



# BCRUPD Policy Brief<sup>1</sup> No.3

“Developing a Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements in the Philippines”

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It is crucial to make human settlements in the Philippines resilient to natural disasters, climate change impacts, and other shocks and stresses. The country's geographic location and topography make it highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change impacts. At least 60% of the country's total land area is exposed to multiple hazards, and 74% of the population is susceptible to their impact (GFDRR, 2017). Records show that the impacts of natural disasters on communities and the whole country have been very catastrophic. From the year 2000 to 2016, natural disasters have affected an estimated 125 million people, caused more than 23,000 deaths, and resulted in US\$ 23 Billion in damages (ADB, 2018). The magnitude and depth of impacts of disasters seem to be increasing, and the change has been attributed to poor management of the built environment (Ballesteros, 2016).

Disaster events in 2019 from earthquakes and typhoons, as well as the 2020 eruption of Taal Volcano and pandemic due to Covid19, have caused adverse impacts to human settlements. Effects from the latest two disaster events mentioned include not only the typically reported disaster impacts (e.g., damage to housing). The Taal Volcano eruptions and Covid19 are showing atypical measures of negative impacts (e.g., losses to land/property rights, prolonged income/livelihoods losses, and even effects on mobility from one's shelter to other basic services) which calls for dramatic shifts and transformations in human settlement systems.

Given the above challenges and with the passing of Republic Act 11201 or the Law Creating the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), crafting a **Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements** is a necessary task. Under Section 5, I. (e) *DHSUD is mandated to formulate a framework for resilient housing and human settlements as a basis for the mechanisms for post-disaster housing and resiliency planning, research and development, extension, monitoring and evaluation of programs, projects and activities to protect vulnerable communities from the adverse effects of climate change and disasters.*

A clear Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements will aid the government and stakeholders to establish a clearer pathway and goals for developing resilient human settlements in the Philippines. For that, the Framework must be taken as a mechanism that links to the whole process of risk management and resilience building to ultimately link sustainable development.

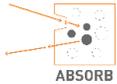
This Policy Brief was developed as a result of the January 2020 Initiatory Meeting organized by the Environment Planning and Land Use Bureau of DHSUD and the Policy Development and Planning Division of the Office of Civil Defense. Meeting results have been supplemented with support from UN-Habitat in the Philippines for the BRCUPD Project to develop this Policy Brief. This Brief seeks to provide important considerations, highlight policy anchors, and share initial recommendations for the development of a Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements in the Philippines.

### *Making Human Settlements Resilient Requires a Comprehensive Approach*

Human Settlements are and will continue to be a critical factor in determining the sustainability of our future. As places where people live and work in proximity, whether permanent or temporary, human settlements' current condition and the path through which they are developed will define how people will interact with the environment and produce economic yields. It is, therefore, essential for human settlements development to take on a comprehensive approach considering that human settlements actually cover the built, natural, cultural, and other societal systems that support the functions for living and sustaining people's lives. The norms and policies that shape and guide the different forms, structure, and size or scale of human settlements are crucial in ensuring its sustainable functioning.

RA 11201 defined human settlements as *comprised of (a) physical components of shelter and infrastructure; and (b) services to which the physical elements provide support, such as community services which include education, health, culture, welfare, recreation, and nutrition.* The definition of resilience meanwhile can be derived from Republic Act 10121 known as Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 states that resilience is *the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to **resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard** in a **timely and efficient** manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions **through risk***

**management.** The table below presents initial considerations in applying the abilities of resilience in human settlements.

Resilience Ability	Possible Human Settlement Condition
 <p>RESIST</p>	- Hazards are present, but the human settlement system/elements will not collapse, be damaged, or be penetrated.
 <p>ABSORB</p>	- Hazards are present but the human settlement system/elements can take in or let impacts occur (whether positive or negative) and then manage the effects to minimize or limit the losses (e.g., risk transfer)
 <p>ACCOMMODATE</p>	- Human settlement system/elements adjust to make room for, direct, or control the expected impacts from hazards as the condition of the system/elements can accept the change, “residual risks,” and manage the “uncertainty” associated with the hazards.
 <p>ADAPT TO</p>	- Human settlements system/elements have considered the hazards and made adjustments to moderate negative impacts of the hazards events as well as capture and maximize opportunities; adjustments could be related to “incremental adaptation,” in which existing practices are adjusted to make them better suited to new/projected conditions
 <p>TRANSFORM</p>	- As opposed to adaptation, which can be incremental and small in scope, this ability relates to when the human settlements system/elements have purposely changed to suit the current and future conditions that hazards could bring. Transformative actions are characterized by “systemic-change.”
 <p>RECOVER</p>	- They are typically related to actions done after the occurrence of disaster events. Actions intend to address and regain the negative effects and losses by building back better through the use of resilience-building strategies.
<i>Adopted from: BCRUPD Project, UN-Habitat and DHSUD</i>	

Given the above, the Framework Strategy should look at all the elements of human settlements – the physical components and services as well as its interaction with the natural, cultural, and societal systems – and make their functioning-together as effective as possible, to reach appropriate resilient characters or ability.

### *The Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements must consider Urbanization*

Human settlements are rapidly evolving due to processes like population growth, rural to urban migration, and physical transformations. Challenges abound when these processes, which are indicators of urbanization, occur off-track the sustainable path. Along with the urbanization challenges mentioned, natural disasters and climate change have been creating a big threat to human settlements around the globe – a threat mostly compounded by large development gaps in the least developed and developing nations.

The world is urbanizing fast. From 50% of people living in urban areas in 2007, it is projected that the global urban population will increase to 30% in 2030 and 66% by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2015). Urban areas in the Philippines have been growing faster than the rural areas since 2007 (NUDHF Full Report 2018). The level of urbanization is at 51.2% in 2015 (PSA, 2019), and it is projected to increase to 56% in 2030 and 65% in 2050 (UN, 2012).

With 80% of the Philippines' GDP coming from urban centers or cities, the country's growing population will continue to gravitate to these areas for income and livelihoods, access to services, and growth opportunities. This urbanization trend in the Philippines should be taken into account when planning and developing human settlements. The sites/location, the form, the function, and the comprehensive spatial structure of urban areas are threads that weave resilience in human settlements. Considering this, resilience thinking from the human settlements scale will be a catalyst for sustainable urban development in the Philippines.

### *The Framework Strategy should promote a systems approach with a focus on the most vulnerable while ushering wider socio-economic benefit for all*

The practice of resilience building following disaster events and in adapting to climate change strongly suggest “systems thinking and approach” to increase the effectiveness of actions and build a more robust future. As human settlements are part of a complex system, the Framework

Strategy can outline a systems approach that illustrates the interrelationships between community wellbeing and local drivers of risk; national and global trends that contribute to uncertainty; and the influence of the governance environment. Its purpose is to aid practical analysis in order to identify key issues and priorities to be addressed in order to strengthen resilience (Pasteur, K., and McQuistan, C. 2016).

Although natural disasters are harmful to all, especially in systemic disruptions, their massive impact falls on the poor and vulnerable ones (Laframboise and Boileau, 2012). The poor and the most vulnerable families in any settlement always have the least capacity to cope and recover from the impacts of hazards and threats. The Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements, consistent with the Philippine Development Plan and the Statement of Policies of RA11201, must endeavor to have a systems approach to resilience that specifically targets *to provide opportunities for an improved quality of life and the eradication of poverty.*

*The Framework Strategy could Target Results derived from a Theory of Change anchored on global goals, national development priorities, and local realities*

Resilience building has been central to recent international agreements like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Climate Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda. Since the roll-out of Agenda 21 from Earth Summit in 1992, nations and the global community has acknowledged that it is important for the *overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor (UN Agenda 21, Section 1 Chapter 7).* The inclusion of a specific agenda for cities and human settlements in the 2030 Agenda is a resounding testament of how vital they are in the pursuit of sustainable development. SDG Goal 11 that seeks to “**make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable**” has 10 targets and 15 indicators. These global targets and indicators, along with the priorities of the Philippine

Development Plan, could very well be the entry points in developing the Theory of Change (ToC) for the Framework Strategy.

Initiating the development of a Theory of Change (ToC) for human settlements resilience could likewise use the broader National Urban Development and Housing Framework (NUDHF) and the Philippine New Urban Agenda (P-NUA). The NUDHF and P-NUA, developed in consultation with stakeholders within and outside the government, already present key principles and general directions that could be considered in the ToC. A ToC can help define the roadmap of actions in building resilient human settlements guided by the long term goal and vision of settlements development. As a planning process and tool for the development of the Framework Strategy, a ToC will help ensure to have systems and not projectized-thinking. Further, a ToC developed with stakeholders will be well suited to complex, multifaceted and long-term issues like resilience of humans settlements as it helps focus on the question “how do I make change happen?” rather than “what should my project do?” (Pringle, P. and Thomas A., 2019).

### *Horizontal and Vertical Coordination is an Essential Requirement in developing the Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements*

The Initiatory Meeting organized by DHSUD and OCD in January 2020 towards the development of a Framework Strategy for Resilient Human Settlements had several other government departments and offices in attendance at the meeting. The event concluded that while most, if not all of them, are actually implementing actions that contribute to building resilient human settlements, there is a need for stronger cooperation and aligned targets to usher in the sustainability of the actions and capture the learnings from all the initiatives. The group has also noted the need to engage with civil society organizations as well as the academe in developing a roadmap for human settlement resilience, acknowledging their experiences in working with communities and LGUs.

While the above captures the horizontal and vertical linkages required in the context of organizations, horizontal integration – across political boundaries- should also be promoted and ensured in the Framework Strategy because hazards do not respect administrative boundaries. Local realities hence have to inform the Framework Strategy as impacts of hazards are different for each area often dictated by the unique geographic and socio-economic conditions of localities. The Framework Strategy must therefore acknowledge that resilience-building against hazards would always be locality-specific and as such the standards and guidelines to support the Framework Strategy should focus on introducing robustness and flexibility rather than lock-in human settlements into static conditions.

Making the Framework Strategy robust can create avenues for paradigm shifts in settlements planning and development as well as enable transformations that might be required given the increasing intensity and magnitude of negative impacts. It should be expected that the local implementation of the Framework Strategy will never be homogenous – it will not be “One-size fits All.” DHSUD can look at this as an opportunity to harness and support LGU ingenuity and realities in planning and designing settlements anchored on local physical, natural, economic realms.

***Private Sector participation and engagement to resilient human settlements is no longer business-as-usual***

Section 2 RA 11201 specifically notes the importance of government’s continued cooperation and partnership with the private sector in undertaking a continuing program of housing and urban development. The Law mentioned the private sector engagement specifically for socialized housing provision. The Framework Strategy could expand this provision in the Law and make the private sector engagement to be broader in view of resilient human settlements – their inputs, while crucial for socialized housing, can further be maximized to address the other elements of the urban system such as settlement connectivity, water-sensitive designs, and renewable energy installation for small settlements.

Moreover, understanding and identifying a broader range of private sector groups that can actively contribute to human settlements resilience building in addition to the traditional housing development actors could be part of the focus in the development of the ToC for the Framework Strategy. For example, private sector groups engaged in information and technology can be tapped for inputs to make smart systems for water catchment, early warnings, temperature controls, and even community disease surveillance. Such inputs can provide innovations to the current practices used in human settlements and communities.

Private sector investments in resilience-building is beneficial to their business as they too are affected and not spared when disaster strikes. Investing in resilience makes good business sense. It is perceived that private sector has the advantage of having the resources and capacity to gather data, learn, adjust, and innovate for their business models. The Framework Strategy can give way to more collaboration with the private sector on knowledge sharing and technology development specifically to support the adaptation and transformation needed by human settlements faced with risks and threats.

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This Policy Brief only presented a few basic considerations for the development of a Framework Strategy on Resilient Human Settlements in the Philippines. DHSUD and other agencies could further elaborate this by having follow-up activities to the Initiatory Meeting organized by the EPLUB and the Planning Division of OCD. Expanding the participation from the donor community, CSOs, POs, the private sector, and the academe will help the Department kick-start the consultative process and begin capturing inputs and insights to commence the Framework Strategy development process.