event was the symbolic renewal of commitment wherein each participant was accorded the Alampay ng Pag-uugnay, a magenta-colored sash inscribed with the DILG logo and the chain symbol with the words “LINKs for Good Governance”. The chain symbolizes the immense responsibility of the MLGOOs in bringing together the different sectors of society and their leadership role towards good local governance. Usec. Austere A. Panadero awarded the Alampay to participants of Luzon 1 Cluster, while Secretary Mel Sarmiento was the one who distributed the Alampay to Luzon 2, Visayas, and Mindanao Cluster participants with the assistance of the LGA Executive Director Marivel Sacendoncillo.
Improving DILG Systems Towards Greater Productivity

Given the ever changing landscape of governance, the DILG is continuously innovating itself as the lead institution in ensuring good local governance. A workshop on Improving DILG Systems Towards Greater Productivity was implemented to maximize the potentials of every region in the delivery of capacity development programs as well as monitoring and evaluation.

53 participants composed of division chiefs, assistant division chiefs, and technical staff from 17 Local Governance Regional Resource Centers (LGRRCs) participated in the workshop held on October 22-23, 2015 at BSA Tower, Pasig City. Directors Manuel Gotis of BLGS and Francisco Cruz of Planning Service and Assistant Director Dennis Villaseñor of BLGD joined the activity to provide updates and clarifications on pressing matters in the implementation of programs, projects, activities (PPAs). Two (2) workshops were conducted to solicit inputs in the implementation of PPAs using LGRC and share their LGRC stories.

The activity produced agreements and commitments specifically in improving systems to optimize results and specific actions to be undertaken with the support of the DILG Bureaus and Services.

LGUs go tech-savvy on Disaster Preparedness with GIS

A total of 65 participants from local government units and DILG Field Offices advanced their knowledge and skill on using Geographical Information System (GIS) to better prepare for disasters. The LGA, in partnership with the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), held the On-the-Job Training (OJT) on Advanced GIS in two (2) batches on October 12-15 and October 26-29, 2015 at the Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City. The participants included Municipal Planning & Development Coordinator (MPDC), Provincial/Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officer (P/MDRRMO), Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer (MENRO), Information Technology Officers (ITO), functionaries and DILG Regional Focal Persons coming from select LGUs in Region CAR, I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII and XIII.

The training is a follow-through activity on Advanced GIS given to the DILG Regional Coaches and LGU staff in August 2015. The series of training on GIS is part of the DILG’s effort, through the LGA to promote awareness in terms of vulnerability to disaster risks and climate change impacts and provide the necessary skill to prepare for disasters. The training specifically aims to provide knowledge, practical experience and hands-on skills in the application of GIS software as a decision support for the whole disaster management cycle starting from preparedness response, rehabilitation and recovery.
Conflict-Affected LGUs consider Mainstreaming of Mediation and Healing Mechanism in Local Governance

The LGA conducted two (2) batches of the Training on Mainstreaming of Mediation and Healing Mechanism in Local Governance on October 26-27 and October 28-29, 2015 at Hotel Rembrandt, Quezon City. A total of 31 conflict-affected LGUs (Batch 1: 42 participants & Batch 2: 26 participants) composed of City/ Municipal Local Government Operations Officers (C/MLGOOs), City/ Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers (C/MSWDOs) and the President or representative of the Liga ng mga Barangay (LnB) participated in the training.

The training aims to develop champions in setting up of mediation and healing mechanism and mainstreaming the same in local governance in support to the commitment of promoting Socially Protective and Safe LGUs which builds the institutional capacities of LGUs to better manage conflicts as well as implement peace and development initiatives. The participants assessed the conflict situation in their locality and designed appropriate conflict management system (CMS) or find areas of existing CMS that need to be enhanced. Effective CMS prevents escalation of disputes into violent conflicts by ensuring not only settlements and agreements but also restoration of relationships.

DILG Region VIII, LGA and Samar Province Initiate Strategic Economic Growth in the Province

The LGA, together with the Provincial Government of Samar conducted the Planning- Workshop on Food Security and Economic Development for the Province of Samar on November 10-11, 2015 at the Provincial Capitol in Catbalogan City. 28 participants from the provincial government, the CSOs, and the academe attended the event which featured an examination and assessment of the food security and economic development in the province and created definitive roadmap towards the resolution of the problem. DILG Regional Director Pedro A. Noval, Jr., LGA Executive Director Marivel C. Sacendoncillo and Provincial Governor Sharrie Ann T. Tan headed the event.

The planning- workshop served as a kick off activity in designing the province’s strategic program entitled Formula ANN (Agrikultura, Negosyo at Nutrisyon): A Strategy Framework for Samar Food Security and Economic Development. The activity yielded positive results particularly in deepening the relationships between actors, appreciating the cumulative effort, and the coming up with the overall roadmap that would help sustainable development flourish in the province.
Abalos teaches fellow LCEs on Maximizing Communication for Success

Local leadership is a multi-faceted role that requires leaders to have certain skills to effectively carry out their governance goals. Other than working hard and excelling in delivering programs, a local leader needs to communicate effectively to ensure that the people know that their government is working for them. This results to greater citizen satisfaction on development efforts and creates better public service career for local leaders.

In view of the foregoing, the LGA conducted an Online Executive Session on “Communicating Accomplishments: Key to Winning Elections” with Mayor Benjamin “Benhur” C. Abalos, Jr. of Mandaluyong City on October 17, 2015 at LGA’s Integrity Room. The session was a success with 18 LGUs attending via a webinar modality. Mayor Abalos shared more than just how to communicate success, but rather how to build local leadership that speaks for itself.

Harvesting Vast Potential of Tacit Knowledge on Local Governance

The LGA presented results of the Research Engagement and Advocacy Program (REAP) implemented in 2014. The REAP is an advocacy program that aims to strengthen local government capacity through research.

Research grants were awarded in 2014 to local resource institutions focusing on DILG’s Outcome Area on Environment Protective, Climate Change Adaptive and Disaster Resilient LGUs. Research studies presented during the knowledge exchange forum are the following:

1. “DRRM Local Training and Volunteer Support Capability of the NSTP/NSRC Implementing-Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines” by University of Luzon

2. “Study on Inter-LGU Cooperation for Environmental Protection of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape” by Mediators Network Incorporated (MedNet)

Pilot Testing of Baseline Competency Tool for CSOs

The first of a series of pilot testing activity on the baseline Competency Assessment Tool for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Participating in the Bottom-Up Budgeting Capacity Building Program (BUB-CBP) was conducted in Imus, Cavite on October 29, 2015. Representatives from 12 CSOs in the municipality participated in the pilot testing of the tool that aims to establish baseline information as benchmark for tracking progress and evaluating results of the BUB-CBP.

A preliminary meeting was called on October 21, 2015 for the Project Management Team to discuss the implementation plan of the pilot testing activities.
LoGoTRI-PhilNet Board of Directors convened for its 3rd Regular Meeting FY 2015

The Local Governance Training and Research Institutes-Philippine Network (LoGoTRI-PhilNet) conducted the 3rd Board of Directors’ Meeting on October 29, 2015 at Lancaster Hotel, Manila. The Board discussed the 2015 accomplishments as well as plans and programs to strategically position them with the DILG targets. The BOD planned the way forward the development of the 2016 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Curricula.

Other matters such as online elections, call for research proposals for the Research Engagement Advocacy Program (REAP), fund generation strategy of the network and the BUB Accreditation were also discussed.

Effective Customer Service Delivery: A Training Workshop For Administrative Officers I-III

A total of twenty-two (22) administrative personnel from Luzon Regions and DILG Central Office participated in the Training Workshop on Effective Customer Service Delivery. The activity was designed to equip the participants with the knowledge and skills in handling clients and providing quality services to them. Effective customer service delivery is deemed important in the employee’s daily work as it impacts the efficient and effective delivery of organizational goals and mandates.

During the training, the concept of Customer Service was discussed to enable participants to demonstrate effective enquiry handling, managing customer complaints, and giving feedback. There was also a discussion on the tasks and responsibilities in relation the Department’s goals and mandate, assessment of current competencies in relation with their tasks and roles and identification of internal and external partners.

A personal development plan was also required from the participants as an output wherein they were able to identify strategies on how to build good relationships with their internal clients and partners.

Resource persons from the LGA composed of Assistant Director Thelma Vecina, HRDD Chief Marciana Obispo, RPDD Daphne Purnell and HRDD Assistant Chief Angelina Layugan discussed various topics during the 2-day activity held at the LGA Training Center in Los Baños, Laguna.
LGA To Do List: Learn and Share

Basic Course on ICS & Google Apps for the Workplace

Concurrent with the capacity development interventions being conducted by the LGA to LGUs and DILG Personnel are the initiatives to continuously strengthen the competency of LGA’s organic personnel. Allowing LGA personnel to engage in a conversation on a topic of mutual interest is an opportunity to share knowledge and break the information silos in the LGA. Thus, the inception of Knowledge Café at LGA.

This activity paves the way for personnel from various divisions and unit to have an open and intelligent discussion on a particular topic. For the last quarter of 2015, a Basic Course on Incident Command System (ICS) was held on October 27, 2015 while another topic on Google Apps for Workplace was held on November 13, 2015.

The Basic Course on ICS intends to enhance the understanding of ICS as a vital tool for effective disaster response while the Crash Course on Google Apps for the Workplace offers options on how we can maximize free Google tools on data organization, analysis, and presentation.
“To My Fellow Little Girls”

All I needed was Vitamin Sea.

Being a person of learning and adventure, I was delighted to be part of the team sent last November 11-13, 2015 to Cagdianao, Dinagat Islands to assist barangays in assessing where they are at, conducting a community-based drill and crafting an action plan. We, with our partners, shared basic knowledge on disaster preparedness, focusing on roles of the community and the family in case of tsunamis.

Despite the rain and mud, the barangay officials and the community, with the support of the DILG regional office, province and municipality, owned the whole process and were very cooperative. During the drill, we saw families with E-bags. Truly, people coming together as a community can make things happen. Hence, it will be a challenge for the LGA to inspire a shift in mindset that disaster preparedness is more than preparing to respond.

The experience provided me the opportunity to meet people with different stories and perspectives, like Nanay Francisca of Brgy. Santa Rita. An epitome of a selfless prayer, she asked for the blessing of those who were not with us and cannot afford to eat.

It reminded me of a short story about a Little Girl. Along a beach, thousands of starfish had been washed up during a terrible storm. The Little Girl was picking them up one by one, and throwing them back into the sea. People wondered and doubted the power of her kind heart, “She could not save all those starfish, she cannot make a difference”.

She bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the sea. She said, “Well, I made a difference to that one”.

We may not be able to change the entire nation even in a series of trainings, but we can make a difference in one person’s life. It is our duty to teach minds, touch hearts, cast stones across waters to create many ripples.

To my fellow Little Girls, let us continue inspiring others to join in hurling starfish back into the sea. Be a blessing to others. And who knows, all the starfish might be saved.

(Short story adapted from “The Star Thrower” by Loren C. Elseley)
A need to revolutionize Capacity Development for Communities

by: Karl Christian Abalos

The weeks of preparing for the pilot test of the Community Drills for Tsunami/Storm Surge were crazy as usual but also different somehow. For this particular pilot, we had to work with PPSC and NGO partners (Save the Children, CDP and Red Cross) – this alone posted a challenge to designing the program as various perspectives needed to be considered. To revolutionize CapDev, needs assessment of communities must be raw and honest coming from the grassroots themselves. There should be no sugarcoating and paraphrasing – communities must face hard realities of their deficiency. The primordial step is to accept it and then plan for remedies.

It was also my first time in Dinagat Islands and I was agitated to the core. What shall I expect? How do we even get there? Would I be able to get a tan? But worries were dissuaded, as usual, once you see a familiar face – a DILG face. We took a rented tricycle from the airport to the pier to catch the last boat trip. From the San Jose pier, we took the provincial government’s car for a three-hour ride to finally get to Cagdianao. The LGU does not boast of fancy hotels, restaurants and training venues and it was very humbling for the training team. And it dawned on me that a true revolutionary CapDev veers away from the usual targets and immerses itself to the unusual.

Come show time, our program was as dynamic as the weather. As this was the pilot, we confess that the team was more liberal in adjusting the sessions to see what would work. What we essentially did was to give an overview of DRR then went straight to a first drill just to see how much should still be included in the next sessions. The result was anticipated; the community was prepped for evacuation but not entirely for response. Yes, the community knows where the dedicated safe zones are and how to get there but is indifferent to the circumstances that may arise en route. Observing this, the team focused the next sessions helping them get better foresight for scenarios during an actual tsunami: how to treat the elderly, drunkards, pregnant women, PWDs and children, which critical areas are to be prioritized, what should be present in a command post (and the protocols therein) and what communication flows/lifelines are to be established.

After a day’s input, a bigger drill was again held, this time with the participation of the municipal and provincial governments with families in the community. From this experience, I learned five (5) essential things:

1. Needs assessment of communities must be raw and honest coming from the grassroots themselves.
2. Veer away from the usual targets and immerse in the unusual.
3. Be flexible to the conditions during actual implementation.
4. Take into consideration informed decision-making when doing capacity building.
5. Reconfigure relationships amongst support systems to ensure continuity of communication and sustainability.

More than anything, these five (5) things were my take-away from the pilot drills. But should I boldly claim that the Community Drills for Tsunami/Storm Surge is a revolutionary CapDev intervention? A bit tricky to answer because these learning came from it but at the same time, I’m thinking that aren’t all pilots designed to succeed? The true test is in the rollout and the challenge in that, amongst others, is monitoring them. I would like to believe that the drills have a potential contribution to the way we do CapDev – that we genuinely become locally-driven, having motivations from and by the grassroots communities.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Daphne Purnell  
Jose Gonzalo Ablay III  
Leah Marie Sanchez  
Lizbeth Jalimao

Lay-out Artist:  
Gary Paulo Mercado

Contributors:  
Karl Christian Abalos  
Maria Lourdes Bacud  
Jane Bereña  
Jel Era  
Kelvin Joseph Mendoza  
Lizeth Certeza

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LGA- EXECOM