



# Regular feedback and dialogue empowers communities and closes the feedback loop

## 1. Issue

On 14 December 2015, Tropical Storm Melor made landfall in the Philippines, mainly affecting the low-lying areas of Luzon, including metro Manila and the provinces of Bulacan and Rizal. Severe flooding in metro Manila impeded access to most vital services including health, food, and water.

## 2. Response

Previous assessments of community communication channels reveal that communities actively use social media during times of crisis in the Philippines.

During Tropical Storm Melor, the Philippines Red Cross monitored social media for requests from affected communities. PRC was alerted via social media to a community member trapped inside her flooded house and in need of medical assistance. PRC deployed its Water Search and Rescue (WASAR) responders to transport the community member to the nearest hospital.

The importance of good information management to support regular feedback and dialogue with communities and respond to requests from communities was crucial during this response.

### Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) at a glance: Philippines Red Cross (PRC)

Formed in 1947, the Philippine Red Cross is the leading humanitarian organization in the country, committed to provide quality life-saving services that protect the life and dignity especially of indigent Filipinos in vulnerable situations. At present, the Philippine Red Cross provides six major services: Blood Services, Disaster Management Services, Safety Services, Health Services, Red Cross Youth, and Welfare Services.

Trusted and preferred channels of communication in the Philippines include radio, newspaper, hotline, SMS, social media, help desks, and printed materials. PRC utilizes these multiple channels to ensure that the affected people had access to information through their preferred and trusted communication channels. Some of these include community focus groups, notice boards, social media, and Barangay Recovery Committees.

*Cover photo: The Philippine Red Cross is committed in engaging communities through using the most appropriate communication approaches to listen to communities' needs, feedback and complaints, ensuring they can actively participate in the Red Cross activities.*



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The Philippine Red Cross Operations Center manages information from all PRC's 103 Chapters nationwide through various platforms such as social media, radio, and news reports, as well as volunteers' reports on the ground.

### 3. Impact: Information management hub: PRC Operations Centre

With over 100 million people in the Filipino population using social media, the outcome of engaging with communities on social media and using this information to alert PRC programme teams and responders, ensures communities can access assistance and need to make informed decisions and stay safe.

To enable effective information flow the Philippine Red Cross OpCen, operates 24 hours a day, provides critical information nationwide to Red Cross staff, volunteers and partners before, during, and after a disaster. In a day, the PRC OpCen monitors an average of 15 incidents – landslides, flashfloods, insurgency related incidents, fire incidents, vehicular incidents, and other disasters – through social media channels and reports these to its programme teams and Chapters.

Communication primarily takes place using SMS or phone calls (landline) to key focal points within the Philippine Red Cross field operations. This is complemented by information from the media and other secondary sources – confirmed through the Red Cross' extensive network of contacts on the ground. The information is analysed and fed into the resulting humanitarian operation on an ongoing basis. With multiple disasters, ongoing at any one time the Red Cross OpCen analysed information from the weather

agency (PAGASA – Project Noah), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committee, Project Agos<sup>1</sup>, television, as well as Red Cross branches and chapters, to provide consistently updated and instantaneous reports on rainfall and flooding.

The PRC OpCen also monitors social media daily through the Philippine standard unified hashtags.<sup>2</sup> When an incident has been identified the OpCen will then gather further information to validate the occurrence. After verification, the OpCen will then coordinate with the concerned Chapter to dispatch rescue team. In case the Chapter involved lacks the capacity to conduct rescue, the OpCen will then alert a nearby PRC Chapter to assist. Updates of the response will then be reported by the Chapters continuously to the OpCen. The OpCen will then report the Chapter initiatives to the PRC offices.

The information will be shared with communities through its volunteers on the ground through text blasts and providing alerts and advisories on the PRC Hazards App, helping to alleviate fears in a time of shock and high insecurity.

1 Project Agos aims to augment flow of critical information through crowdsourcing during disasters. Philippine Red Cross and Project Agos, sign a MOA that aims to design and implement an online civic engagement campaign to share information and content for the benefit of the public. The project aspires to organize an online community of information responders.

2 Philippines launched a standard unified hashtags for disasters: [reliefweb.int/report/philippines/standard-hashtags-disaster-response](http://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/standard-hashtags-disaster-response)

#### For more information, please contact:

##### Philippines Red Cross

**April Bulanadi**  
Manager, Communications  
Email: [aprilann.bulanadi@redcross.org.ph](mailto:aprilann.bulanadi@redcross.org.ph)

**Catherine Larracas**  
Manager, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation,  
Reporting (PMER) Office  
Email: [catherine.larracas@redcross.org.ph](mailto:catherine.larracas@redcross.org.ph)

**Maria Roxanne B. Nicolas**  
CEA Project Officer  
Email: [roxanne.nicolas@redcross.org.ph](mailto:roxanne.nicolas@redcross.org.ph)

##### International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**Sandra Romero Ruiz**  
Disaster Risk Management Delegate  
E-mail [sandra.romero@ifrc.org](mailto:sandra.romero@ifrc.org)

**Caroline Austin**  
Community Engagement and Accountability  
E-mail: [caroline.austin@ifrc.org](mailto:caroline.austin@ifrc.org)