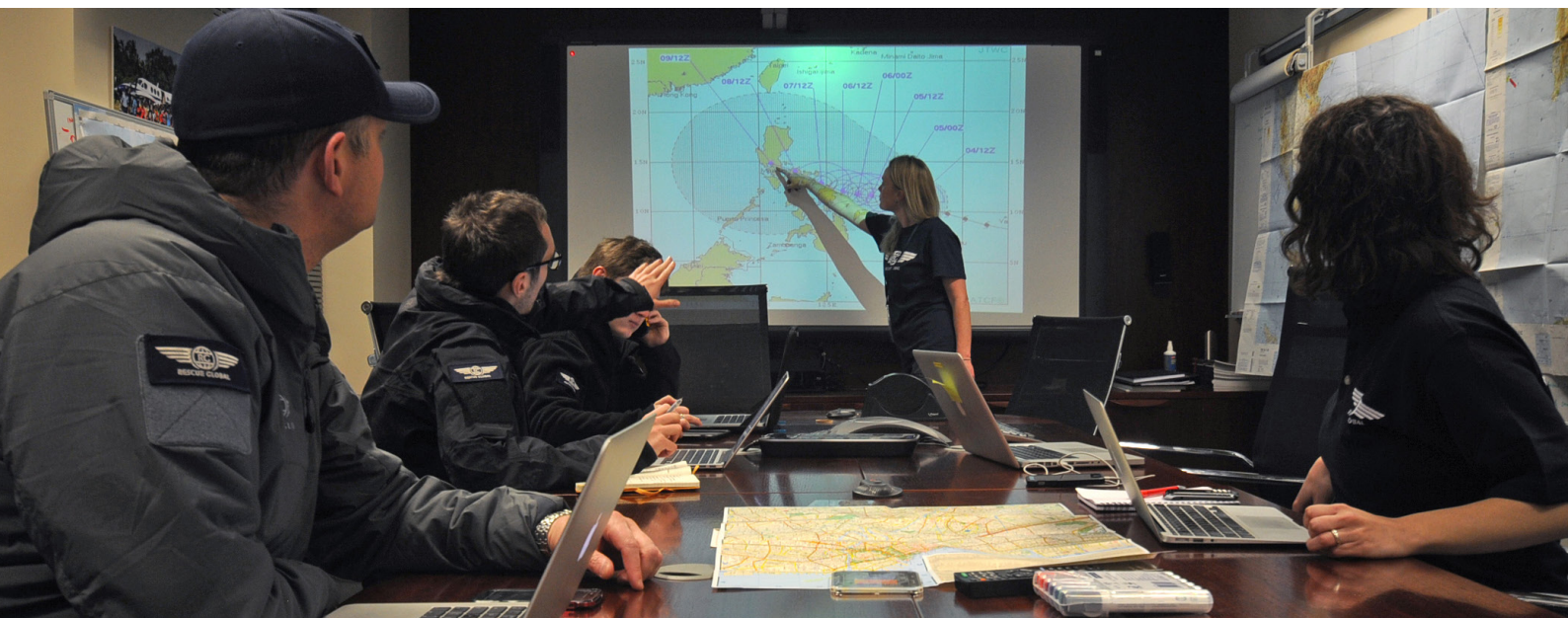


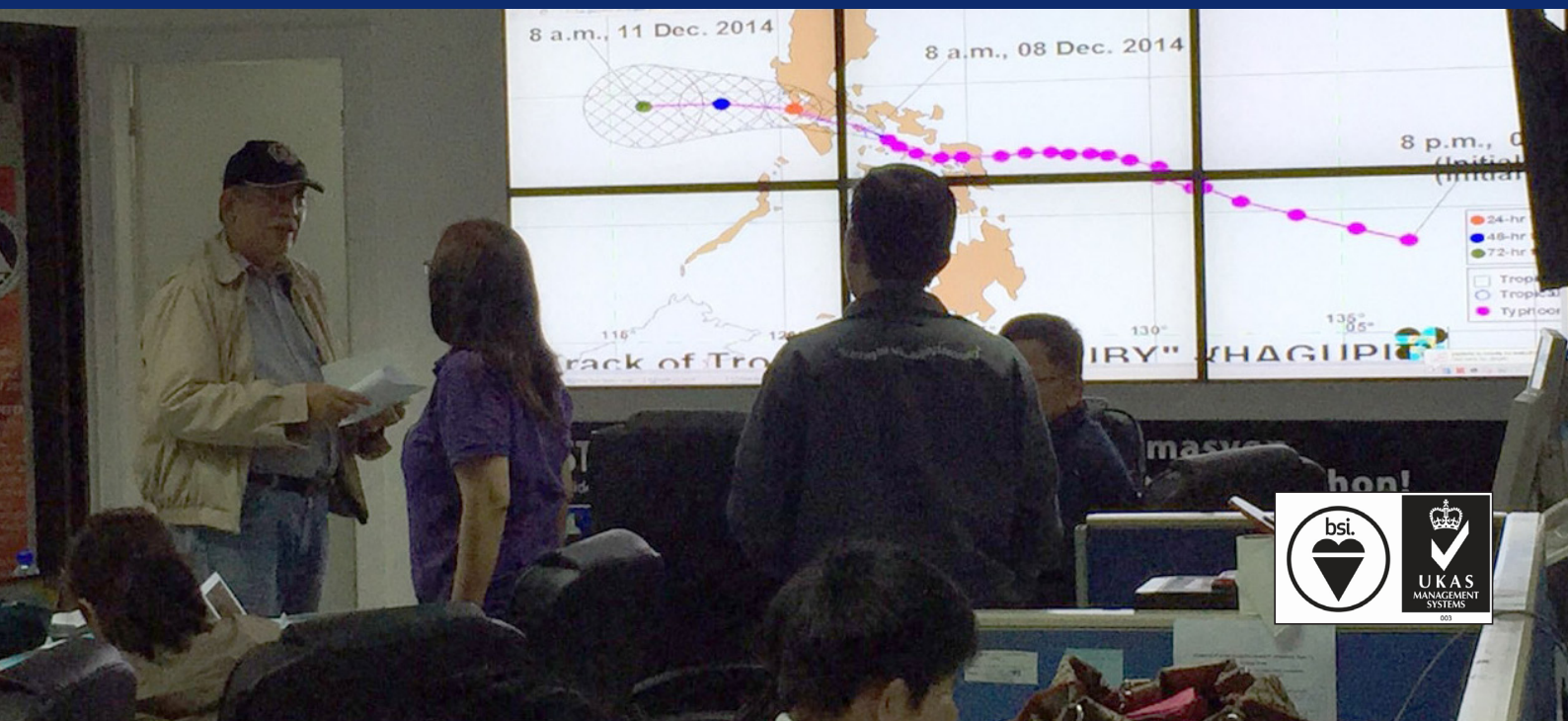


**RESCUE GLOBAL**

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & RESPONSE**



# OPERATION ARETE REPORT 12 / 2014



# OPERATION ARETE: BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

In late November 2014, one year after Super-Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) hit the Philippines, the Pacific Disaster Center and other global weather agencies began tracking a tropical depression gathering strength in the Pacific Ocean.

Though the Philippines regularly deals with severe weather systems, memories of the devastation caused by Yolanda in 2013 meant that the Philippine government, population and the international community were on high alert as the storm, named Typhoon Ruby by the Philippine Government, moved towards Eastern Samar province.

Unpredictable, slow-moving and dangerous, it finally made landfall on the evening of December 6th as a weakening Category 3 storm.

Owing to the uncertainty among weather agencies about the likely path and strength of the storm, as well as our commitment to long-term capacity building in the Philippines, Rescue Global offered to send a team to Manila to assess the requirements of the situation and determine what assistance might be appropriate as events unfolded.

We were then invited to attend by the Philippines government National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). The mission, named Operation Arete (meaning “excellence” in Ancient Greek), forms part of Rescue Global’s ongoing work with the Philippine government and our Crisis and Disaster Resilience Alliance (CaDRA).



# CONTENTS

4. Headquarters
4. Partnerships
5. Manila Pre-deployment
5. Manila Deployment
6. Activity in Manila
8. Reflections on the response
10. Crisis and Disaster Resilience Alliance (CaDRA)
12. Operation Balanga
14. Conclusion

# HEADQUARTERS

When Rescue Global has a team out responding to a disaster, our Headquarters operations play a very important role. We support the field-based team around the clock, tracking them to ensure their safety and to be able to respond to any support needs they have, and maintaining communications channels with them. Our Headquarters team also monitors multiple information sources, including social media and specialist channels.

Our Headquarters team also provides expert liaison and analysis to external partners, including governments, militaries, the private sector, other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the academic community.

Before a team deploys, the pre-deployment activities at our Headquarters ensure that the team is fully briefed, equipped and supported for the conditions and situation they are going in to.



Operations at Rescue Global Headquarters

# PARTNERSHIPS

Our partners support us in our critical work to save lives. Working in partnership with different sectors, from a multinational corporation to a grassroots NGO, enables a holistic approach to tackling the disaster cycle, from the response and recovery phases, through to the strategic resilience planning and capacity-building phases. At Rescue Global we proactively seek partnerships across difference sectors, with local, national and international entities, in order to achieve this systematic approach, and we coordinate this through our Crisis and Disaster Resilience Alliance (CaDRA).

Collaboration and partnership achieves a force-multiplier effect, with each organisation bringing unique skills and resources, and the ability to achieve a positive effect across different phases of the disaster cycle.

Rescue Global brings to partnerships a high degree of professionalism and world-class governance and transparency, as demonstrated by our ISO 9001 accreditation. We work to the highest levels of skills and expertise in our missions, using cutting-edge innovation and technology to maximise our effectiveness when and where it matters most.



## MANILA PRE-DEPLOYMENT

Our pre-deployment planning procedures enable us to understand and make decisions on:

1. What the requirements of the situation are likely to be.
2. What risks are likely to arise and how to mitigate them.
3. What resources Rescue Global can offer that would be beneficial to the management of the situation, helping determine:
  - The mission objectives.
  - The composition of the deployed team.
  - The equipment likely to be required.
  - The partners to contact.

During disaster response Rescue Global typically works directly with the government of the nation affected by the disaster, in this case with Under Secretary Admiral Pama of the NDRRMC.

This strategic collaboration ensures that the intent and implementation of our deployment is aligned to that of the affected nation, and is core to our approach to disaster planning and capacity-building.

## MANILA DEPLOYMENT

On December 6th a Theatre Reconnaissance Group (TRG) deployed to the Philippines.

On arrival they met with Major General Romeo Poquiz, Rescue Global's local representative in Manila and a veteran of 37 years' experience in the Philippine Air Force. Major General Poquiz had set up the key civil-military contact points, tying in with government departments and local partners, to ensure that Rescue Global could contribute and support immediately.

The main objectives of Operation Arete were to:

1. Monitor the response to the storm, focusing on the government response led by the NDRRMC: monitoring Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) such as utilities, as well as the response by local Disaster Risk Management offices and other relevant departments.
2. Assist in the coordination of international and local response NGOs, should it be required, as well as assessing the contribution of the private sector, working to ensure that deployments match need and that they are aligned with the intent of the Philippine Government.

Beyond these specific aims, the deployment contributed to the ongoing development of the CaDRA initiative in the Philippines. This seeks to inform and empower mid to long-term planning and disaster mitigation, and capacity-building, as well as making immediate response more effective by involving and coordinating the following sectors: Government, Military, NGOs, Private Sector and Academia.



NDRRMC command centre

## ACTIVITY IN MANILA

Acting on the experience gained during Typhoon Yolanda, the Philippine government was keen to stress that offers of international response, while gratefully received, were not required for this emergency, emphasising too that any such offers were to go through the Department of Foreign Affairs and the NDRRMC to ensure an efficient disaster management system.\* Rescue Global actively supported this position throughout our deployment, by contacting our CaDRA partners to ensure that no self-mobilisations occurred without the appropriate protocols being followed.

The storm continued to weaken after passing through Eastern Samar, making landfall twice more as it crossed the country. By the time it reached Manila, Typhoon Ruby had been downgraded to a tropical depression. A number of the cities most devastated by Typhoon Yolanda, such as Tacloban, escaped with relatively minimal damage, but large scale evacuations across the areas served as an indication that the Government had taken the threat seriously and been proactive about preparing for the impacts.

*\*The World Disasters Report 2015 will be emphasising this trend of nations impacted by disasters demanding that they retain their sovereignty when an international response is needed.*



NDRRMC Command Centre



Philippines media at the NDRRMC

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & RESPONSE

## REFLECTIONS ON THE RESPONSE

Speaking at the time, Under Secretary Pama noted that he felt the preparations, including the large-scale evacuation of those at risk, were key to having achieved relatively low casualty rates. Nonetheless, both he and Colonel Edwin Sadang from the Office of Civil Defence (OCD) were quick to highlight aspects of the system that still require improvement, including:

- Setting up and maintaining reliable communications in the hardest hit regions.
- Establishing a more effective method and means for storing, organising and disseminating the wealth of information that surfaces when communications are restored.
- Clarifying and regulating the process of international involvement in response to natural hazard events.

- Strengthening the capacity of Local Government Units (LGUs) to manage these events more effectively at the sub-national level.

The NDRRMC has set up a needs registry: a database of resources and expertise required for improving preparation and response, accessible to humanitarian actors. Registration is how international actors are encouraged to get involved in the case of a future calamity. Alternatively, external actors may partner with the most appropriate cluster group or the OCD, having clarified specifically what resources or expertise they can contribute.

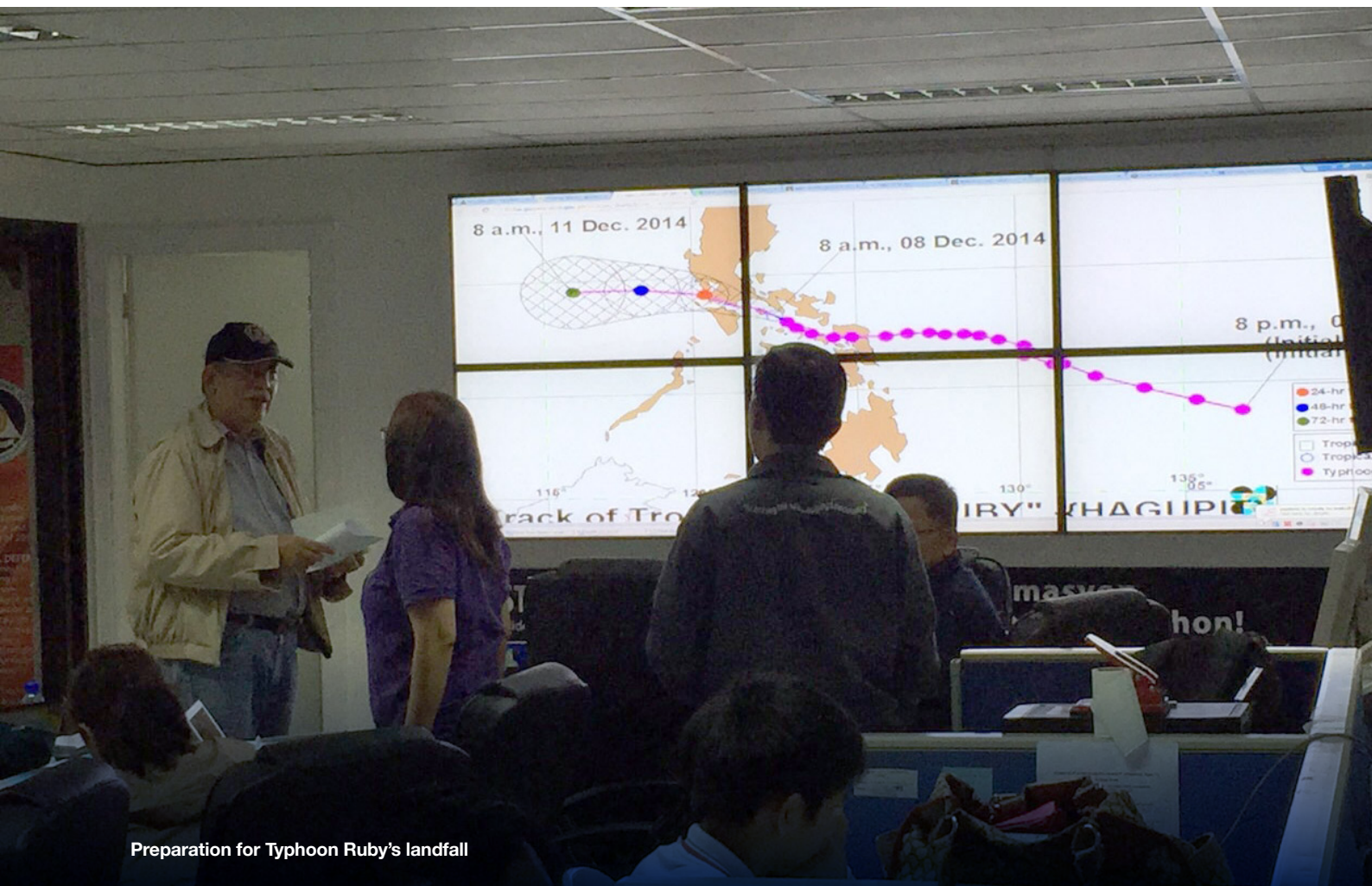


NDRRMC Operations Centre and leadership





Disaster risk reduction partnership development



Preparation for Typhoon Ruby's landfall

# DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & RESPONSE

## CRISIS AND DISASTER RESILIENCE ALLIANCE

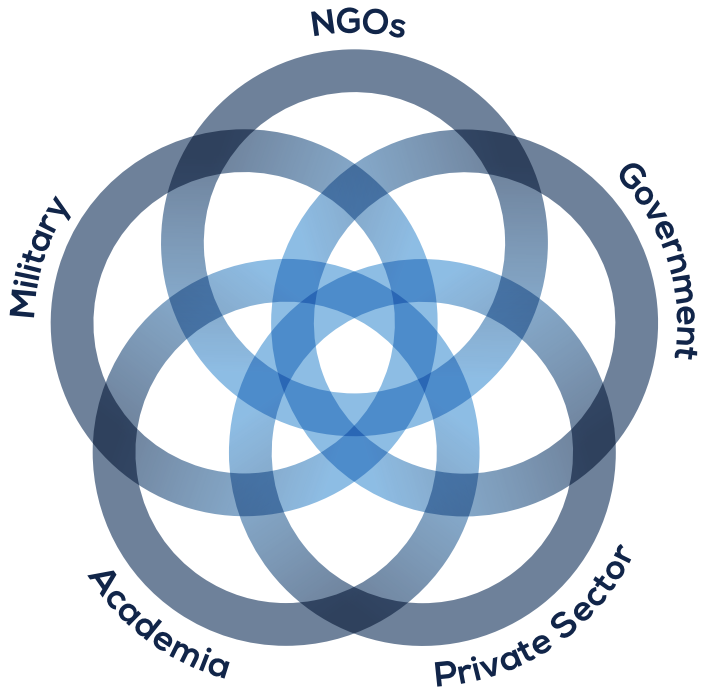
# CaDRA

The Rescue Global team met with representatives from a number of other government agencies engaged in resilience building, including the Depts of Foreign Affairs, Health, Science and Technology, Agriculture and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the national forecasting centre. Meetings were held with members of the Philippine Senate in order to discuss and advise on new disaster risk reduction legislation currently being drafted. Finally, our team met with senior leaders in the private sector, to plan and champion inter-agency and inter-sector collaboration on disaster response and resilience.

Thanks in part to the respectful approach taken by Rescue Global during the response to Typhoon Yolanda,

our team had the opportunity this time around to gain a deeper understanding of the way the NDRRMC deals with disaster events. Maintaining a presence at the Camp Aguinaldo HQ during the management of Typhoon Ruby, plus the knowledge gained through the meetings mentioned above, helped us ascertain where and how Rescue Global can assist, and which of the members of CaDRA are best placed to contribute to resilience building as the national disaster strategy develops.

Rescue Global is very grateful to the representatives from the various organisations with whom we engaged in the Philippines. The access we have been afforded has, we hope, been mutually beneficial and it is very exciting to be forging such close relationships across the relevant sectors.



### WHAT IS CaDRA?

CaDRA stands for Crisis and Disaster Resilience Alliance. It is not an organisation in itself. It represents an international initiative operated by Rescue Global, comprising a network of organisations governed by a small secretariat. All work together to increase nations' resilience to the impacts of disasters, with the consent and support of the national government, usually through their National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

### HOW DOES CaDRA PROMOTE RESILIENCE?

By undertaking work within all stages of the disaster cycle (Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery) CaDRA member organisations facilitate a shift away from the traditional focus on the Response element. Member organisations undertake joint planning, training and exercises as well as cooperating in the aftermath of an event, promoting a more systematic and integrated culture of Disaster Risk Reduction and Response.

### WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

The term resilience is derived from ecology and refers to the capacity of a system to absorb the effects of disturbances whilst continuing to maintain its vital functions. In more recent usage it has been applied to the ability of societies to deal with the effects of hazards such as earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes and industrial catastrophes.

### WHAT TYPES OF ORGANISATION TAKE PART IN CaDRA?

- Members of CaDRA are drawn from five sectors, which are:
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
  - Academia and research organisations
  - Governments and Official Agencies
  - The Private Sector (business)
  - The Military

Typically, members commit to providing a pre-agreed resource in the event of a hazard impact, such as a hurricane, earthquake or man made disaster. This pre-determined attendance allows the mechanisms of Disaster Response to run more smoothly and quickly, reducing the amount of time it takes to reach the most urgent situations and limiting any prolonged damage that the affected communities sustain.

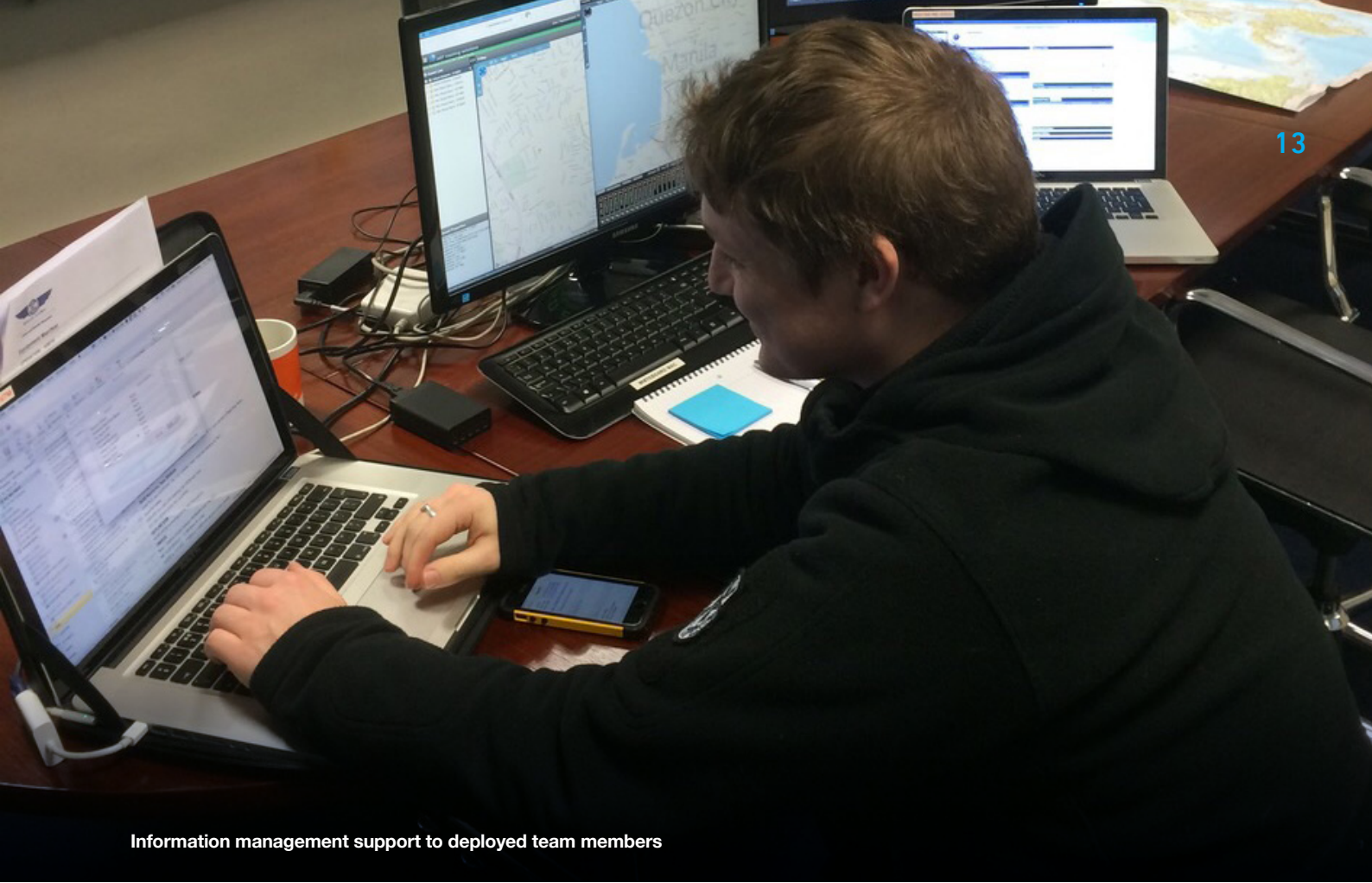
# OPERATION BALANGA

The Rescue Global Pathfinder team was invited to audit an evacuation of the city of Balanga that had been implemented prior to Typhoon Ruby making landfall. The trip also served as an opportunity to test some of the equipment, such as personnel trackers, robust video feed equipment and a situational awareness platform that Rescue Global is developing in partnership with Inca-X and the Orchid Project. Accompanied by evacuation plan engineer Gang Badoy, Rescue Global Pathfinders Daniel and Simon were met with a warm welcome by Mayor Joet Garcia and members of the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO).

As had been the case with NDRRMC representatives, the team was impressed by the Mayor's openness and critical reflections on the plan's effectiveness, despite what was ostensibly a well-enacted operation. Prior to Typhoon Ruby, the biggest challenge for city officials had been motivating people to move to designated safe zones and evacuation centres, with many residents displaying the attitude of, 'if we are not safe in our homes, we are not safe anywhere'. In this instance however, the evacuation target of 600 people in the most vulnerable areas of the city was met, with residents diligently following instructions given through a multi-channel warning system. The system consists of alarms, social media updates, and barangay (district) based radio networks, amongst other channels designed to make unofficial word-of-mouth transmission as accurate as possible. 135 responders were mobilised as part of the response to severe weather warnings.

The audit team concluded that the success of the plan was two-pronged. Firstly, the proactive running of evacuation drills throughout the time since the plan was formed appeared to have educated and prepared the public adequately. Secondly, the lingering fear and trauma of the Philippine population in the wake of Super-typhoon Yolanda likely heightened residents' perception of the danger. Overall however, Balanga's evacuation plan and implementation seems to represent an encouraging example of grassroots disaster risk reduction to compliment the strategies implemented at national level. The challenge now will likely be to achieve consistency across the regions and to strengthen the communications networks that underpin the system as a whole.





Information management support to deployed team members



Operations planning at Headquarters

# DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & RESPONSE

# CONCLUSION

Our primary objective is to work ourselves out of a reason for existing. Deploying to the Philippines during Typhoon Ruby allowed Rescue Global to make considerable progress in our stated mission of saving lives by empowering others, striving towards a future in which countries have real resilience and are able to respond to and recover from disasters without the need for international assistance where possible.

Until this objective is achieved, Rescue Global provides, at no charge to any nation, the most professional disaster response service possible, managed with the rigour and oversight of an efficient government-run emergency service. Operation Arete gave us the opportunity to monitor, mentor, observe and collaborate with our partners in the Philippines working on Disaster Risk Reduction and Response, at the strategic and tactical levels in a real world event.

Rescue Global champions sovereignty, self determination and real learning from the lessons of the past as well as the present, in a positive cycle of continuous improvement. Operation Arete enabled us to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the Philippines national disaster management processes by monitoring and consulting with NDRRMC, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, as well as a host of national and local officials, NGOs, Academic, Private and Public sector groups.
- Build upon the relationships that were initiated during our deployment after Typhoon Yolanda (Operation Phoenix) and subsequent follow-up visits throughout 2014. In addition, we identified areas for more developed collaboration as we register Rescue Global Philippines, a locally based NGO supported by our UK HQ, run by the Rescue Global Philippines Country Manager, General Romeo Poquiz.
- Assess the local context for furthering CaDRA in the Philippines, identifying and engaging key figures and organisations across the five sectors.

Rescue Global has a strong rapport with the Philippine Government and the NDRRMC. This is key when seeking to contribute effectively to the disaster risk reduction and response processes in this country. Rescue Global is committed to working in close cooperation, standing shoulder to shoulder with the appropriate agencies and actors in the Philippines, as well as the Asia Pacific region in general, now and for the foreseeable future.



Operations planning at Headquarters

# ABOUT RESCUE GLOBAL

Rescue Global is a UK non-profit, a US 501(c)(3) nonprofit and an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO).

## **Our mission is to: Save Lives.**

We do this by empowering decision makers at the nation state level, working in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Response environment. We also conduct Liaison, Mentoring and Disaster Reconnaissance missions during the critical response phase, to disaster worldwide.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Aligned with our core mission: To Save Lives, a great amount of our time and resources are focused on Disaster Risk Reduction activities.

Conducting risk assessments, capability analysis, reviews, research, education and training, we work to build capacity and foster resilience worldwide.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

As part of our commitment of: To Save Lives, through our work in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Response life cycle, Rescue Global takes part in and commissions projects whose aims are to research, develop and test methods, technologies and practices in the most realistic ways possible.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

Rescue Global empowers decision makers with expert guidance, support and additional capabilities in times of need, in order to save lives. We support complex disaster response command and control operations in direct to support to nations impacted by disasters, as well as providing a reconnaissance and assessment capability in order to gather vital information which might otherwise be difficult or impossible to gather.

If you would like to learn more about the Disaster Risk Reduction and Response activities of Rescue Global, or to find out how you can assist us through partnering or volunteering, please visit:

[www.rescueglobal.org](http://www.rescueglobal.org)

 [@rescueglobal](https://twitter.com/rescueglobal)

