

TERMINAL REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS INTERVENTION FOR THE NOAH PROGRAM (STRATCOMM)

INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Communications Intervention for the NOAH Program was created to provide institutional communications support in promoting and raising the level of awareness for the NOAH Program and to attain public acceptance of the program as a science-based disaster management tool as an early warning system.

The project was implemented at the same time the NOAH program was launched in July 6, 2012 in Marikina City as part of the government's initiatives to implement a responsive and pro-active program for disaster mitigation and risk reduction in order to promote a culture of safety and preparedness among the populace particularly those in vulnerable areas; thereby avoiding or lessening the negative impact brought about by devastating typhoons in the past years like Sendong, Pablo and Ondoy in the future.

The program is to complement the efforts and activities of the government's warning agencies particularly the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) in providing accurate, timely and comprehensive weather and hazard information to include, not only pertinent data but also the possible effect or impact to communities-at-risk in order to avert massive casualty and minimize loss to properties.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a comprehensive report and account of the various communications activities implemented to raise public awareness on Project NOAH and promote a culture of safety to prevent natural calamities from becoming disasters.
2. To provide assessment and analysis of the project by giving concrete examples showing how it was able to reach out to various sectors of society and to impart information relative to Project NOAH and disaster management in general.
3. To provide recommendations to further enhance and improve the communications component of Project NOAH and its possible institutionalization into mainstream public communications that will strengthen advocacy for disaster preparedness and cultivate a culture of safety in the long run.

PROJECT TARGETS

1. Conduct information, education and communications (IEC) campaigns for various target audiences to include but not limited to national government agencies, local government executives, disaster risk managers, academic institutions, non-government organizations, private enterprises and organizations, media practitioners and the general public.
2. Produce and make available to various audiences printed and audio-visual (AV) communication collaterals as sources of information about Project NOAH and its importance in disaster preparedness that may include, but not limited to brochures, news magazine, posters, press releases and institutional video.
3. Participate in promotional activities that will provide an avenue to make Project NOAH known to a wider audience like participation in conferences, symposia, exhibits, forums, press conferences, etc. like the National Science and Technology Week of the DOST.

PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Year 1 (July 2012 – December 2012) refer to Exhibit A

Year 2 (January 2013 – December 2013) refer to Exhibit B

Year 3 (January 2014 – December 2014) refer to Exhibit C

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS & MILESTONES

- Marikina Experience of Habagat Zero Casualty due to Project NOAH (Press release from Marikina)
- Cagayan de Oro Experience of Zero Casualty (Press release from CDO)
- Participation in the Iba na ang Panahon: Science for Safer Communities IEC Campaign in all 17 regions
- Participation in the National Science and Technology Week 2014 in Manila and regional NSTW like in Tuguegarao for the Northern Luzon cluster
- Participation in the STII-KBP Media Seminar/Workshop for Responsible Weather Reporting in Tuguegarao, Cebu, Davao and Butuan (refer to Exhibit D)
- Project NOAH mobile applications made in Android and IOS plus parallel apps of ARKO, Raincheck.ph, Flood Patrol
- Production of Communications Collaterals like the following:
 - 1) Project NOAH Brochure (in English, Pilipino and Visayan dialect) distributed during the S&T Cluster Fairs in Tuguegarao, Cebu, Davao, media seminars, press conferences, fora and orientations, exhibits, etc. (refer to Exhibit E)
 - 2) S&T Post Special Edition (refer to Exhibit F camera-ready mock up)
 - 3) Reference for Emergency and Disaster (RED) Book (refer to Exhibit G, digital file in CD)
- Production of the Project NOAH Institutional Video (on-going)
- Production of press releases for print media and uploads to the www.science.ph and DOST website

LIST OF PERSONNEL INVOLVED (Refer to separate Report of the Finance and Administration Division)

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

During the project implementation for a period of two and a half years (from July 2012 to December 2014), a number of problems were encountered and challenges presented that were appropriately addressed by the project leaders and staff.

The following were the problems encountered:

1. Insufficient time available for the conduct of IECs (two days) due to the extent of topics to be discussed and the number of concerns and questions from participants. As a result, the time allotted for workshops was shortened thus compromising hands-on exercises that are equally important for participants to appreciate and fully imbibe the learnings.

This was addressed by giving priority to localized content where lectures were concentrated to applicable topics and concerns for particular areas/regions and revising presentations to suit the need of participants.

2. Resetting or cancellation of scheduled IECs due to bad weather, availability of resource persons, shortage in logistics resulted in delays in other activities and deliverables of NOAH StratComm.

This was addressed by adjusting the time frames and deadlines for other activities to give priority to the IECs that provide close-in encounters with Project NOAH stakeholders.

3. Manpower support, in some instances, were insufficient thereby requiring more manhours to accomplish tasks needed to be done during the IECs like reproduction of CDs containing all lecture information of speakers and reproduction of workshop materials.

This was addressed through overtime work and collaboration among other staff once their respective assignments were finished.

4. Availability of good photos and video clips for audio-visual presentations and printed collaterals became a problem in the production of brochures, the **RED Book** and the **S&T Post Special Edition**, as well as the NOAH institutional AVP.

This was addressed by networking with various agencies like Project NOAH WebGIS, UP DREAM, PAGASA, PHIVOLCS, ASTI and the DOST regional offices to solicit their help in producing good, quality photos and video clips. Likewise, assistance from the STII-AV Unit provided for stock photos and clips for photo coverages used for said publications.

The challenges encountered during the conduct of IECs and production of printed collaterals were as follows:

1. Improvisation and modification of the program in the conduct of IECs to allow for adjustments caused by delays of arrival of speakers, switches in confirmed speakers, last minute revisions in contents of presentation.
2. Stepping up by project staff to act as (IEC) workshop facilitators has to be done in some occasions due to the unexpected number of participants that required more groups to be formed.
3. Coordination and planning for project visits to weather installations by participants and media became, at times, complicated due to unavailability of sites to visit, bad weather condition, lack of transportation and time constraint due to distances between project sites.
4. Language barrier became a major concern during the workshops and open forum portion during the IECs because of the diversity of dialects like Cebuano, Kapampangan, Bicolano, Ilocano, Bisaya, etc. Documentation of proceedings became a challenge but facilitators and speakers assigned in the different regions were able to translate from the dialects to English or Pilipino as those assigned coming from different agencies were knowledgeable, to some extent, of the local dialects. Likewise, the DOST Regional staff were able to assist to a certain degree.
5. Content of presentations were made concise and localized to make the lectures more effective on a per region basis during the IECs and on-site revisions were done through the help of the project staff, DOST regional staff and the IT unit.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

The Strategic Communications Intervention for the NOAH Program was a dynamic communications strategy guided by its work plan, however, the course of actions taken during the duration of the project took different routes to achieve the same objective of communicating what Project NOAH is and what are its benefits in order to heighten awareness to the program and encourage the cultivation of the culture of preparedness with activities geared toward disaster mitigation.

In general, the StratComm Project was able to consolidate a workable communications strategy that caused target audience to respond positively as can be seen through participation of local chief executives, disaster managers, non-government organizations, academic institutions, the media [local and national], and the business community [local and foreign] particularly in the conduct of the NOAH StratComm information education and communications (IEC) campaigns throughout the country.

In collaboration with the Science and Technology Information Institute (STII), Project NOAH StratComm participated in the 3-month long IECs campaign dubbed **“Iba na ang Panahon: Science for Safer Communities”** in the **17 regions** in the country introducing Project NOAH and DREAM [through lectures and workshops] to an average of 200 participants each event composed of local government executives,

disaster risk reduction managers, representatives of national government agencies, non-government organizations and other stakeholders.

Media has played an important role in disseminating information about Project NOAH and its components like the UP-DREAM, NOAH WISE, etc. These were done through regular press releases, media conferences, press conferences, and media seminars.

The Science and Technology Information Institute and the Mediacore also contributed greatly to the promotion of the Project NOAH through collaborative work like joint press releases through the STII news service, publications and events that were supported by the Public Affairs Unit of STII.

Correspondingly, the **Philippine Science Journalists (PsciJourn) group has given Project NOAH a big boost** in terms of promoting its use and making it known not only to the scientific community but to the general public through the various media like print, radio and television.

Strategic partnerships with television networks like GMA-7, TV5 and ABS-CBN/ANC with assistance from the Public Affairs Unit of STII have also contributed media mileage.

The recent **tie-up with the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP)** has given Project NOAH as well as the DOST wide program on disaster management wider exposure for regional and national media practitioners to fully know and appreciate Project NOAH and its components in keeping the public well informed about the program, weather reporting and disaster preparedness in general.

The collaboration with KBP resulted in the conduct of four (4) media seminar/workshops in Tuguegarao (Luzon), Cebu (Visayas), Davao and Butuan cities (Mindanao) participated in by regional radio and television reporters and broadcasters.

Also, the strategic partnership with KBP resulted in the creation of the STII-KBP Facebook account for weather information exchange.

JUSTIFICATION FOR MODIFICATION IN WORKPLAN

During the course of the project implementation, intervening factors occurred, without prejudice to overall output and objectives set forth at the start of the project, necessitating provision for immediate communications support and information resources on Project NOAH and DREAM for LiDAR-generated hazard maps requested by specific audiences who showed interest on Project NOAH. These specific audiences requested briefings about Project NOAH to get information vital to the preparation of their own disaster management programs geared at ensuring business continuity and synchronization of development activities to changing weather patterns.

The intervening activities were special requests for Project NOAH to conduct seminars for a national government agency like the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), foreign and local business organizations (American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Real Estate Brokers Association of the Phils. and Contact Center Association of the Phils.), local government unit (City of Manila for participation to the 1st Manila Disaster Preparedness Conference and Exhibit) and academic institution (Far Eastern University) brought about by the growing popularity of Project NOAH and the heightened awareness and need for conducting disaster preparedness briefings using information provided by Project NOAH as well as PAGASA .

Likewise, the Project Leader of the NOAH StratComm and/or his representative also spoke and delivered presentations in several occasions like the National Electrification Agency (NEA), the LGU of La Union (represented by Alan Taule), the Philippine Science Journalist Association of the Philippines.

Project NOAH StratComm also grabbed the opportunity to promote Project NOAH as a disaster management tool to media practitioners that are considered important partners in delivering the message of disaster preparedness by participating in the conduct of the media seminars/workshops in collaboration with the STII and Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP). During the events, Project NOAH StratComm staff participated in documenting and conducting the seminar/workshop activities that tackled responsible weather reporting held in Northern Luzon (Tuguegarao), Visayas (Cebu) and Mindanao (Davao and Butuan). These activities were conducted in collaboration with PAGASA.

NOAH StratComm again saw the great potential in making Project NOAH and its component projects well known to a greater number of decision makers in the regions through the Iba na ang Panahon: Science for Safer Communities IEC campaign from March to May 2014. With the participation of the NOAH StratComm, Project NOAH and its components , like the DREAM project, was able to be at the forefront of disaster preparedness -- touching base with more than 1,000 local government executives and disaster risk managers in all 17 regions [including Metromanila] in the country.

Access to internet, creation of mobile apps, live/pre-taped guest appearances and phone patch episodes by top DOST and Project NOAH officials in radio and television shows/programs further heightened public awareness of Project NOAH.

The social media has considerably contributed to the popularity of the project especially with the Twitter accounts of Dr. Mahar Lagmay; websites of DOST (www.dost.gov.ph and www.science.ph), Project NOAH (www.noah.dost.gov.ph); and links from various websites like PAGASA.

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that the Strategic Communications Intervention for the NOAH Program be continued in whatever form it may take, either as another project or as an institutionalized component

of STII, since disaster preparedness and risk management are already included as one of the 8 DOST Outcomes thus meriting a status that is permanent in nature and part of mainstream DOST media concern and advocacy.

It is also suggested that at least two (2) regular staff be employed [one senior and one supervising] to handle Project NOAH and weather –related news and other communication tools, lodged under the STII and under supervision of the Office of the Director.

There are a lot of communications interventions still needed to be implemented if Project NOAH, now fast becoming a household “**brand**”, is to continuously be in the mindset of our countrymen to instill the culture of safety, culture of preparedness, that are vital ingredients in the country’s battle against disasters.

The fact remains that natural calamities will be regular occurrences in our country, therefore it is imperative to make disaster preparedness a part of our daily lives towards the pursuit of “safer communities” for the future of the next generations. Part of disaster preparedness is to have the right information at the right time; needed is a tool that will provide early warning for early action and that is Project NOAH.

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