



Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards and success stories in disaster prevention and mitigation in the Philippines

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The Philippines, being a locus of typhoons, tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, is a hotbed of disasters. Natural hazards inflict loss of lives and costly damage to property in the country. In 2011, after tropical storm Washi devastated cities in southern Philippines, the Department of Science and Technology put in place a responsive program to warn and give communities hours-in-advance lead-time to prepare for imminent hazards and use advanced science and technology to enhance geohazard maps for more effective disaster prevention and mitigation. Since its launch, there have been many success stories on the use of Project NOAH, which after Typhoon Haiyan was integrated into the Pre-Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) system of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), the government agency tasked to prepare for, and respond to, natural calamities. Learning from past disasters, NDRRMC now issues warnings, through scientific advice from DOST-Project NOAH and PAGASA (Philippine Weather Bureau) that are hazards-specific, area-focused and time-bound. Severe weather events in 2015 generated dangerous hazard phenomena such as widespread floods and massive debris flows, which if not for timely, accessible and understandable warnings, could have turned into disasters. We call these events as "disasters that did not happen". The innovative warning system of the Philippine government has so far proven effective in addressing the impacts of hydrometeorological hazards and can be employed elsewhere in the world.