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EMPOWER PROJECT

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ADRA Philippines
J.P. Rizal St., Brgy Sabutan
Silang, Cavite 4118
Email: info@adra.ph

Humanity & Inclusion Philippines and Indonesia
Valero St., Salcedo Village, Brgy. Bel-Air
Makati City, 1227
Email:

Through a grant from:
European Union

EDITORIAL

CONTRIBUTORS

Carissa Galla
Geraldina "Levy" Gutierrez
Renalie Zenine Cabatu
Rizty Dogcio
Monaliza Baccay
Ma. Karina Meneses

EDITORS

Julien Fouilland
Stephanie Carette
Joseph Rao
Viridiana Corral Martinez

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Rizty Dogcio

EMPOWER PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency

BDRRMC – Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council

BDRRMO – Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office

CAR – Cordillera Administrative Region

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

DGA – Disability, Gender, Age

DRR-CCAM – Disaster Risk Reduction- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

DRRM – Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

EMPOWER – Empowering Municipalities, Barangays, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and People’s Organizations through Working Together to Enhance Disaster and Climate Risk Governance

EU – European Union

HI – Humanity & Inclusion

LGU – Local Government Unit

PDAO – Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office

PhilDHRRA – Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas

PHILSSA – Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies

PNP – Philippine National Police

TNA – Training Needs Analysis

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

BY CARISSA GALLA

The EMPOWER Project conducted a series of comprehensive data collection activities from July to December in 2020 with the purpose of 1) identifying baseline information per indicator in the logical framework 2) identifying and analyzing the inclusive disaster and climate risk governance strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and capacities of stakeholders (local government units and civil society organizations) 3) identifying and analyzing the training needs in disaster and climate risk governance of local government units and civil society organizations.



The Community Facilitator interviews members of a farmers' organization during the baseline survey in Itogon.

The EMPOWER Project conducted a baseline data collection to determine the level of engagement between civil society organizations and local government units and the level of CSO participation in disaster and climate risk governance, and the reasons behind the amount of level of engagement and participation. The project plans to compare findings from the baseline result to an end line data collection that will be conducted by the end of the project to identify the progress made in achieving the project objectives through improvements made by partner local government units (LGUs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) on inclusive disaster and climate risk governance.

The EMPOWER Project further hopes to use the findings from the capacity and needs assessments to inform the design of EMPOWER interventions and outputs such as the EMPOWER Module, training, awareness-raising activities, and coaching sessions, among many others.

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The Pinukpuk Municipal DRRMC has member organizations of women and older persons while the Itogon Municipality DRRMC has member organizations of farmers and persons with disability. At the municipal level, disaster risk reduction-climate change adaptation and mitigation (DRR-CCAM) initiatives are co-led by mainstream CSOs. Overall, there is an opportunity for organizations of persons with disabilities, older persons, women, farmers and children/youth to be more active in co-leading DRR-CCAM initiatives. More importantly, at the barangay level there is an opportunity for organizations of persons with disabilities, older persons, women, farmers and children/youth to be member organizations of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees. Information about the utilization of local DRRM funds are publicly available however LGUs have an opportunity to maximize the utilization of Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Funds (LDRRMF) for inclusive DRR-CCAM initiatives.

Specific to DRR-CCAM capacity, there is an opportunity to have up to date and completed risk assessments in all barangays. The data collection also shows that, in Pinukpuk, 7 out of 23 Barangays have approved BDRRM Plans. Two barangays in Pinukpuk have staff who are trained in emergency response and not yet in DRR-CCAM showing an opportunity to strengthen a pro-active approach in managing risks instead of managing crisis events. Overall, there is an opportunity to support barangays to have strengthened capacities to develop inclusive BDRRM Plans. Overall, the training needs analysis show that both municipalities and their barangays have an opportunity to strengthen their capacity to make DRR-CCAM more inclusive of older persons, persons with disabilities, women, children/youth and farmers. Organizations of farmers, women and children share the same challenges in DRR-CCAM participation such as farmers and women losing income in order to participate in DRR-CCAM community-based activities or children/youth not attending school to participate in DRR-CCAM community based activities. On the other hand, organizations of persons with disabilities and older persons face similar challenges in DRR-CCAM participation such as participating at their own costs (e.g. transportation costs) while not having the resources to self-support these costs. For CSOs, a common capacity constraint is overcoming barriers in DRR-CCAM participation such as improving capacities to mobilize resources.

Mechanisms to engage with CSOs in government initiatives exist however there is an opportunity to include DRR-CCAM initiatives and there is an opportunity for CSO driven or led DRR-CCAM initiatives. There is also an opportunity to disseminate existing mechanisms for CSO consultation. Municipal and barangay LGUs supported and organized CSOs to help CSOs have access to local assistance (e.g. cash assistance for older persons) provided by the LGUs. There is an opportunity for CSOs to improve engagement with LGUs through more meaningful participation in local governance decision making. There is an opportunity for non-mainstream CSOs such as organizations of persons with disabilities, older persons, women, farmers and children/youth to increase their independence to strengthen their advocacies in informing the design of their programs. Related to the need for protection teams, in Benguet, Barangay Loacan has CSO groups who promote the rights of women and children. Overall, there is a need for more barangays to set up mobile protection teams led by CSOs to help promote the rights of women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. One of the most crucial findings is the limitation of up to date, accurate and complete disaggregated data on sex, age and disability at municipal and barangay levels. There is a need for LGUs to strengthen their capacity in collecting sex, age, disability disaggregated data using a rights-based approach in disability identification.

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Most of the CSO leaders and members are women and girls, thus their participation in organizational activities is strong however their participation in DRR-CCAM activities remains weak due to the limited capacity building opportunities on DRR-CCAM that include women and girls. In general, among CSOs, participation in DRR-CCAM is weak due to the lack of technical guidelines on how to carry out DRR-CCAM programs and due to the limited motivation among members and the opportunity to increase interest in DRR-CCAM advocacy.



The Project Officer and volunteers interview barangay officials of barangay Aciga in Pinukupuk, Kalinga.

Findings from the baseline activities validate the initial findings from previous data collection activities conducted before the call for this proposal. The results of the data collection show that the participation of persons with disabilities, older persons, children and women in DRR-CCAM is limited.

The EMPOWER Project sees that the activities 1) that present the current situation/context of the limited inclusion of persons with disabilities, older persons, women, children in DRR and the limited participation in disaster and climate risk governance 2) that discusses the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons to participate and have access to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation activities and 3) that discusses the need for disaster and climate risk governance to be inclusive can help to raise awareness about the need for an inclusive disaster and climate risk governance. To influence and change mindsets, EMPOWER has organized several awareness raising activities in both areas and has seen great results from the activities. LGU and CSO representatives manifested their potential as some of the strongest champions of inclusive disaster and climate risk governance. For some champions, immediately during the awareness raising session a change of mindset was evident among the CSOs especially who expressed strong interest to support disaster and climate risk governance.



The Project Officer and the Community Facilitator interview the key informants of Local Government Units in Pinukpuk.

Aside from the awareness raising activities, the EMPOWER Project organized a training of trainers with the objective to strengthen the capacities of the champions and change attitudes, practices and know-how on inclusive disaster and climate risk governance.

Promisingly, after participating in a series of capacity building activities such as awareness raising and trainings, CSOs and LGUs in general are open to support the EMPOWER Project and are interested and willing to contribute in achieving the project's objectives. Out of these activities, champions were developed from both CSO and LGU sectors and these champions see the EMPOWER Project as a good opportunity for them to strengthen their operational, technical and resource (i.e. fundraising, human resource, administration, etc.) capacities.

The EMPOWER Project will continue to support the capacity building of the champions as they test their capacity to lead and influence in disaster and climate risk governance in the upcoming peer to peer trainings and other CSO-led and CSO-LGU jointly organized activities.

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Baseline Survey Results

| INDICATOR | TARGET | BASELINE |
|---|--------|----------|
| Percentage of Disaster and Climate Risk Initiatives Co-led by CSOs | 80% | 0 |
| Percentage of DRRM funds allocated and utilized for inclusive disaster and climate change adaptation mitigation initiatives | 70% | 0 |
| Number of municipal wide SIMEX conducted | 2 | 0 |
| Number of organizations that are members of DRRM councils and actively involved in the council's planning | 10 | 4 |
| Number of municipal champions composed of CSOs and LGU officials | 26 | 0 |
| Number of women who are active members or leaders of disaster and climate risk governance structures | 856 | 223 |
| Number of government-approved inclusive BDRRM plans | 26 | 0 |
| Number of barangays whose DRRM budget are accessible to the public | 26 | 28 |
| Number of CBOs who have become active members of their Barangay DRRM Committees | 160 | 2 |
| Number of federation of organizations of vulnerable groups | 2 | 8 |
| Number of disaster and climate risk help desks | 26 | 0 |
| Number of inclusive CSO-LGU consultation initiative platform | 2 | 0 |
| Number of inclusive community resilience and adaptation and mitigation projects (ICRAM) | 26 | 0 |
| Number of household preparedness plans | 3,000 | 0 |
| Number of CSO-led Mobile Protection Teams | 26 | 0 |
| Number of Inclusive Early Warning Systems set up | 26 | 0 |
| Number of Inclusive early warning kits distributed | 26 | 0 |
| Number barangays with disaggregated data of households | 26 | 0 |
| Number of inclusive CSO strengthening bureau | 1 | 0 |

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DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK GOVERNANCE PROJECT LAUNCHED IN ITOGON AND PINUKPUK

BY LEVY GUTIERREZ

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Humanity & Inclusion (HI) launched the Project called EMPOWER - Empowering Municipalities, Barangay, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and People's Organizations through working together to Enhance Disaster and Climate Risks Governance.

The Project expects to benefit nine (9) barangays from Itogon, Benguet, and twenty- three (23) barangays from Pinukpuk, Kalinga.



The Country Director of ADRA Philippines delivers a message on behalf of the EU, HI and ADRA during the Project Inception in Pinukpuk.



The Country Director of HI Philippines delivers a message on behalf of the EU, HI and ADRA during the Project Inception in Itogon.

The EMPOWER project aims to reduce the vulnerability of communities devastated by Typhoon Ompong, strengthen their resilience and prepare for and deal with disaster and climate change risks and respond to crisis events by enhancing civil society's meaningful participation in disaster and climate risks governance.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THROUGH MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CSOS IN DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITIES BECOME MORE RESILIENT AND BETTER PREPARED TO MANAGE THE VARIOUS AND OFTEN INTER-CONNECTED RISKS THEY FACE"

The organizations of persons with disabilities, women, older persons, farmers, and youth will be the champion for change in their community by making their voices heard in DRR & Climate risk governance structures' policy and decision-making bodies.

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Through this Project, both local governments of Itogon and Pinukpuk expect to remove barriers to CSO participation and are encouraged to improve their local policies, structures, and practices to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness in local governance.

Mr. Abe Tomas, the CAR Regional President of the Organization of People with Disability, shared, "Persons with disabilities are capable of taking control of their lives and safety. We must allow them to participate and contribute to disaster and climate risk governance". He encouraged person with a disability to be active and engage with their respective LGUs to establish its PDAO that will manage their issues and concerns.



Mr. Avelino Tomas, Regional President of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities talks about the importance of participation of persons with disabilities in DRR and CCA during the Project Inception in Itogon.

"This Project is timely; I welcome and support this Project. When Typhoon Ompong hit our Municipality and killed 94 people, I realized the importance of citizens' participation in risk governance. I urged my people through their community organizations to take part in the decision-making processes. There are avenues like the local councils that they can engage with and make their voices heard," Mayor Victorio Palangdan said.

Mayor Irving V. Dasayon narrated, "Pinukpuk was heavily devastated when Ompong hit our Municipality. Our farmers suffered a great loss, which turned them into huge debt. If they are active along with other community-based organizations here in Pinukpuk, it will be a great help to improve our DRR and climate risk governance."

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A project stakeholder signifies his pledge of commitment to support the EMPOWER Project during the Project Inception in Pinukpuk.

Ms. Reiza Dejito, Country Director of Humanity & Inclusion, declared, "Why is this project strong in inclusive governance? We seek to promote and embed the rights of persons with a disability, women and girls, older persons, farmers, and youth within the local governance structure on DRR and climate risk governance to encourage inclusion in policies, programs and access to services."

Mr. Tom Pignon, Country Director of ADRA Philippines, said, "We believed that communities become more resilient and better prepared if they manage the various and often inter-connected risks they face, through inclusive participation."

The Project's inception hopes to achieve buy-in from local government units and CSOs in Itogon and Pinukpuk by committing their time to the Project's deliverables. The project outcomes, outputs, and activities will be realized if both parties are willing to deliver to the Project's goal and objectives.

During Project Inception, the Local Chief Executives of Itogon and Pinukpuk and the CSOs signed a pledge of commitment and vow to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement to formalize their support and ensure their participation in the Project.

Also discussed in the inception are the roles and responsibilities of each party.

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LGU AND CSOS WARMLY WELCOME EMPOWER PROJECT IN ITOGON

BY RENALIE CABATU

Even with the challenge of working under various limitations because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the ADRA & HI team was not hindered from kicking off the EMPOWER project. With a mission geared towards strengthening community resilience through encouraging the inclusion of civil society organizations (CSOs) in governance, the project was officially launched in Itogon, Benguet.



The EMPOWER project staff of Itogon interview the barangay officials of Ampucao, Itogon after the project orientation.

In time with the celebration of the National Disaster Resilience month in July, the EMPOWER project team made rounds in the nine barangays of Itogon to conduct mini Project Inceptions for the DRR-focused EMPOWER project. Headed by their captains, the partner barangays warmly welcomed the project team in the areas. As the details of EMPOWER were presented, members of the barangay councils and representatives of CSOs expressed their utmost interest and enthusiasm towards the project. Punong Barangay Albert of Brgy. Poblacion even remarked that the implementation of the project may be a good approach to shift the minds of the people from time to time to thinking about things other than the issues brought by the pandemic.

There is an undeniable role of the community members that are recognized by the government. In fact, during the baseline survey conducted in the project areas, the Secretary of Brgy. Ampucao said that CSOs have very significant roles in governance and contribution to the barangay because, as representatives of their sectors, they are the ones who truly know the situation of their communities. In times of disaster, CSOs are the closest to being most effective when it comes to responding to the needs of the community members.

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In a discussion with a group of women in Brgy. Ucab during one of the mini inceptions, Nanay Milagros, a Purok Leader, stated *“Noon, wala talaga kaming pakialam sa mga nangyayari dito sa barangay, lalo pa’t tingin namin kaya naman kahit kanya-kanya. Pero ngayong miyembro na kami ng council at mga asosasyon, naisip namin na may magagawa pala kami para sa barangay”* In that sense, more involvement in the community, through representation in LGU or CSOs, stripped off their indifference in community affairs.

As of now, there is still a long way towards attaining meaningful participation from the community that is envisioned by the EMPOWER Project. Nevertheless, the project hopes that gradually, there will be more community members with similar perceptions as Nanay Milagros. When the voices of all people are heard and they realize their roles and capacity to contribute to the community and governance, there is empowerment. When the community is empowered, they become stronger and more resilient towards any challenges and calamities that they may face.

“NOON, WALA TALAGA KAMING PAKIALAM SA MGA NANGYAYARI DITO SA BARANGAY, LALO PA’T TINGIN NAMIN KAYA NAMAN KAHIT KANYA-KANYA. PERO NGAYONG MIYEMBRO NA KAMI NG COUNCIL AT MGA ASOSASYON, NAISIP NAMIN NA MAY MAGAGAWA PALA KAMI PARA SA BARANGAY”

The EMPOWER project staff presents the results of the baseline survey to the barangay officials and community representatives of Tuding, Itogon.



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PERCEPTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

BY RIZTY DOGCIO

Among the survey and data collection results is that local authorities see persons with disabilities, women, and older people as priorities during emergencies. For example, whenever the interviewers ask the respondents how they involve persons with disabilities and older people in Disaster and Climate Risk initiatives, respondents always say that the local authorities prioritize them for evacuation during typhoons. This line of thinking is not entirely wrong. However, the capacities of persons with disabilities and older people are not recognized because the authorities often focus on what persons with disabilities, women, and older people cannot do.

Hon. Peter Bargaso does not share the common view that persons with disabilities are passive recipients of assistance. He is the head of the Committee on Senior Citizens and Persons with Disabilities of the Barangay Local Government Unit of Gumatdang. He was present during the Training Needs Assessment for the organization of persons with disabilities to support the activity. At the time of assessment, the respondents are parents or guardians of persons with disabilities.

During the group interview, Hon. Bargaso shared that persons with disabilities themselves must be involved in the project activities because they can contribute something. He cited his neighbor as an example, a professional despite his impairment, he said that persons with disabilities have capacities too. According to him, depending on their impairment, persons with disabilities will be able to participate with proper support. Also, he hopes that the EMPOWER Project will involve persons with disabilities in its community activities.



Hon. Peter Bargaso, during the Sensitivity Awareness Raising for LGU officials in Itogon.

Hon. Bargaso's sentiments about persons with disabilities stood out during the data collection activities because it is so different from the majority perception among local authorities about persons with disabilities. People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable to natural hazards. Still, we may change the narrative that persons with disabilities are vulnerable when we perceive them as to how Hon. Bargaso sees them. When local authorities can recognize their capacities, they may design programs that will encourage the participation of persons with disabilities.

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CSO representatives attend the project orientation facilitated by the EMPOWER project team.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH CSOS FOR INCLUSIVE DRR GOVERNANCE

BY LEVY GUTIERREZ

The EMPOWER Project identified forty-one CSO partners during the baseline data collection. They comprise community-based organizations of women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and farmers. Representatives of these groups participated in the CSO assembly on October 8, 2020, at Brgy. Tuding, Itogon, Benguet.

Like the project launching, the EMPOWER Project team discussed the project's objectives and details. Several CSOs raised questions about how they will participate in a Covid-19 pandemic situation. Others have concerns about the project's focus, which is capacity-building activities. As testified by some barangay officials and organizations' leaders, most residents are active and participate in projects and activities only when there is a tangible benefit.

Thus, mobilizing the community and CSO members is quite a challenge for the team.

The project believes that encouraging participation in the community cannot be done by the team alone. Thus, 'Champions' from CSOs in the area will co-facilitate the project activities.

At the end of the assembly, the CSOs selected ten champions among their ranks to co-facilitate the project's inclusive DRR and climate risk governance initiatives.

Despite the challenge in mobilizing, it is remarkable that, even if still only a few, there are individuals who emerge willing to take on advancing the EMPOWER project's objectives and motivating the participation of their fellow community members in DRR and climate risk governance.

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The EMPOWER project team during the Module Development Workshop. The resource persons contributed online through Zoom.

MODULE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP BY CARISSA GALLA

Civil Society Organizations from Itogon Municipality's barangays (villages) have limited participation in disaster and climate risk governance, especially CSOs of at-risk groups such as persons with disabilities, women, older persons, and children/youth. The root cause stems from two crucial factors. The first factor is the need to change the environment on local disaster and climate risk governance to be more participatory and inclusive; on the other hand, the second factor is attributed to the limited capacity of CSOs to participate in disaster and climate risk governance.

According to Benedict Balderrama, the National Coordinator of the Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA), *"Capacity building for local leaders is important for increasing CSO participation in disaster and climate risk governance. With increased capacity comes enhanced empowerment and confidence for participation in assessment, planning, and budgeting processes and in joint community action to address risks, respond to disasters and promote climate justice."* Capacity building and community empowerment are essential factors for disaster and climate resilience.

Through capacity-building interventions, the EMPOWER Project aims to strengthen the participation of CSOs in disaster and climate risk governance by creating an enabling environment through capacity-building activities that would support the strengthened involvement of CSOs representing at-risk groups.

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As a tool for capacity building the EMPOWER Project developed two modules, the first module seeks to strengthen CSOs' capacities that support sustainable participation in disaster and climate risk governance while the second module seeks to initiate change and transform the existing disaster and climate risk governance environment to be more inclusive.

Mr. Haley B. Atienza, the Regional Coordinator of the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PHILDHRRRA Visayas), emphasized the module's importance. According to Atienza, *"effective approaches in disaster risk reduction and management start from a comprehensive understanding and practice of good local governance, by the leaders, constituents and other stakeholders in one collective ecosystem"*.



The findings from comprehensive data collection activities (i.e., training needs analysis, CSO capacity & needs assessment, LGU capacity & needs assessment, baseline data collection, and stakeholder analysis) were used to design the training modules workshop. Although local organizations and local government units in Itogon engage in activities related to disaster risks, these are predominantly participated by LGU officials, and training topics are mainly about disaster response focusing on search and rescue and first aid with basic disaster preparedness and hazard mapping issues. Also, they never received any training on inclusive disaster and climate risk governance.

Some LGUs have received training on sensitivity sessions about persons with disabilities, gender sensitivity, and some training on children's initiatives; however, none of these targeted training cross-cut across disaster and climate risk governance. Less than half of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) from Itogon, have received a few training related to disaster risks with topics limited to safety and first aid.

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The data collection results confirm that the existing disaster and climate risk governance environment is not inclusive with limited systems that can support organizations or groups who tend to be excluded or discriminated against before, during, and after disasters. More importantly, CSOs have limited motivation to participate in disaster and climate risk governance. Even if some CSOs show interest in experiencing the same, CSOs do not see why this thematic area is a priority.

With the development of inclusive disaster and climate risk governance modules, the EMPOWER Project aims to develop champions from CSOs and LGUs. They can initiate, lead and sustain inclusion in disaster and climate risk governance. Mr. Marlon Era, Associate Professor from the Behavioral Sciences of the Department of College of Liberal Arts of De La Salle University, quoted another by *Slavoj Žižek*, *Leadership among CSOs has to strengthen participation in disaster and climate risk governance as these leaders were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results."*

Leaders and experts on disaster and climate risk governance from the government, the academe, and CSOs participated in the Module Development Workshop. Technical specialists from the EMPOWER consortium who have expertise in inclusion and other thematic areas were tapped as resource persons to design and develop the modules. These leaders also serve as role models who can share vast experiences on the successful participation of CSOs in disaster and climate risk governance and can share the great results on long-term disaster resilience that this participation yields.



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INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF BRGY. VIRAC, ITOGON, TURNED THE CHALLENGES INTO INSPIRATION TO MAKE THEIR ORGANIZATIONS MORE VISIBLE AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

BY RENALIE CABATU

With goals geared towards improving the welfare of the people, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are the partners of the local government in implementing projects and activities for the community. Over 300 organizations, with the purpose inclined to uniting the different sectors and seeking assistance for livelihoods, were organized in the municipality of Itogon in Benguet. This is currently where the EMPOWER Project, which aims to strengthen the resilience of high-risk communities by reinforcing civil society relevance in disaster and climate risk governance, is being implemented.

In Itogon, one notable barangay whose spirit of solidarity is practiced especially during the occurrence of disasters is Barangay Virac. Rain-induced landslides, sinkholes, and river pollution from mine tailings are just some of the threats that affect the lives of the residents of the said barangay. To mitigate and respond to these hazards, several CSOs in Virac contribute efforts.

The Camp 5 Mag-uuma Mag-uusal Livelihood Association, a farmers' group organized by Ms. Angelita Camuyot, envisions to develop the natural environment through upland farming. As a newly formed organization with a little over 30 members, they conduct regular planting of forest and fruit trees on the mountains in their barangay to ensure the protection of natural resources while augmenting the sources of living of community members. Ms. Camuyot, who is also the president of the Virac Senior Citizen Association, advocates alongside environmental sustainability for the health of her fellow residents.

As a retired teacher, she hopes to educate the households on the negative effects of pollution and chemical wastes on their health, which is an emerging issue in their barangay.



Ms. Angelita Camuyot poses for a photo after she was interviewed.

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Ms. Teodora Laus is interviewed by the EMPOWER Community Facilitator..

Similarly, the Chosol Women's Association, headed by Ms. Teodora Laus, is a very active CSO in Virac whose activities focus on maintenance of the environment and beautification of surroundings. To provide sources of income for the women, they also conduct livelihood skills training for their members. Hailed as a very active woman leader in their barangay, Ms. Laus is also paving the way for the organization of a women's federation in Virac. Through this federation, she hopes to encourage the camaraderie of women in the barangay.

Ms. Camuyot and Ms. Laus prove that while multiple roles are already implicated to women, i.e., fulfilling household responsibilities, economic activities, and participation in community affairs, driving positive change for their barangay is a value-adding task. As women leaders, they are advocating for the upliftment of the standard of living in their community through the initiatives of the CSOs they handle. Hopefully, their visions of empowering their fellow residents through encouraging active and meaningful participation in community affairs will be fulfilled.

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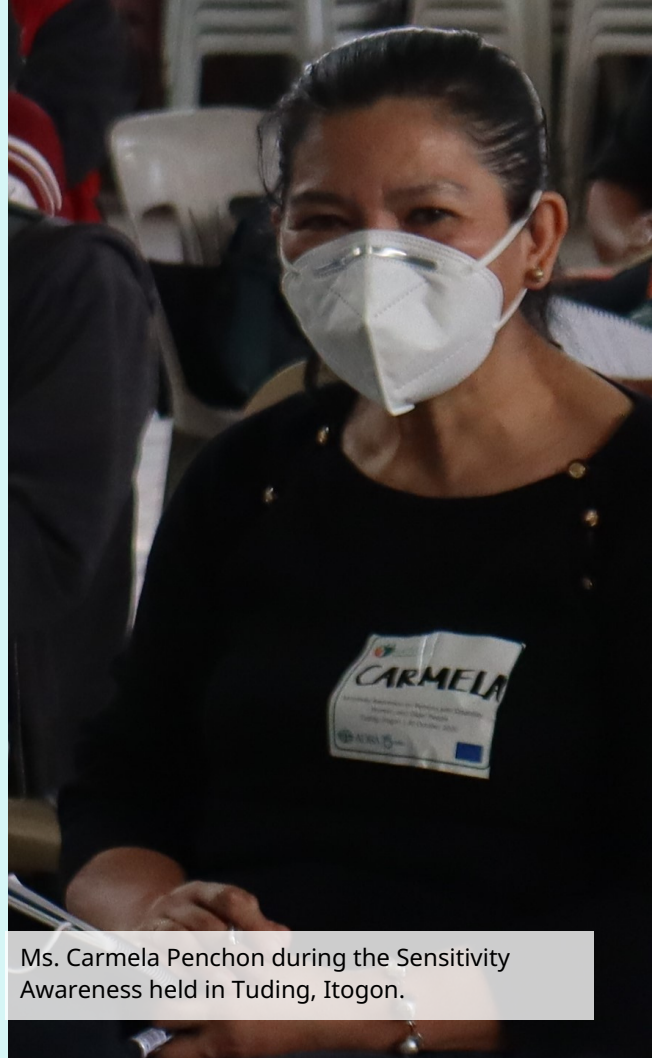
DGA SESSIONS HELD TO ENCOURAGE VULNERABLE GROUPS IN DRR GOVERNANCE

BY RENALIE CABATU &
MONALIZA BACCAY

The project team conducted Disability, Gender, and Age (DGA) sensitivity awareness-raising sessions in Itogon and Pinukpuk from October to December. The activity aimed to raise the awareness of local government units (LGUs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) about women, older persons, children, and persons with disabilities' situations during and after disasters. Also, the DGA sessions seek to remove discrimination towards these groups, especially in times of disasters and emergencies, and to equip LGUs and CSOs to have improved awareness on how to interact with persons with disabilities, women, children, and older persons through a rights-based lens. More importantly, the DGA sessions sought to initiate LGU and CSO participants' transformation into EMPOWER champions.

The DGA sessions revealed that LGUs and CSOs had misconceptions about persons with disabilities among all the groups. Before the activity, barangay officials and CSO members had limited awareness about the target groups' rights, especially about persons with disabilities. During the discussion about the situation of persons with disabilities, both LGU and CSOs' sentiments revealed that they perceived persons with disabilities as victims, fragile people, and a burden in society. On the other hand, LGUs and CSOs admitted that some of the persons with disabilities themselves have a low-self-image and have a "beneficiary" mentality.

As an intervention, the DGA sessions oriented LGUs and CSOs about the capacities and rights of persons with disabilities before, during, and after disasters. The facilitators shared best practices of champion persons with disabilities from previous projects via film showing and story-telling.



Ms. Carmela Penchon during the Sensitivity Awareness held in Tuding, Itogon.

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The question-and-answer portion corrected initial misconceptions of government officials and CSOs about government services for persons with disabilities and older persons.

During the sessions, the EMPOWER team observed some positive changes emanating from both LGU and CSO participants. Ms. Carmela Penchon, Secretary of the Federation of Persons with Disabilities in Itogon, initially had reservations about women's participation and persons with disabilities in disaster and climate risk governance. She shared that she initially wanted to be passive due to her lack of confidence as a woman with a disability to lead DRR-CCAM initiatives.

However, after the first DGA session, Ms. Penchon mustered great courage and expressed to the whole group her commitment to lead DRR-CCAM initiatives. Ms. Penchon was one of the most active participants during the activity. She believes that developing the community's knowledge and skills is necessary to empower them. She emphasized the need for LGU and CSOs to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in DRR-CCAM. She also shared that organizations of people with disabilities should strive hard to empower themselves. Instead of having the mindset only to receive benefits, they should also contribute to society because they can have that kind of capacity. She realized the need for leaders like her to encourage their fellow community members to participate in governance and contribute to the community.

Mr. Jyrick Waking, from the Philippine National Police (PNP) of Itogon, testified that personnel like them need these sessions to communicate with diverse groups effectively. Mr. Waking believes that by enhancing the polices' capabilities, they will have the means to solve issues faced by persons with disabilities in their locality.

As the participants were made aware of the rights of persons with disabilities, women, youth, and older persons, they realized the need to address and prioritize their needs, especially in times of disaster. So, they shared their insights on addressing the vulnerable groups' concerns in their community.



The HI Disability Technical Adviser facilitates the Sensitivity Awareness in Pinukpuk, Kalinga.

Engr. Cyril Batcagan, the MDRRM Officer of Itogon, said that programs and services for persons with disabilities are available in their municipality; however, the persons with disabilities themselves are not aware of how to access these. The DGA sessions moved the LGU and CSOs to take action and discuss how to improve government services to become more inclusive and accessible help for persons with disabilities. Some of the solutions suggested by the newly transformed champions include simplifying government processes to avail services, having dialogues between the LGU and community, conducting training on inclusion, strengthening organizations of persons with disabilities, and organizing records data of persons with disabilities in the barangays.

Implemented by:

INCLUSIVE EARLY WARNING KIT DISTRIBUTION

BY LEVY GUTIERREZ



One of the EMPOWER project components is to support the local government units of Itogon & Pinukpuk in setting up an inclusive early warning system. There is no existing inclusive early warning system developed in both towns.

Through funding support from the EU, the EMPOWER Project provided the municipalities of Itogon and Pinukpuk with inclusive early warning kits. Each barangay received one set of equipment containing audiovisual devices that include megaphones, whistle, bell,

and visual devices such as flags with colors, communication cards, reflectorized vest, poncho, LED flashlight, solar panel, headlamp, and a transistor radio.

The provision of inclusive early warning systems is part of the EMPOWER Project's intervention to strengthen communities to have the capacity to prepare better and avoid disasters. However, local government units still need to invest in expanding their early warning systems to cover all the areas of their barangays

"THE EARLY WARNING DEVICES PROVIDED IS A BIG HELP TO OUR COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR A HAZARD LIKE TYPHOONS. IT CAN SAVE LIVES AND HELP PEOPLE TO PROTECT THEIR PROPERTIES AND LIVELIHOOD"

The HI DRRM Technical Adviser orients the representatives of the barangays during the distribution of the Inclusive Early Warning Kit in Itogon, Benguet.



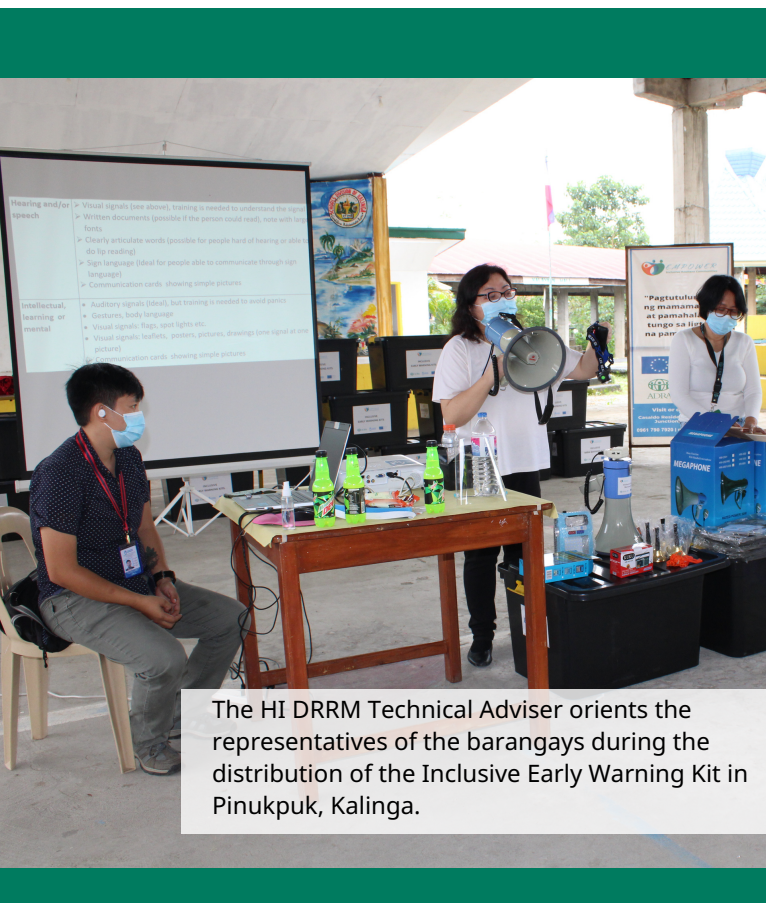
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ADRA



This project is funded by the European Union



The HI DRRM Technical Adviser orients the representatives of the barangays during the distribution of the Inclusive Early Warning Kit in Pinukpuk, Kalinga.

Engr. Cyril Batcagan, Itogon Municipal DRRM Officer, said, *"the early warning devices provided have great benefits for the community. Dissemination of information and giving inclusive early warning to people, including persons with disabilities, will be easier, especially in emergency times. Hazards have become more frequent, like typhoons, which have become more destructive. As a result, there are worse flooding and landslides, and often persons with disabilities have been ignored and excluded from consideration in the design of disaster early warning system".*

Likewise, Mayor Irving Dasayon said, *"The early warning devices provided is a big help to our communities to prepare for a hazard like typhoons. It can save lives and help people to protect their properties and livelihood".*

Ms. Carissa Galla, the DRR Technical Adviser of the project, gave orientation to the 32 barangays officials of Itogon and Pinukpuk on how to use the inclusive early warning kits and how to be inclusive in the design of the local government's early warning system. Ms. Galla emphasized three crucial points in the early warning system. She said, "Authorities should communicate the warning early, the information should be correct, and the warning should reach all people in the community – no one should be left behind."

Aside from the early warning kits provided, the project will train local government units and community-based organizations to develop inclusive early warning systems inclusive to persons with disabilities, older persons, women, and children.

"AUTHORITIES SHOULD COMMUNICATE THE WARNING EARLY, THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE CORRECT, AND THE WARNING SHOULD REACH ALL PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY – NO ONE SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND."

The project will link with the country's national agency's warning system and weather bureau - Philippines Atmospheric and Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (PAGASA), to train the municipal and barangay local government units of Itogon and Pinukpuk to monitor hydro-meteorological hazards and use this information to prepare for potential disasters.

Implemented by:



This project is funded by the European Union

CAPACITATING WOMEN AND GIRLS OF ITOGON AND PINUKPUK ON INCLUSIVE DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK GOVERNANCE

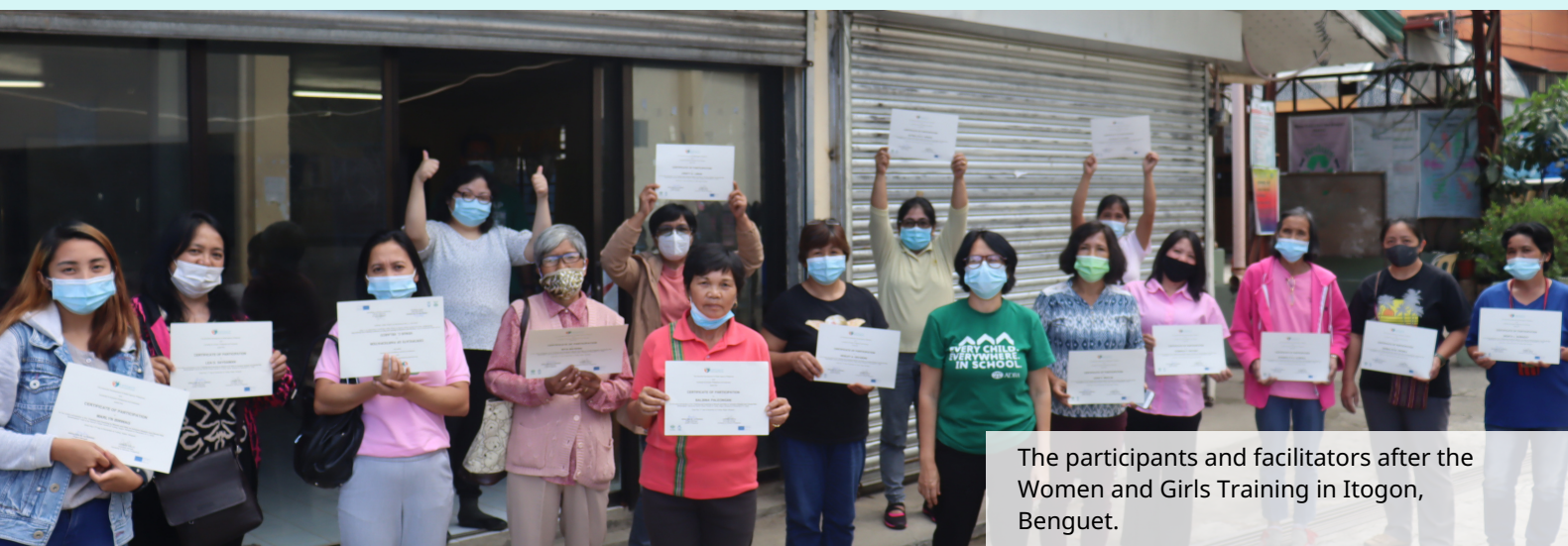
BY RENALIE CABATU &
MA. KARINA MENESES



A participant doing an activity during the Women and Girls Training in Pinukpuk, Kalinga.

Women's collective action is a potent force that can address several service delivery inadequacies during a disaster. Women can discuss and address issues such as lack of programs for women and girls' groups, inadequate targeting, and inefficient program delivery through substantial involvement in disaster and climate risk governance. Advocating this perspective, HI and ADRA facilitated Training and Coaching to Women and Girls on Gender in Disaster and Climate Risk Governance held from December to January in different clusters in Itogon and Pinukpuk. The activity aimed to enhance women's capacities and improve engagement or meaningful participation in DRR governance by gaining familiarization with women's and girls' rights in DRR and encouraging women-led DRR initiatives. The training promoted the EMPOWER project's key message – that there should be equal opportunities for women and men in disaster and climate risk governance.

The training allowed the women to reflect on their journey as mothers and community leaders. Despite having multiple roles in society, they have something to contribute within their households and their community. The training also introduced women & children/girls' laws and policies to guide them in asserting their rights and responsibilities in disasters.



The participants and facilitators after the Women and Girls Training in Itogon, Benguet.

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This project is
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A participant sharing her experiences during the Women and Girls Training in Itogon, Benguet.



Among the training participants, Kagawad Estrellita Apidos exemplifies that women and men can equally contribute to society. She is an active leader in the community, holding various responsibilities, including being a member of the barangay council of Barangay Loacan and head of the Women's Federation in the municipality of Itogon. She also facilitated the organizing of older persons, persons with disabilities, and women in her Barangay. With the EMPOWER project's implementation, her task is to champion women & girls' issues in inclusive DRR & climate risk governance. Since she knows the significant role women play in the community, she advocates the meaningful participation of women's organizations in DRR governance.

Focusing on women's roles during disasters, the participants narrated their struggles and their successes. To emphasize that they can effectively perform any role in the community, the women repeatedly uttered the words "what men can do, women can also do" during the training sessions. Ms. Nenita Subaday, an officer of the Women's Brigade in Barangay Poblacion, specifically stated that women also could take on men's roles, especially during emergency cases, such as rescuing, warning dissemination, saving lives, and relief distribution.

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By bringing together women of different sectors, the training utilized the diversity of their interests in raising awareness of situations and promoting understanding and support. Alicia C. Bitanga, the secretary of Senior Citizen's Organization of Barangay Kattabogan in Pinukpuk, shared that despite having attended various training before, EMPOWER project's is the one that made her understand women's rights. She expressed her interest and pleasure in sharing and learning with other sectors and contributing to the community. Similarly, Leonora Membrot, a barangay Lupon in Pinukpuk and a member of a women's and a farmers' organization, recognized the benefit of participating in the training. As a former community organizer and advocate of Indigenous People's rights, she felt that she could return to being an active community member by engaging in the EMPOWER project.

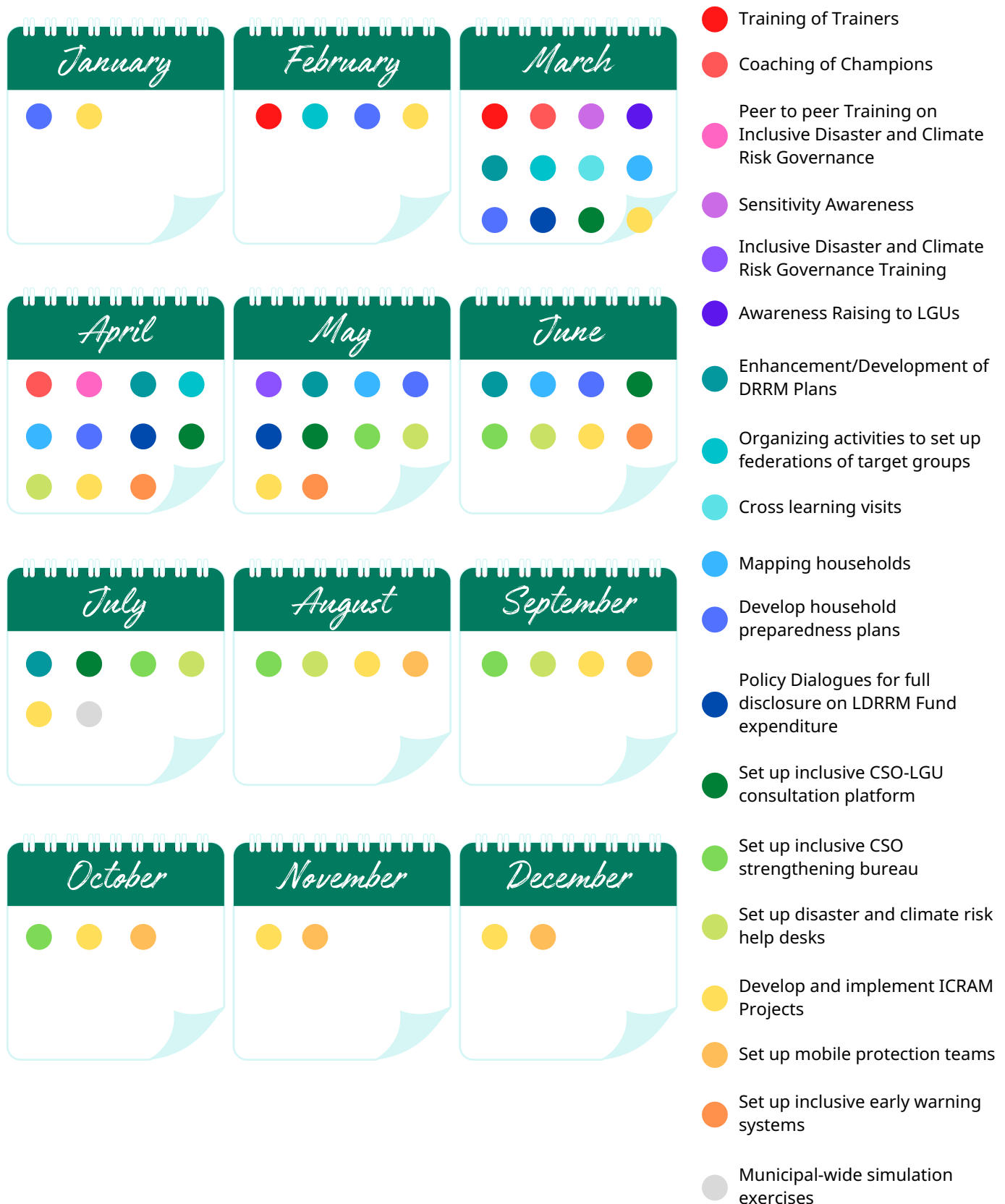
By the end of the training, the women already have increased interest to participate in disaster and climate risk governance. Though at present, the number of women who are actively engaging in community affairs and power is still less. Through education and capacity-building, the project will advance a transformative process to equip and strengthen women's voice and negotiating power to demand promotion of rights and access to services. As Apidos said, *"In times of disasters, it's necessary to amplify women voices in doing so, society will understand more our problems and needs."* In this way, vulnerable groups, including women, can unreservedly be included in governance.

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EMPOWER Project 2021 Calendar of Activities



Implemented by:

About the Implementing Organizations



The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is a global humanitarian organization whose purpose is in "serving humanity so that all may live as God intended". ADRA Philippines belongs to the worldwide ADRA network that is present in 118 countries. ADRA Philippines has been in operation for 35 years to assist those affected by disasters and improve social development for vulnerable communities with families living in extreme poverty. ADRA Philippines is registered with the State Security and Exchange Commission and is licensed and accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

ADRA Philippines works with people in poverty and distress to create positive change through empowering partnerships and responsible action. Reaching across boundaries, empowering and speaking out for the at-risk and forgotten, to achieve measurable, documented and durable changes in lives and society. As a humanitarian agency, ADRA Philippines abides by the four Core Humanitarian Principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. This means the agency provides assistance to communities and families regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation or religious association.



Co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, Humanity & Inclusion (the new name of Handicap International) is a 38-year-old independent and impartial organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict, and disaster. We work alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. With local partners, we run programs in health and rehabilitation and social and economic integration. We respond quickly and effectively to natural and civil disasters in order to limit serious and permanent injuries and to assist survivors' recovery and reintegration. We advocate for the universal recognition of the rights of people with disabilities through national planning and advocacy.

About the Funding Agency



The European Union (EU) is a unique economic and political union between 27 European countries.

Development lies at the heart of the EU's foreign policy, with the EU providing over half the world's cooperation funding. The EU sees development cooperation not as 'charity' but as an investment in a viable, shared future. The EU is thus a leading advocate of the UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and its own European consensus on Development of May 2017 sets out how the EU will focus on "people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership" in working towards the 2030 agenda's sustainable development goals.

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

Implemented by:



This project is funded by the European Union



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