

# Disaster Prevention and Management



Reducing and  
Managing the Risk  
of Disaster in  
Philippine Jails  
and Prisons

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### Abstract

This brief is designed to inform disaster risk reduction and management in Philippine jails and prisons. It draws upon research conducted in nine jails and prisons between July 2015 and January 2016. This research included 44 interviews with stakeholders, including inmates and prisoners, and nine focus groups with inmates and prisoners in different regions of the country. The research indicates that natural hazards are one amongst the many threats that inmates and prisoners face in their everyday life. Natural hazards are significant because inmates and prisoners are particularly vulnerable. Inmates' and prisoners' vulnerability stems from a thread of proximate and root causes that range from insalubrious and overcrowded facilities and limited resourcing from the government, to the neoliberal nature of the Philippine state.

However, inmates and prisoners are not helpless 'victims' in dealing with natural hazards. They display a wide range of skills, resources and knowledge (i.e. capacities) that are grounded in everyday practices and values reflective of the broader Philippine society.

This policy brief finally makes some recommendations for strengthening hazard prevention, fostering vulnerability mitigation, enhancing preparedness, and reinforcing disaster management in Philippine jails and prisons. These recommendations emphasise the contributions of a number of stakeholders, including the active role of inmates and prisoners who are the first line of defence in facing disasters in jails and prisons.

# Reducing and managing the risk of disaster in philippine jails and prisons

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## Rationales

Jails and prisons and their inmates and prisoners often suffer silently from natural hazards and disasters. Many jails and prisons, in such diverse contexts as Indonesia following the 2004 tsunami and the United States of America when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, have been badly affected by natural hazards in recent years. In the Philippines, typhoons Ondoy, in 2009, and Yolanda, in 2013 (Box 1), severely impacted jails and prisons in Metro Manila and Eastern Visayas.

However, responses to disasters in jails and prison are most often ad-hoc and not embedded within everyday disaster risk reduction and management policies nor are jails and prisons considered within local governments' policies to deal with disasters. Such a gap in policy and practice is accentuated by a lack of research on how jails and prisons as well as inmates and prisoners actually deal with natural hazards and disasters.

## Objectives

This policy brief aims to provide Philippine stakeholders of jails and prisons management with tangible evidence on how jails, prisons as well as inmates and prisoners deal with natural hazards and disasters. This set of evidence should be useful to inform policy and practice of disaster risk reduction and management at local, including at the level of each jail and prison, and national scales on both the short and long term.

## Evidence

This policy brief draws upon evidence collected between July 2015 and January 2016. These more specifically stem from:

- 33 interviews with key stakeholders of jail and prison management in the Philippines;
- 11 interviews with inmate and prisoner leaders as well as former political detainees;
- nine focus groups using participatory tools with groups of eight to 20 inmates and prisoners in municipal, city, district, provincial and national jails and prisons in different regions of the country;
- a vast amount of unpublished (statistics, reports, policy guidelines, theses) and published materials (books, manuals, articles) on imprisonment in the Philippines.

### Box 1. Typhoon Yolanda's Impact on Jails and Prisons

Typhoon Yolanda struck the Visayas archipelago on 8 November 2013 and impacted the Leyte Regional Prison, the Leyte Provincial Jail and 169 BJMP jails. These facilities suffered from damage to buildings, perimeter walls and fences, lifelines

(e.g. electric, telephone and water networks), furniture and appliances, vehicles, crops and fish pens, food supplies, documents and records. Around 600 inmates left detention facilities (most of them from the Leyte Provincial Jail and Tacloban City Jail) when buildings, perimeter walls and fences collapsed at the height of the storm. Most went to check on their families and help in initial recovery efforts but eventually returned to their jails. As of late January 2014, less than 150 were still reported 'at large' by BJMP and the provincial government of Leyte. 621 BJMP staff were also personally affected by Typhoon Yolanda. Overall, BuCor estimated the damage to the Leyte Regional Prison at PHP2.6 million while BJMP evaluated the impact of the typhoon on its jails at PHP18.5 million. In addition, a large numbers of court case records and other administrative documents related to inmates' pending trial and judgement were lost at the Regional Justice Hall in Tacloban.

## What's Disaster Risk?

A disaster is a situation and process involving a hazardous event which has consequences in terms of damage, livelihoods disruption, and/or casualties. The potential for a disaster to occur is coined disaster risk. In jails and prisons, disaster risk stems from the compound function of natural hazards and exposed jail/prisons and inmates/prisoners, characterized by their varying degree of vulnerability and capacities (adapted from Wisner et al., 2004). The different components of disaster risk are often captured through the following mnemonic, here presented in the context of prisons:

Disaster Risk = Natural Hazard(s) x Exposed Jail/Prison and Inmates/Prisoners



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Temporary detention upon arrest	Transitional (while awaiting sentence) and short-term (< 3 years) detention	Long-term (> 3 years) detention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lock-ups of the Philippine National Police</li> <li>- Lock-ups of the Armed Forces of the Philippines</li> <li>- Lock-ups of the Bureau of Immigration</li> <li>- Lock-ups of the National Bureau of Investigation</li> <li>- Lock-ups of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Municipal, city and district jails managed by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology</li> <li>- Municipal jails and the Camp Crame Custodial Center managed by the Philippine National Police</li> <li>- Provincial and sub-provincial jails managed by provincial governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prisons and penal farms managed by the Bureau of Corrections</li> </ul>
	<b>Juvenile (&lt; 18 years old) detention</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rehabilitation Centers for the Youth managed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development</li> </ul>	

Figure 1. The different types of detention facilities in the Philippines

A **natural hazard** is a natural phenomenon which is of potential danger for people and properties in a given area at a given period of time. In the Philippines, natural hazards include typhoons, floods, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, storm surges, fire, droughts and heat waves.

**Vulnerability** refers to jails/prisons' and inmates/prisoners' susceptibility to suffer should potentially harmful natural hazards occur or, in other words, the condition of the jails/prisons and inmates/prisoners which makes it possible for a natural hazard to turn into a disaster (adapted from Cannon, 1994). Vulnerability usually reflects how power, wealth and resources are shared amongst people and organisations as those most vulnerable to natural hazards, such as jails/prisons and inmates/prisoners, often stand at the margin of society. Vulnerability to natural hazards varies in time and space but most often mirrors organisations and people's everyday struggle to sustain their daily needs in the context of a wide range of non-natural hazards.

**Capacities** include the set of knowledge, skills and resources inmates and prisoners resort to in dealing with natural hazards and disasters. Capacities include, for example, solidarity networks, experiences and knowledge of past hazardous events, local leadership and flexible decision-making processes.

## An Overview of Philippine Jails and Prisons

Philippine detention facilities consist in short- and longer-term incarceration centres under the authority of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Bureau of Immigration (BI), the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), provincial governments and the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor). These fall under the responsibility of

three different ministries (Department of Justice for BI and BuCor, Department of the Interior and Local Government for BJMP and provincial governments, and Department of Social Welfare and Development) and the direct commandment of the President of the Philippine for the AFP and PDEA.

### Box 2. Key figures on Philippine Jails and Prisons (data from BJMP and BUCOR)

- 7 prisons and penal farms managed by BuCor
- 464 municipal, city and district jails managed by BJMP
- 474 municipal jails and Camp Crame Custodial Center managed by PNP
- 75 provincial and sub-provincial jails managed by provincial governments
- 93,961 inmates (~85% males) were detained in BJMP jails as of 30 Sep. 2015
- 38,575 inmates (93.5% males) were detained in BuCor facilities as of 31 Dec. 2013
- Philippine inmate population rose by 47% between 2003 and 2013 while the Philippine total population rose by only 17.6% over the same period
- Congestion rate in BJMP jails was up to 2285% as of 30 Sep. 2015
- Congestion rate in BuCor facilities was up 249% as of 31 Dec. 2013
- BJMP budget for 2015 was PHP6.7 billion or 0.05% of GDP
- BuCor budget for 2015 was PHP1.9 billion or 0.01% of GDP
- Staff-inmate ratio is 1/50+ in BJMP jails
- Staff-inmate ratio is 1/20+ in BuCor facilities
- Daily inmate food allowance is PHP50.00 for both BJMP and BuCor facilities
- Daily inmate medicine allowance is PHP5.00 for both BJMP and BuCor facilities



Figure 2. The San Mateo Municipal Jail (on the right, behind the BJMP vehicle) sitting along the Marikina River (on the left), July 2016

There are four types of detention facilities (Figure 1). This policy brief only focuses on BJMP, provincial governments and BuCor facilities hosting inmates awaiting trial and judgement, those who have been sentenced for less than three years (all detained in either BJMP or provincial jails) and convicts who have been sentenced for more than three years (incarcerated in the BuCor prisons and penal farms).

The total population detained in BuCor and BJMP facilities has been rising very quickly and much faster than the overall Philippine population (Box 2). It has grown from 75,699 inmates in 2003 to 111,497 in 2013. Noteworthy, these figures exclude an additional very large and quickly growing population detained in provincial jails under the authority of provincial governments. This increase in detained population is the consequence of both increasing arrests and captures by PNP and AFP and slow processing of trials by the Department of Justice (DOJ). For BJMP and provincial facilities, in particular, this had led to an increasing inflow but slow outflow of inmates. At the same time, only a very limited number of new detention facilities have been built. As a consequence, most Philippine jails and prisons are overcrowded. This is especially true for BJMP and provincial jails under the authority of provincial governments where overcrowding rate often exceeds 1000%, with peaks over 2000%.

Overcrowding results in challenging sanitary and health conditions. The annual inmate death rate reached 8% in 2013 while it does not exceed 5% for the whole population. Deaths in detention stem from a wide range of illnesses, including tuberculosis, pneumonia, heart attack and stroke. These are often preceded by more benign and common problems such as cough, diarrhoea, boils, skin diseases, etc. Illnesses usually break out of poor sanitary conditions and inappropriate food supply.

In facing these challenges, BuCor, BJMP and provincial governments are most often undermanned and short of resources (Box 2). Their limited budget, staff and facilities further constrain the development of livelihood and rehabilitation programmes within jails and prisons. They also receive relatively limited attention and support from outside stakeholders at the exception of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, and various local NGOs and religious groups.

The lack of government and outside resources has spurred the emergence of an informal and unique management system where jail and prison governance is shared between the warden, whose role is essential, and her/his jail officers, on the one hand, and the inmates and their organisations, including gangs or pangkat, on the other hand (Narag, 2005).

## Disaster Risk in Philippine Jails and Prisons

### Natural and Other Hazards in Philippines Jails and Prisons

Most jails and prisons of the Philippines are exposed to recurrent and less frequent natural hazards that are either diffuse and widespread, in the case of tropical storms, typhoons and earthquakes, or more localised and spatially constrained such as floods and landslides. In the case of many old facilities, such as the Pampanga Provincial Jail, exposure to floods has significantly increased over the past few decades by changing hazard patterns associated with upland deforestation, river siltation, land subsidence and urbanisation, largely beyond the direct reach of stakeholders of jail and prison management. Old facilities located within densely populated urban areas, especially those surrounded by slums, also face fire hazard as when a fire broke out very near the Manila City Jail in December 2015. In other cases, more recent facilities, such as the San Mateo Municipal Jail (Figure 2), have been purposefully built on limited available land that are also marginal spaces of less social visibility and economic value but often prone to floods.



Figure 3. Hazards scoring activity conducted with inmates of La Trinidad District Jail in Benguet, July 2015

Enhanced scientific knowledge is also 'changing' the hazardscape, such as for the Special Intensive Care Area (SICA) facilities in Taguig that are now known to be located right across the Valley Fault System. In addition, there are instances of hazards aggravated by the difficulties maintaining drainage and sewage infrastructure within the detention facilities as in the case of the Quezon City Jail and the New Bilibid Prison which face flash floods. Finally, the use of rice cookers and stoves inside the cells also increases fire hazard.

Overall, natural hazards rank high amongst the threats inmates and prisoners face in Philippine jails and prisons (Figures 3 and 4). However, this observation has to be contextualised 1/ within each and every jail and prison – all detention facilities being different, 2/ amidst a large array of other non-natural hazards.

In all facilities visited, other everyday non-natural hazards, especially illnesses and the separation from their family, top inmates and prisoners' concerns. Considering these non-natural threats when dealing with natural hazards is important for two reasons: firstly because inmates' and prisoners' everyday behaviours and practices are often shaped by addressing these threats, as well as meeting food and hygiene needs, at the detriment of other more distant hazards such as natural phenomena.

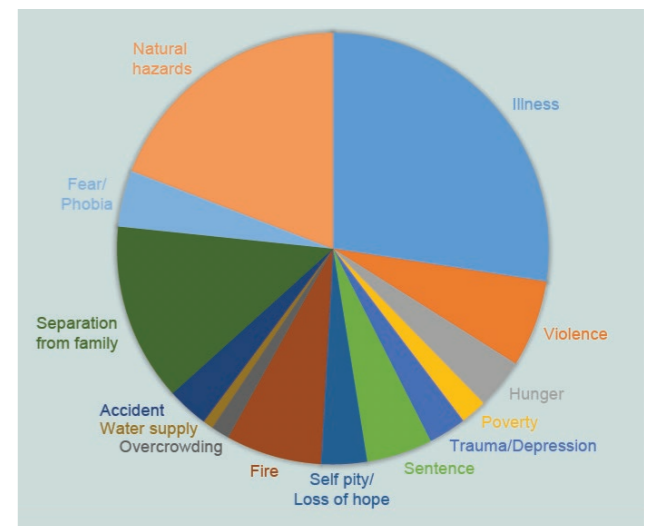


Figure 4. Main hazards faced by inmates and prisoners in the Philippines (data from nine focus groups conducted with 123 inmates in nine jails and prisons between July 2015 and January 2016)

Indeed, there is no point at thinking of seasonal typhoons or floods when tuberculosis or skin diseases are daily threats. Secondly, illnesses and separation from their family affect inmates' and prisoners' vulnerability and capacities in facing natural hazards as discussed thereafter. Nonetheless, the frequent occurrence of typhoons and floods as well as, in a lesser extent, earthquakes and man-made fires, that affect many jails and prisons and disrupt inmates' and prisoners' daily routine are a serious concern. Interestingly, heat does not appear to be a priority problem for inmates unlike usually thought by authorities. In fact, the rainy season is most feared by inmates because it vehicles health hazards and disrupts everyday routines such as drying clothes. Overall, the occurrence of natural hazards particularly impacts sanitary conditions (and thus the incidence of diseases), access to basic resources such as water and electricity, and, crucially, visits from relatives and friends (hence their support) and trials at the courts which are often postponed (Box 3).



Figure 5. Main courtyard of the Quezon City Jail around noon time in January 2016

### Box 3. Tropical Storm Mario and the Jails of La Trinidad, Benguet

Tropical Storm Mario hit La Trinidad, Benguet, on the 19th-20th of September 2014 at a time when habagat monsoon rain was already pouring over the region. Powerful gusts of wind and torrential rain struck the contiguous Benguet Provincial Jail, managed by the provincial government of Benguet, and La Trinidad District and Municipal Jail, under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology. A section of the roof of the municipal and district jail was blown away, forcing the evacuation of 17 inmates from the second to the ground floor. They then had to share other inmates' cells and the alley for two days until a marquee was brought from the Baguio City Jail as a temporary replacement for the missing roof. Electricity was out for only seven hours. On the other hand, the provincial jail did not suffer any structural damage but was cut off the electric network for seven days. The long power outage meant no access to water pumps, leading to severe (drinking, bathing and laundry) water shortage for the prisoners who had to rely on insufficient supply from the outside. The differentiated impact of Tropic Storm Mario for the two facilities mirrors their dissimilar vulnerability in facing a common event.

## Vulnerability of Prisons and Prisoners in the Philippines

Philippine jails and prisons are overcrowded (Figure 5), which means that when these facilities are located within hazard-prone areas, a large number of inmates are exposed to potential harm. However, the severity of the impact is driven by jails/prisons and inmates/prisoners' vulnerability (Figure 6). Vulnerability is better captured through two main perspectives: the physical (infrastructure) and social. Firstly, Philippine jail and prison infrastructure are often fragile in facing natural hazards. These include building and perimeter walls/fences prone to earthquakes and storm surges (as demonstrated by the effect of Typhoon Yolanda that wiped out the Guiuan District Jail), roofing vulnerable to strong winds (in the case of the New Bilibid Prison and La Trinidad District Jail in the face of Typhoon Yolanda and Tropical Storm Mario respectively) and lifelines such as electric and water networks often affected by storms and heavy rains (as illustrated by the impact of Tropical Storm Mario on the Benguet Provincial Jail). Vulnerable structures also refer to wooden cubicles or kubol prone to fire (as on 27 November 2001 at the New Bilibid Prison) and cells with a limited number of beds or tarima to offer protection to a large number of inmates in the event of an earthquake.

Finally, access to jail and prison facilities is often hindered by narrow gates that make it difficult for emergency services, e.g. fire trucks, to get in. Similarly, access to jails and prisons may be difficult if the surroundings are flooded as was the case when typhoon Ondoy struck Pasig City and its jail.

### Box 4. Fire at the New Bilibid Prison

On 27 November 2001, at 11 pm, fire broke out in Building 11B of the New Bilibid Prison where some inmates were cooking peanuts and using candles to provide light in their dorm. The combination of strong wind and wooden structures made fire to spread quickly. It took a bucket brigade organised by the inmates and BuCor to put it out before the Bureau of Fire Protection came to the rescue. It was not a major event and was not at the scale of the whole prison. No one died. However, its impact on the 40 survivor inmates who were living in crowded conditions in the building was huge. Most lost all their belongings but the clothes they were wearing at the time of the event. They had to look for an alternative place to stay on their own and, for those who did not have any visitors, replacing lost sleeping gears, kitchen utensils, clothes, hygiene and other personal items was a huge and costly task. The loss of photos, letters and other souvenirs also constituted a massive blow for inmates.

Secondly, social conditions within Philippine jails and prisons make some inmates and prisoners particularly vulnerable to natural hazards (Box 4). These conditions within detention facilities very much mirror the broader Philippine society so that factors of vulnerability inside are similar to those outside. Inmates and prisoners most vulnerable to natural, but also hazards such as illnesses, are those at the margin of the prison society. These include the oldest and/or weak/sick inmates, as in the case of the recent Leyte Regional Prison fire, migrants (inmates incarcerated away from their home town or province), and poorest inmates and prisoners. All share in common a lack of access to enough resources to both sustain their everyday needs (e.g. food, clothing, hygiene items, proper sleeping conditions) and face the less frequent threats of natural hazards (e.g. relevant knowledge of hazards, own tarima to seek shelter in case of an earthquake, savings to rebuild a kubol after a fire, own water reserve). This deprivation of access is often the combined consequence of poverty upon admission to the prison and an absence of visits when inside. When marginalised inmates do not have visits from relatives and friends, they are forced to enter in clientpatron relationships with more powerful inmates and prisoners able to provide the required support. In the Philippine setting, these unequal relationships further accentuate marginalisation, and hence exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards as marginalised inmates and prisoners are compelled to live in poor conditions and do 'dirty' chores in unhealthy environments. Jails/prisons' and inmates/prisoners' vulnerability in facing natural hazards is accentuated by external and dynamic pressures. These include the lingering lack of resources of prison administrations, i.e. BuCor, BJMP and provincial governments, that struggle to meet the needs of an ever increasing inmate population. In this context, areas of intervention have to be ranked and prioritised and, at the moment, building new infrastructure and providing food to inmates prime over initiatives towards improving health, sanitation, hygiene, formal and informal education, income-generating activities and disaster risk reduction. In this context, graft and corruption put further pressure over limited resources but somehow only constitute the visible tip of the iceberg. Ultimately, the root causes of inmates' and prisoners' vulnerability result from both the social and economic conditions outside of the jails and prisons, i.e. widespread poverty due to unequal distribution of power and resources within the Philippine society, and the political strategies of the state with regards to poverty alleviation, social protection,

public safety and detention policies. The overarching neoliberal political and economic agenda which has been put forward by recent governments has implicitly fostered imprisonment as a strategy to deal with poverty at the detriment of social protection. An increasing number of largely poor people are arrested and put in jails which budgets are stagnant. At the same time, the current justice system does not cater for such an increase of cases to be treated, thus leading to increasing congestion of poorly resourced Philippine jails and prisons vulnerable to natural hazards.

## Capacities of Inmates and Prisoners in Philippine Jails and Prisons

If inmates and prisoners incarcerated in Philippine jails and prisons are made vulnerable by exogenous structural forces they nonetheless display a wide range of endogenous capacities in facing natural hazards. These range from cultural values and tight social networks to creative decision making that materialise in multiple imbricated layers of coping strategies from the individual to the jail or prison levels (Figure 7).

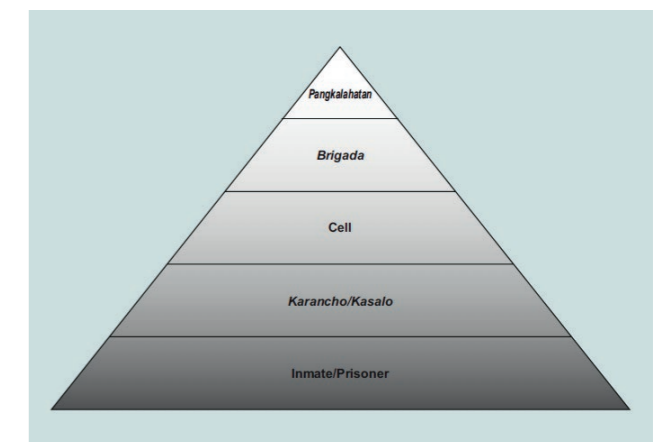


Figure 7. The different layers of inmates'/prisoners' capacities in Philippine jails and prisons

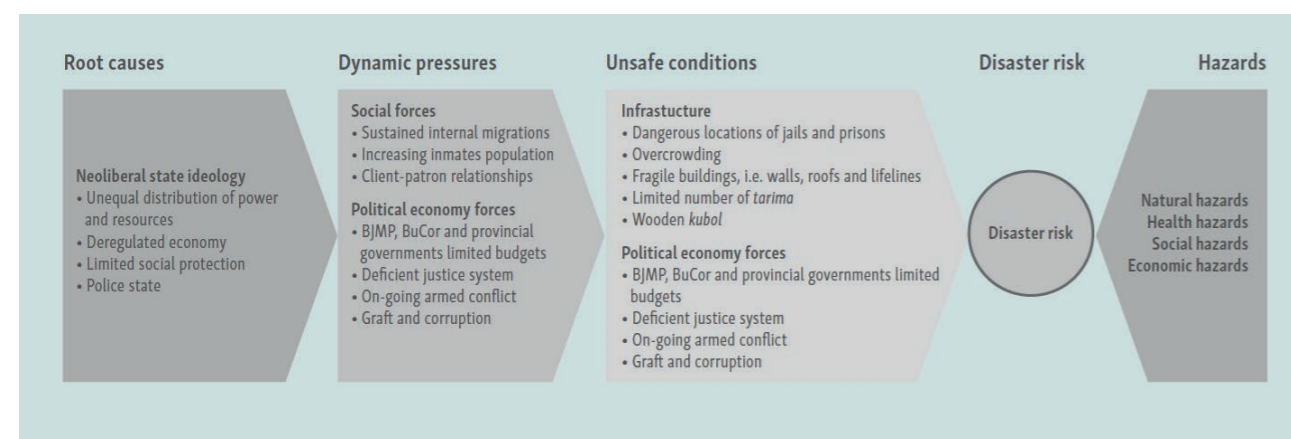


Figure 6. Articulation of the causes of inmates' and prisoners' vulnerability in facing hazards

### Box 5. Coping with an Earthquake at the Cebu City Jail

On 6 February 2012 at 11.46am, an earthquake struck the province of Cebu. The 6.7 magnitude tremor caused significant shaking but had limited effect on the Cebu City Jail. During the earthquake, around 270 female inmates who were occupying eight cells orderly evacuated to the courtyard. As practiced before during drills, the inmate patroller led other inmates out of their cells, prioritising the elderly, sick and pregnant detainees. The inmate dorm coordinator (i.e. the mayora) was the last to leave the cell as she was responsible for ensuring that everyone had safely evacuated. The inmates' main fear was eventually the potential loss of family members. For their peace of mind, a landline was available by the warden to contact their families. In addition, a TV was used to update them of any news about the impact of the earthquake beyond the walls of the jails. After the quake, the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office assessed the jail facilities for any structural damage. Apart from small cracks, there was no serious damage to the jail which meant that all female inmates were able to stay in their dorms.

Integrating social networks is most often a prerequisite to secure incomes. The lowest and tightest level of social networks is the rancho or salo that refer to a small group of close and marginalised inmates/ prisoners usually tied to a more powerful inmate/prisoner who acts as the patron in a typical client-patron relationship. The clients work (e.g. do the cooking, dishes, laundry, messaging) for their patron in exchange of a weekly wage, extra-financial assistance (e.g. in case of illness or other emergencies) and material supports (e.g. soap and toothpaste). In times of disaster, this is the first inter-relational support system mobilised by the inmates and prisoners to sustain their basic needs. Rancho/Salo mates or karancho/kasalo share food and soap and, perhaps most importantly, provide moral support and informal counselling.

The informal governance structure of the cell provides the upper level of social network. The, usually elected, cell officers (e.g. mayor/a, bisemayor/ a, kulturero/a, bastonero/a) look after both the cell's everyday life and unusual situations (Figure 8). The cell budget, which stems from the contribution of patron inmates/prisoners (also called VIP or Very Important Preso) and other sources, is bankrolled to cover regular house chores (e.g. cleaning), unexpected needs (e.g. candles when electricity is cut after a typhoon) and maintenance (e.g. roof repair after a typhoon) and support marginalised inmates and prisoners in time of need (e.g. illness, death) in exchange of political allegiance. Strategic and financial decision making revolves around weekly meetings or sembol involving all inmates/prisoners. At the Quezon City Jail, bastonero are also in charge of fostering readiness (e.g. putting belongings and furniture in safe and higher places) inside the cells whenever there is a typhoon warning.

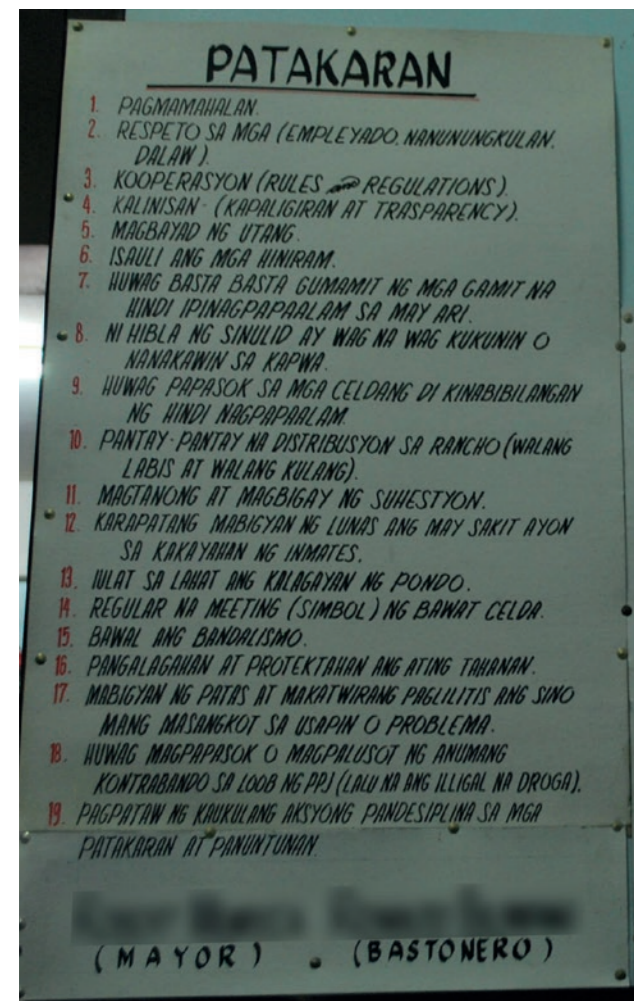


Figure 8. Cell rules set by a pangkat at the Pampanga Provincial Jail in San Fernando, January 2016

The higher level of social network is the brigada. Although often assimilated to gangs or pangkat structure (Candaliza-Gutierrez, 2012), brigada also serve as powerful inmates/prisoners' organisations in many ways similar to people's organisations outside the jails and prisons. Brigada are key actors of the overall jails and prisons informal governance through elected officers (e.g. bosyo, bise-bosyo, mayores) and financial contributions from each cell affiliated to the said brigada and other sources, including stores and handicrafts. They provide support to build infrastructure (e.g. sport grounds and bathrooms) and additional assistance to inmates and prisoners in the event of major emergencies or disasters in exchange for political allegiance. The limited number of inmates/prisoners who choose not to become part of a brigada gather in querna, which provides the same kind of support but with limited resources due to smaller inmate/prisoner 'membership'. On top of the pyramid, all brigada of the same jail/prison collaborate at the pangkalahatan level.

Inmates' and prisoners' coping mechanisms and broader capacities to deal with disasters are grounded in everyday practices and values and do not constitute extra-ordinary initiatives. They draw first upon the concepts of damayan and pakikisama, especially at the rancho/salo level, that underpin many aspects of the Philippine society and culture. Meanwhile, they also reflect the prevalent client-patron suki system that structure the political economy outside of the detention facilities. These layers of coping mechanisms within the jails and prisons are supplemented by outside networks, including relatives and friends at the individual level, and NGO and church groups at the brigada level.

## Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in Philippine Jails and Prisons

What is Disaster Risk Reduction and Management? Disaster risk reduction consists in preventing hazards, reducing vulnerability and enhancing capacities. It should therefore combine prevention, mitigation and preparedness initiatives wherein:



Figure 9. The City of San Fernando District Jail located on the second floor of the local police station, July 2015

**Prevention** includes all activities to prevent natural hazards from having harmful effects on jails/prisons and inmates/prisoners (adapted from Cuny, 1983).

**Mitigation** refers to the taking of actions to reduce vulnerability. Mitigation accepts the occurrence of natural hazards, but attempts to limit their impact on jails/prisons and inmates/prisoners (adapted from Cuny, 1983).

**Preparedness** comprises activities taken in advance to enhance and inmates' and prisoners' capacities ensure effective response to the impact of natural hazards (adapted from UNISDR, 2004).

**Disaster Management** refers to the organisation and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with emergencies (adapted from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).

### Box 6. Dealing with Typhoon Ondoy

Typhoon Ondoy struck Metro Manila and surrounding areas on 26 September 2009. It led to widespread flooding and damage in 17 jails managed by BJMP and also affected more than 160 of the agency's employees. Six jails had to be evacuated to nearby public facilities (school or gymnasium) and police stations, as well as other detention facilities. In other jails, inmates located at the ground floor had to be transferred to upper floors. Most of these initiatives were organised without prior planning and in a rush. For example, inmates from the San Mateo Municipal Jail had to swim along a rope amidst flood water when the second floor got submerged. Support from BJMP STAR teams and PNP forces facilitated the process. Inmates were eventually sheltered in a nearby school where they received assistance from the local government. At the Pasig City Jail, inmates staying on the ground floor were relocated in already overcrowded upper dorms. The jail was isolated for several days and could only be accessed by boats and improvised rafts. Supplying food, water and hygiene items quickly became an issue and was complicated by the threat of leptospirosis. In many other jails isolated due to flood and power outage, inmates were worrying about their relatives. To assist, some wardens and wardresses offered to send text messages to inmates' relatives.

## Current Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policies and Practices in Philippine Jails and Prisons

At present, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) is a concern for many stakeholders of Philippine jails and prisons at both national (headquarters/ministries) and local (jails/prisons, local governments and inmates/prisoners) levels. However, there is no overarching and explicit DRRM policies as there is, for example, for schools under the Department of Education (DepEd). Nonetheless, a number of initiatives are geared towards reducing the risk of disaster in the first place and managing disasters should they occur. Due to understandably more pressing priorities, such as building new facilities and dealing with sanitary and health issues, and limited resources, these initiatives remain sparse, unequally distributed across detention facilities, and most often response-focused.

### Disaster Risk Reduction in Practice

Preventing natural hazards, at the exception of fire (which origins are often anthropogenic), is a difficult task at the scale of jails and prisons and rather fall under the responsibility of local governments.

There are, however, good examples of new BJMP and provincial facilities which locations have been chosen or are being chosen to avoid hazard-prone areas, e.g. the future City of San Fernando new district jail. Others, like the new building of the Pampanga Provincial Jail or the new Malabon City Jail, have been built on embankments to prevent flooding. There are also a few so-called 'eco-jails' powered by solar panels and fostering innovative waste management that contribute to climate change mitigation.

### Box 7. Reducing the Risk of Disaster at the San Mateo Municipal Jail Female Dorm

The initiatives conducted at the San Mateo Municipal Jail female dorm since Typhoon Ondoy in 2009 constitute an excellent example of creative, inexpensive and successful DRRM practices thanks to the wardress' leadership. These draw upon the intrinsic capacities of the inmates. Indeed, each of the four key officers of the jail single cell, i.e. the mayora, bise-mayora, kulturera and bastonera, looks after a group of ten other inmates that form a rancho. Within each of these groups, a buddy-buddy system associates two inmates, usually a young and an older one who, should need be in time of flooding, evacuate together under the commandment of their officer in charge. Each of the four groups is also equipped with a 'go box' that includes key items useful in time of emergency (torch, biscuits, water, etc.). Cell officers also make sure that all inmates take their mat and linen whenever they have to evacuate. Evacuation is ordered by the wardress who seats on the Municipal DRRM Committee (MDRRMC) and who monitors water level in the nearby river. She also coordinates with the nearby BFP station, which is to provide truck, boat and boys for evacuation, as well as a STAR team and PNP and AFP forces. The actual evacuation to a pre-designed evacuation centre, i.e. a school, is also coordinated with the MDRRMC and the municipal mayor. The evacuation plan also caters for earthquake and fire hazards and both warning and evacuation procedures are regularly rehearsed by inmates and jail guards. The whole DRRM plan is embedded within the everyday management of the jail and strongly connects with initiatives to address health hazards. In fact, every female inmate holds a personal handbook where they have information about their rights and where they can take note of their health condition, hearings at the court, and other basic details. The bise-mayora is further in charge of monitoring inmates' health inside the cell and coordinating with the jail nurse. She has received basic first aid training that also helps in time of disaster. Similarly, the nurse holds a waterproof emergency box that contains all basic items she usually needs in time of disaster. Overall, these initiatives stand out by their simplicity and level of integration, enhancing inmates' capacities and addressing some of the root causes of vulnerability tied to poor health conditions.

Mitigation initiatives are twofold. Those directly targeted at DRR such as retrofitting earthquake-prone buildings are rare because they are constrained by budget shortage and logistical complexities (e.g. temporary inmates relocation). Natural hazards prevention is however factored in the construction of new facilities. The plan to build a five-storey dormitory at the Special Intensive Care Area (SICA) in Taguig City has been altered in consideration of the major seismic fault that runs underneath the compound. Two new smaller, earthquake-proof buildings will rise instead. Similarly, the large football field at the 10 centre of the future Quezon City Jail new compound in Payatas has been thought to accommodate the large inmate population should an evacuation be needed.

Indirect mitigation initiatives consist in improving the everyday wellbeing of inmates and prisoners, including alleviating poverty, addressing hygiene and health needs, and enhancing food supply. These fall under the broader prerogatives of BuCor, BJMP and local governments but are very much constrained by budget and other resources shortage.

Actions geared towards enhancing preparedness are limited despite the informal shared governance that prevails in jails and prisons. There are rare cases, though, where cell officers have received basic first aid trainings, e.g. at the San Mateo Municipal Jail female dorm. At the New Bilibid Prison, prisoners further benefit from awareness campaigns organised by BuCor through the brigada and their bosyo and mayores. In the same prison, BuCor and the same brigada, in collaboration with local NGOs and the Bureau of Fire and Protection (BFP), have organised prisoner fire brigades equipped with fire extinguishers, buckets and stretchers. These proved very useful when fire struck building 4B in 2015.

### Disaster Management in Practice

It is mandatory for every BJMP jail and BuCor prison and penal colony to have an emergency plan. These plans are focused on responding to disasters and seldom refer to DRR. They are primarily geared towards security concerns and ensuring that no inmates/prisoners escape. For BJMP jails, these plans are tied to alert levels (white, blue and red) designed after military standards and include evacuation procedures in the event of a range of context-specific hazards.

Many facilities organise drills to test run their plans such as La Trinidad District Jail or the Cebu City Jail. Others are unable to fully practice because of the lack of space and staff as in the case of the City of San Fernando District Jail or the Quezon City Jail (Figure 9). For detention facilities that face frequent natural hazards, such as cyclones and floods, these plans are regularly put in practice and seem to work relatively smoothly as exemplified during recent flood events at the San Mateo Municipal Jail or when the October 2013 earthquake hit the Cebu City Jail (Box 5). Whether the same plans would be useful in facing larger and rarer events is a question raised by many wardens.

In fact, both typhoons Ondoy (Box 6) and Yolanda revealed the vulnerability of jails and prisons and challenged authorities' ability to respond, especially at the local level. The widespread impact of Typhoon Yolanda, in particular, required massive support from the outside (regional and national offices), including staff, goods and supplies, and funding, to ensure that jails and prisons remained functional and covered for the needs of inmates and prisoners. On the other hand, these events also emphasised that security, which mobilised considerable resources and personnel to recover inmates and prisoners, was less of a concern than expected as most of them spontaneously returned to their jails after a few days as observed elsewhere in the world. In this perspective, the deduction of one fifth of the sentence offered to those who return to jails/prisons (although a very large majority of inmates in jails have not been sentenced yet) within 48h after the official proclamation of the end of the disaster as well as the commitment to speed up trials in some provincial jails are excellent initiatives.

### Roles of Stakeholders in DRRM

In facing disasters, BuCor and BJMP rely first and foremost on their own resources and additional support from PNP, BFP and AFP. For BJMP jails, the warden is the most important actor as he/she leads the design of the jail's emergency plan and makes decision in time of disaster. Many of them have first-hand experience in handling disasters due to their rotation from one jail to another every three years. If their own resources are overspent, wardens rely on the support from the agency's STAR (Special Tactic And Response) teams (i.e. elite commandos) as well as neighbouring BFP and PNP. If need arises, as in the case of Typhoon Yolanda, AFP support is asked for recovering missing inmates. Huge expectations therefore fall on the wardens as that they can be dismissed if they fail to perform their duty. This was the case when the warden of the Tacloban

City Jail female dorm abandoned her duty to check on her family when Typhoon Yolanda hit the town. To investigate such cases and reflect upon disasters, BJMP has a Critical Incident Analysis Team (CIAT).

One major issue across most, not all (counter examples include, for example, the San Mateo Municipal Jail and the City of San Fernando District Jail), jails and prisons, is that BJMP jail emergency plans are neither coordinated with the local government DRRM plans nor with national government agencies such as PHIVOLCS, PAGASA and Mines and Geosciences Bureau. They therefore do not benefit from the knowledge, skills and resources of these agencies and, at worst, may interfere with the latter's own plans. Better coordination is observed for provincial jails in which case the provincial government is both in charge of the jail and its DRRM office although the wardens usually expect PNP Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams to also come and help them.

Other government agencies, like DSWD and DOH, provide very limited support or only through Local Government Units (LGU) as in the City of San Fernando. Local NGOs, church groups and international organisations, especially the ICRC, provide spontaneous support postdisaster, including relief goods and hygiene items. In fact, ICRC has its own emergency plan to respond to disasters in jails and prisons. Interestingly, international NGOs, including those very active in DRRM in the country, are not involved in dealing with disasters in jails and prisons.

With the exceptions of a few jails that benefit from the initiatives of creative wardens (see Box 7 and above paragraph on preparedness), the contributions of inmates and prisoners to DRRM is very limited. Unlike for preventing and mitigating health hazards, very limited information and responsibility is handed over to them when it comes to natural hazards, with the exception of cleaning the cells after flood events. Nonetheless, wardens usually expect cell officers to perform their leadership roles in time of emergency to assist in organising evacuation and the distribution of relief goods as well as for reporting potential damage, which has indeed been observed during the evacuation of the Pampanga Provincial Jail due to Typhoon Lando in August 2012. In the same jail, officers also have whistles to warn guards in the event of an emergency.

## Recommendations For Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction And Management In Philippine Jails And Prisons

### Overarching Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Preventing hazards, mitigating vulnerability and fostering preparedness require a combination of actions from the top down and bottom up (Figure 10). Such process should draw upon an integrated disaster risk assessment which considers, on one side, superintendents', wardens', 11 jail guards', nurses', brigada and cell officers', and other inmates/ prisoners' unique local knowledge of their immediate detention environment, and, on the other side, scientific knowledge produced by agencies such as PHIVOLCS and PAGASA channelled through local government units and their DRRM offices. To integrate actions and knowledge in DRRM, there ultimately needs to be a dialogue between stakeholders of both jail and prison management and DRRM, including inmates/prisoners and brigada.

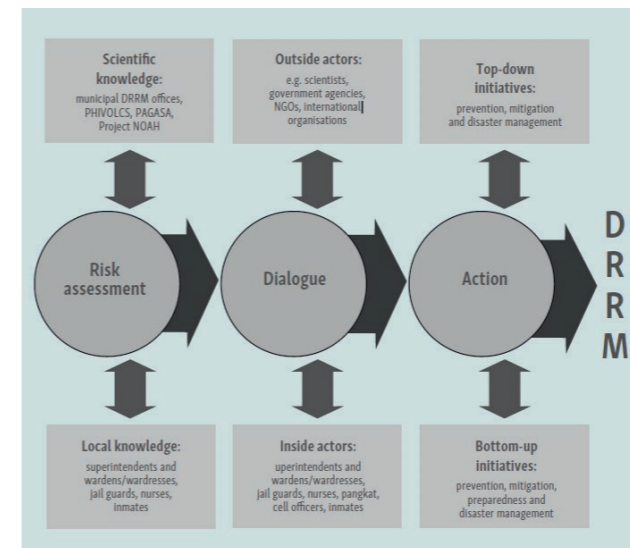


Figure 10. Integrated framework for strengthening disaster risk reduction and management in Philippine jails and prisons

### Overall Recommendations

- BuCor and BJMP should consider mainstreaming DRRM in a way similar to DepEd with schools.
- BuCor and BJMP should designate national and regional DRRMO officers in charge of designing national and regional DRRM plans for both agencies and of coordinating support to jails and prisons in the event of a large disaster.
- BuCor and BJMP should encourage their superintendents and wardens to designate a DRRM officer in each jail and prison. These DRRM officers should be trained by municipal and city DRRM officers.
- These DRRM officers should be tasked for developing comprehensive disaster risk assessments of their prison/jail in coordination with the prison/jail security officer.
- The same DRRM officers should eventually upgrade current emergency plans into holistic DRRM plans in coordination with regional, municipal and city DRRM offices. Memorandum Of Agreements may be signed between prisons/jails and municipal/city DRRM offices.
- Jail and prison DRRM officers (or wardens) should be active members of municipal and city DRRMCs. Similarly, BJMP regional directors should seat on regional DRRMCs and provincial jail wardens should participate in provincial DRRMCs.
- DRRM should be included in prison/jail guards training curriculum, including at the Jail National Training Institute.
- DRRM should be included in therapeutic community discussions. Municipal and city DRRM officers should be invited to facilitate such discussions.
- Jails and prisons should be better integrated in municipal and city development plans and Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUP).

### Recommendations for Strengthening Prevention

- Natural as well as anthropogenic hazards should be factored in the construction of all new detention facilities, i.e. the location of jails and prisons and their design.
- At the local level, prevention should be coordinated with municipal and city DRRM offices. At the national level, BuCor and BJMP should coordinate with PHIVOLCS and PAGASA to seek relevant information and hazard maps and include them in their GIS database at a very fine scale.

### Recommendations for Fostering Mitigation

- New detention facilities should also factor mitigation in their design in order to reduce structural and inmates' vulnerability.
- Mitigation measures should include earthquake-, strong wind-, flood-, storm surge-, fire- and volcanic ash-proof buildings and perimeter walls/fences. Open spaces (e.g. sports grounds) are also crucial to facilitate evacuation.
- DRRM initiatives should be integrated with health and broader livelihood programmes as these will, on the long run,

contribute to reducing vulnerability to natural hazards.

- In particular, providing inmates and prisoners with increasing opportunities to join Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, PhilHealth and Social Security System would have a direct impact on reducing inmates' and prisoners' vulnerability and strengthening their ability to recover from disasters.
- Micro-insurance scheme should also be initiated by wardens in collaboration with brigada and mayores in the event of disasters.

### Recommendations for Enhancing Preparedness

- The comprehensive health care programme should be expanded to DRRM. In each cell, one inmate/prisoner should be designated as DRRM coordinator and equipped with basic training, including first aid and counselling, to be provided by municipal and city DRRM offices.
- Inmate/prisoner DRRM coordinators should contribute to disaster risk assessment and DRRM plans to be designed by jail and prison DRRM officers provided that all other security concerns are addressed.
- Inmate/prisoner DRRM coordinators should also be in charge of training their fellow cell officers with regards of DRRM and of conveying information on natural hazards and disasters, including early warning in time of emergency.
- Jail and prison DRRM officers should provide inmate/prisoner DRRM coordinators and all inmates with relevant information on DRRM.
- Inmate/prisoner cell officers should eventually prepare and train their karancho in dealing with natural hazards. All ranchos should make sure to have a complete and safe go box, including a whistle or other warning device, torch, water, biscuits, and other basic amenities.
- In time of emergency, DRRM coordinators should coordinate response and evacuation with their fellow cell officers.

### Recommendations for Reinforcing Disaster Management

- Jail's and prison's DRRM plans should rely upon a series of early warning systems for each relevant natural hazard, including at the evel of the cells through TV, radio, whistles, etc. These early warning systems should be coordinated with municipal and city DRRM offices.
- Each jail and prison should make sure to have enough food and medical supplies in a safe place to overcome a few days of isolation.
- In time of emergencies inside or outside the jail, wardens should facilitate communication between inmates /prisoners and their relatives to ensure they are all safe and sound.
- The sentence reduction/trial fastening systems for inmates prisoners who leave and return to detention facilities should be expanded to all detention facilities. However, it should be clarified how a sentence reduction may be applied to inmates who are awaiting judgement.

### Role of the Different Stakeholders

- BuCor and BJMP headquarters should initiate and systematise DRRM through appropriate policies. In collaboration with its regional offices for BJMP, they should also be in charge of encouraging the implementation of these policies and monitoring progress at the jail and prison level.
- Superintendents and wardens are arguably the most powerful stakeholders of jail and prison management in the Philippines. Consequently, their commitment to DRRM is essential to advance such agenda. They should therefore lead the implementation of DRRM in their facilities, in collaboration with their guards and nurses.
- Inmates and prisoners constitute the first line of defence in facing disasters. They should therefore be at the forefront of DRRM and support wardens' initiatives. Brigada and cell officers should provide the interface between inmates/ prisoners and the prisons/jails administration and help in fostering DRRM inside their cells.

- DRRM efforts in jails and prisons should be supported by municipal, city and provincial DRRM offices. These have skills, knowledge, resources and funding to assist wardens. Henceforth, closer and systematic collaboration should be established between prisons, jails and LGUs.
- Other government agencies, e.g. DOH, DSWD, PHIVOLCS and PAGASA, should further support BJMP in strengthening DRRM in jails and prisons by providing technical assistance and expertise.
- Local and international NGOs as well as the Philippine Red Cross are untapped resources for DRRM in jails and prisons. There is a huge national and international momentum for DRRM and incredible skills and knowledge within the Philippine NGO sector. These constitute a great opportunity for BJMP, BuCor, provincial jails and their wardens, including to seek financial support if needed.
- Finally, international organisations, such as ICRC and United Nations agencies, should provide additional support in time of disasters.

## Prospects for Disaster Risk Reduction in Philippine Jails and Prisons

In the upcoming years, DRRM will not top BuCor's, BJMP's and provincial jail administrations' agenda given the scope of other issues these institutions are facing, i.e. addressing congestion, improving health and enhancing inmates' wellbeing. In fact, addressing these structural issues should also contribute significantly to reducing disaster risk in the long run but will require strong political commitment and resources from the government. On the other hand, most of the foregoing recommendations for DRRM rely upon simple and inexpensive initiatives. For most of them, these initiatives have already been successfully pioneered by some creative superintendents and wardens. Furthermore, they take advantage of both inmates' and prisoners' endogenous capacities and the informal shared governance system that prevails across Philippine jails and prisons. Importantly, empowering inmates and prisoners, i.e. the first line of defence in facing natural hazards, does not mean transferring further responsibilities from BuCor, BJMP and provincial authorities. Overall, DRRM in Philippine jails and prisons requires political will at the national and local levels and strong commitment on the side of the superintendents and wardens. The scale of damage experienced during recent events, especially typhoons Ondoy and Yolanda, constitutes powerful reminders that such events are not rare and isolated, and that jails and prisons are vulnerable environments.

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