

# FILIPINO DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

A CASE STUDY OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



## CONTEXT

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries globally. The country experiences frequent tropical cyclones, active volcanoes, earthquakes, and climate-related risks, leading to significant humanitarian needs and socio-economic impact.

The Filipino diaspora, with an estimated 10.2 million individuals across 200 countries, plays a crucial role in the mobilization of financial and human resources, philanthropic initiatives for humanitarian aid, recovery and development, along national and international actors.

## SCOPE

In this context, the Framework was applied to support US-based Filipino diaspora's efforts towards stronger and more streamlined internal coordination, with a focus on preparedness, information exchange, and communication for potential crises, and to a lesser extent, to promote mutual knowledge and collaboration between diaspora organizations and humanitarian actors, including government counterparts, UN agencies and private actors, in the Philippines.

## FAST FACTS

**2000**

diaspora organizations/members grouped under NaFFAA, the National Federation of Filipino American Associations.

**200+**

registered under the FilAm Alert system.

**50+**

diaspora actors trained on humanitarian standards and principles such as the Sphere Standards and Build Back Safer methods.

**5**

consultations with diaspora and country level actors.

## THIS CASE STUDY FEATURES:

- 1. Crisis Context:** Large country, frequent and diverse environmental hazards, some pockets of political instability.
- 2. Diaspora type:** Large, decentralized with local and regional chapters, professional associations, HTAs, solid donation culture, involved in both humanitarian and development efforts.
- 3. Humanitarian system in-country:** Solid government's role, clear systems and structures, presence of international and national actors;
- 4. Diaspora partner:** Large national network (NAAFFA) with regional chapters; experience in humanitarian assistance; limited formal humanitarian coordination.
- 5. Scope of the engagement:** Support diaspora's internal coordination, communication and collaboration with actors in country.



## IMPACT

**For diaspora:** The Framework application significantly impacted diaspora actors, fostering improved internal information sharing, communication, and coordination, through the development of innovative tools.

**For humanitarian actors:** Humanitarian actors in-country benefited from increased contacts with diasporas' actors for mutual knowledge, trust and collaborations; simulations of preparedness efforts promoted increased coordination.

**For local actors and affected communities:** The affected communities benefited from more effective humanitarian assistance aligned with humanitarian standards and based on reliable data on needs and existing interventions. Collaborations between diaspora organizations and other stakeholders generated innovative and more effective responses for affected communities.

## FRAMEWORK APPLICATION

### *Design of the Engagement*

- Diaspora as partner in design and execution
- Consultative process
- Build on existing diaspora's platform
- Partnership with experienced private actors

### *Functions*

- Coordination governance systems suitable to diaspora's needs and preferences
- Priority on Information sharing and communication for crisis preparedness
- Crisis preparedness and response simulations with in-country actors

### *Governance*

- De-centralized and volunteer-driven, with regional representatives

### *Liaison*

- Ad hoc liaison role played by IOM the Philippines and in the US; no dedicated focal point.

### *Stakeholders*

- Guidance from private actors (Philippines Disaster Response Foundation – PDRF).
- Buy-in of institutional stakeholders.

For more information on the Framework for Diaspora Engagement in Humanitarian Assistance or its Case Studies, please contact the Diaspora Engagement Unit at IOM Washington at [diasporaforhumanity@iom.int](mailto:diasporaforhumanity@iom.int).

## RELEVANT TOOLS OF THE FRAMEWORK

- **The Diaspora Humanitarian Council**, to guide the Filipino American Diaspora in their humanitarian response efforts, with functions of communication, information sharing, prioritization of activities, and mobilization of capacities and funds. It works with rotating participation, a volunteer-driven platform, and regional representatives.
- The **Humanitarian Digital User Handbook** was developed to provide guidance to rotating participants and store relevant tools.
- A **centralized SMS alerts' system**, FilAm Alerts, created to send/receive alerts following any disaster in the Philippines, and promote reliable and timely information.
- A **website, FilAm Alerts**, as platform to foster collaboration among Filipino-American leaders across the United States to effectively coordinate the humanitarian response of the Filipino-American diaspora and tackle some common challenges of the Fil-Am community distributing aid on the ground in terms of logistical ability, transparency, access to reliable and updated information.
- **Simulation of a typhoon scenario and tabletop exercises**, involving diaspora's leaders, government bodies, international organizations, private actors (PDRF), to articulate actors' response initiatives, discuss roles and responsibilities and areas for possible collaboration.
- **Joint needs assessments and private/public collaborations** to promote safer shelters for underserved communities.
- **Trainings and capacity building** for diaspora organizations on safer shelter and settlement and standards and principles of humanitarian assistance.

## REPLICABILITY

The nature of humanitarian interventions is very context-specific; however, the Framework's flexibility allows for adaptation to diverse situations. The different Framework's components are adaptable to different contexts and needs of both diasporas and institutional humanitarian actors, either in response to future crisis in the same context, or in other crisis settings.

