

CITIES IN CRISIS CONSULTATIONS - Bogo, Philippines

MARCH 2016

Overview of Urban Consultations

By 2050 over 70% of the global population will live in urban areas. This accelerating urbanization trend is accompanied by an increasing vulnerability of cities to both natural and man-made disasters. More and more, humanitarian actors are responding to urban crisis. They are however often badly equipped to understand and effectively engage with cities' complex socio-economic dynamics and governance structures. Recognizing these challenges, the World Humanitarian Summit has mandated an Urban Expert Group to identify key recommendations for promoting better humanitarian response to urban crisis.

With a view of contributing to this discussion, IMPACT Initiatives and UCLG's Task Force On Local and Regional Government Disaster Response facilitated a series of consultations in six cities affected by natural or man-made disasters. In collaboration with local authorities and aid actors, each city identified key lessons and guidance to inform future responses, outlined in city-specific reports and compiled into a comprehensive report which will be presented in May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit, in partnership with the Urban Expert Group.

The Consultation Process:

- 1 Guiding questions for all cities agreed upon with the Urban Expert Group
- 2 Bilateral interviews held with city-level authorities and civil society, UN Agencies, NGOs and donors involved in the response
- 3 Final consultations hosted by local mayor(s) to identify lessons learned and develop recommendations for future response to urban crisis
- 4 Findings from interviews and consultations summarized in city-specific and overarching reports

INTRODUCTION

Bogo, a coastal city of 82,000 people situated in the northernmost part of the island of Cebu, was hit by 250 mph winds at the height of Typhoon Haiyan on November 8th 2013. Initial damage assessments revealed 18,000 damaged houses, among which 4,000 needed to be relocated, 6,000 to be rebuilt and 8,000 needed to be repaired on site. Early evacuation and relocation to the city arena limited the number of casualties to 17. The Typhoon had long term consequences on the livelihoods of Bogo's populations. Coconut plantations were extensively damaged, the boats that the fishermen used for their livelihood were washed away and thousands of people had to be relocated, many were rendered homeless due to destruction of their flimsy thatched-roof houses.

KEY FINDINGS

Unlike some other cities affected by Haiyan, Bogo received relatively little international support from humanitarian actors. Most of the response was therefore led by local actors, notably the Municipal authorities. The Municipality led the set up of coordination mechanisms for the local response, which were operational 3 days after the Typhoon struck Bogo. Among the key challenges that were identified during the consultation was the insufficient community-level preparedness, as well as the difficulties faced by the municipality to obtain the required resources for reconstruction. Also, there was a discrepancy between the UN lead needs assessment and the data available from the municipality.

Among the key recommendations resulting from the consultations:

- More focus is needed on preparedness;
- Channels of coordination and engagement need to be established between local authorities and international and national responders;
- Local authorities should have access to crisis response and recovery fund.

Crisis Overview

The first week

All systems were down initially. The initial focus on the response, conducted directly by the Municipality, was on debris removal and on clearing of roads for accessibility and connectivity to the airport and affected areas (barangays and nearby municipalities). The city hall employees were divided into teams to perform specific tasks: packing of relief goods, documentation and communication, assessment, and distribution. The local Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) office, Bogo City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD), was in charge of interacting with aid organizations coming to the city. The city government has also mapped the danger zones in their area to alert all sectors especially the residents about the no build zone areas.

The first 2 months

The main focus remained initially on search and recovery, health and the provision of food and non-food items as well as the restoration of communication and utilities. Debris removal continued in the first 2 months, as well as a continued focus on relief distribution, with a particular focus on shelter. Electrical, water and bank networks were also reactivated.

2 months +

The Municipality develops a two year community rebuilding plan which outlines priority target groups, type of aid to be provided, aid delivery modalities, coordination mechanisms. In order to fill funding gaps, the Municipality requests support from international aid actors. Through the "Adopt a Barangay Program" the city government paired organizations to barangays (neighbourhoods) to support them in their holistic recovery. In parallel the Office of the Mayor sets up a "one stop office" that supports NGOs with the following: data dissemination; documents, licenses, and permits processing; as well as with project implementation, coordination, support and supervision.

KEY CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN BOGO

1 Preparedness saved lives but can be further improved:

Despite the existing preparedness plans, a number of people refused to move to evacuation centers prior to Haiyan, as they considered that the danger was not so high. The evacuation centers (schools and sports centres) were easily identified by the population but were not well equipped and designed to host such a large population. The use of schools as shelter for extended period affected the schooling of the children.

2 Accessing Calamity funds both from government and international donors:

Except for Bogo City's Calamity Fund, the City Government faced difficulties in accessing funds for the rehabilitation of their public facilities. The process required a lot of documentation, requiring two years for accessing the funds.

3 The city hall was not consulted at first for the assessment on its own territory:

Initial assessments by international humanitarian actors did not consult the local authorities. As a consequence, their findings were not accurate and diverged from those of the Municipality, which was in a better position to assess its territory.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE URBAN RESPONSES

- 1 Create a city level coordination mechanism to improve crisis response:**

This mechanism should be in charge of the collaboration and coordination amongst the City government's departments and humanitarian operators. This office should centralize and share information, facilitate targeting and promote synergies among all responders.
- 2 Reinforce city preparedness:**

Potential evacuation centres (school buildings, sport complexes and/or other public infrastructures) should be better equipped to deal with large scale crisis and for a prolonged hosting of affected populations. Buildings should be reinforced and equipped with basic utilities (toilets, showers, kitchen). In parallel, efforts on community level preparedness should continue.
- 3 Identify a crisis financing mechanism to facilitate local government's access to emergency funds:**

Crisis response funds (financed by state or international donors) should be accessible by local authorities to finance the reconstruction and recovery effort. Such mechanism will facilitate local governments' actions to provide a first emergency response and to rebuild and re-establish services as quickly as possible.
- 4 Advocate for the reinforcement of city-to-city cooperation on crisis prevention, preparedness and management:**

City-to-city cooperation partnerships has proved to be an efficient cooperation mechanism, enabling international local governments to contribute towards a sustainable local development of municipalities in other countries. However, city-to-city cooperation has proven in some cases a very good mechanisms to also support municipalities following a sudden-crisis, going beyond the development type of partnerships and focusing on immediate humanitarian responses. DRRM, resilience planning and crisis management should be developed as key areas within the city-to-city partnerships. Such partnerships should be established on a more regular basis, channeling not only financial support for affected municipalities, but also ensuring that governance and/or sectoral expertise and best practices are mutualized among governance actors in a context of crisis, benefitting crisis-affected populations and municipalities.

Best practice: Adopt a Barangay

Who: The City Government

The city government provided an innovative and efficient initiative to manage the reconstruction phase on its territory. The plan was drafted to respond to local needs assessed by the City itself rapidly after the emergency phase. It enabled the City to stay at the centre of the reconstruction planning, facilitate the humanitarian coordination by avoiding projects' overlap and to match aid organization with each affected village. All reconstruction projects were requested to mainstream DRR and resilience norms.

Best practice: Long term planning in DRRM

Who: The City of Bogo

Bogo city has been working since many years in the DRRM sector, with dedicated financial resources to implement its DRRM strategy. The City of Bogo has ensured education and sensitization of its populations on DRRM issues and is preparing new approaches targeting the full spectrum of the population. Moreover, the City plans to set-up actions to adapt public infrastructures in order to be able to use them as primary evacuation centres in case of crisis.

Best practice: Bogo Calamity fund

What: The Calamity Fund

5% of yearly City Government's total budget goes to a Calamity Fund. In case this fund is not spent during the year, the savings are put on a trust fund and become the cities' budgetary reserve fund. Within the Calamity Fund, 75% is used for preparedness and mitigation programs/activities, while 30% is for quick response and rehabilitation. In case the 75% is not spent on the intended activities, these funds can be re-directed to response and rehabilitation type of activities.

Best practice: City-to-city international cooperation

Who: Cités Unies France

When the typhoon stroke the Philippines, numerous French local governments requested Cités Unies France (CUF) to initiate a common and mutualized action to respond to the crisis in the Philippines. CUF opened a solidarity fund that raised 300,000 EUR through the participation of over 50 local French municipalities. With these funds, CUF partnered with the French-Philippines United Action in order to support the reconstruction of a Barangay.

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva-based international association, aiming to shape practices and influence policies in humanitarian and development settings in order to improve efficiency of aid responses and positively impact lives of people and their communities. IMPACT implements assessment, monitoring, evaluation and organizational capacity-building programmes and has established field-presence in over 15 countries.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is a global network of cities and local, metropolitan and regional governments. UCLG has established a Task Force on Local and Regional Government Disaster Response, in order to provide a platform for local governments to exchange knowledge and expertise on disaster management.

Cités Unies France, a federation of French local and regional governments involved in international relations and, in particular, in decentralized co-operation, is responsible for the Secretariat of UCLG's Task Force and has been directly supporting this consultation process.