



Case Study 20

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Strategic Planning

A Comprehensive Plan for More Focused Initiatives

Clarity in an organisation's direction and activities can only be achieved with a long-term strategic plan. Unfortunately for the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority

(NAMRIA), such a plan had not existed before the Government of Australia through PAHRODF intervened.

In contrast, NAMRIA has now undergone various PAHRODF-initiated interventions since 2007, including a 2010 intervention that helped the agency obtain an International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) certification for mapping and special information in 2012. It was not until 2011, however, that findings from the organisational assessment conducted by PAHRODF revealed that NAMRIA still lacked a long-term strategic plan and needed to determine the role of human resources in its management plan.

The ISO certification neatly tucked under NAMRIA's belt actually propelled the agency to pursue interventions all the more, including one for strategic planning. The plan was crafted over a six-month period in 2013 and helped define NAMRIA's mission, vision and strategy. "As part of our continuous improvement, we need to be guided by a strategic plan as we implement our projects, programmes and activities, year after year," Efren Carandang, NAMRIA's deputy administrator, shares.

Carandang cites that fortunately, NAMRIA has been very open to interventions and their positive experiences with PAHRODF and the Learning Service Providers (LSPs) seem to have encouraged them even more. "We have very good experience with PAHRODF. Their consultants are generous and accommodating. PAHRODF is very flexible. We actually had some instances where we had to change the plan along the way and they accommodated these changes. The LSPs are excellent. They are experts in their own fields," he happily notes.

As the central mapping and resource information agency of the national government, the role of NAMRIA is quite critical - providing mapping services to both government agencies and the general public. Charged not only with the management of geospatial information, NAMRIA also oversees the geospatial or map holdings of other government agencies. "We assist the national government in the delineation and limitation of territories, and provide the basic reference for all mapping activities in the country," he narrates. They are currently in the process of compiling everything so this can be uploaded to a geoportal site that can be accessed by everyone.

Until the establishment of NAMRIA in the 1980s, there was no centralised mapping agency in the country. Various Local Government Units (LGUs) had their own mapping services, as did other government agencies such as the Physical Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PhiVolcs). This resulted in chaos as overlapping jurisdictions and inaccuracies hampered government efforts especially on disaster preparedness. Now that NAMRIA is in the picture to consolidate all these maps, confusion about location-based decisions and details has become a thing of the past.

Holistic initiatives

Carandang relates that his Re-entry Action Plan (REAP), meant to ensure that learnings from the intervention on strategic planning, is focused on implementing the 12-point programme of NAMRIA's long-term strategic plan. In broad strokes, these initiatives are geared towards responding to the needs of the times, the requirements of the national and local governments, as well as those of the general public. This is very much in line with the agency's vision of

having a geospatially empowered Philippines by 2020. "This means that government, business, and the people, will be using geospatial or map information in making decisions in the conduct of their day-to-day activities," he explains.

To further stress the importance of NAMRIA's role and the relevance of these maps, Carandang shares the all-too often forgotten fact that 80 percent of decisions made by government, businesses, and even ordinary people are location-based. As he puts it, "The more location information people have, the better decisions they make. Even simple things like planning where to go and how to get there are made easier if you have the right map. The more detailed, the better the decision."

Thankfully, with a strategic plan now in place, everything is proceeding quite systematically. Unlike in the past, all activities contained in the plan are now incorporated in NAMRIA's annual budget proposals. "Everything is guided now. Unlike before when we just crafted our plans from year to year, right now it's a long term plan," Carandang relates. Fortunately, the agency is getting financial support from the administration and is being allocated the budget it requires to proceed with its plans.

To add to this, NAMRIA's approach has also become more holistic, incorporating the elements of the strategic plan in the other organisational developmental interventions now being implemented. "We have our strategic performance management system. We have our competency-based system for recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, etc. [These are] also part of the implementation of our continuous improvement based on our ISO certification," he shares.

Significantly, NAMRIA has also begun to take their stakeholders' plans into account before making decisions. "We do a lot of consultation and interaction with other government agencies about their future needs," he says. If they used to plan projects before without even consulting their end users, the customers – government agencies and the private sector – are now very much a part of the process. He recounts how well-received this initiative has been by the stakeholders. "During the closing of our strategic plan process, we invited our stakeholders and we presented the output. The reaction was very positive. They had a better understanding of the agency. And well, in a sense they had higher expectations from us because they now know what we can do for them," Carandang says.

To this end, perhaps the most important outcome achieved by the intervention is on national initiatives, especially in relation to disaster management. "Our role is to provide support and the tools to make better decisions. That is very important," he declares. Dealing closely with other government agencies such as PhiVolcs, PAGASA, and the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation has helped NAMRIA produce relevant data on the maps that these agencies need, particularly in priority areas. "With detailed maps, you can make detailed plans. And that goes as well for local government units, especially in terms of their national preparedness plans," he stresses.

Commitment and motivation

For Carandang, time, budget and getting their middle managers in the loop have been the greatest challenges in the implementation of the action plan. "We're doing a lot of things, undergoing a lot of interventions. So everything is going on at the same time," he shares. Likewise, the agency has had to shell out some funds for logistical support to implement

different projects because not everything can be shouldered by PAHRODF. With their middle managers, he says that they have had to patiently explain how everything gels together and what their roles are.

For him, all these have exacted even more commitment – in time, effort, and even in enthusiasm. The ISO certification, in fact, has proven to be a powerful motivation for the organisation as it is a testament to their efforts. "They know and accept it as part of the continuing improvement of our services," he shares.

Carandang is pleased to note that the fruits of their strategic planning intervention is now becoming more evident within NAMRIA and in their output. "We have a well-motivated and well-informed workforce. They know their goals, the direction that we are taking. If we consult our stakeholders, they expect the result will be products and services that will cater to the actual needs of the stakeholders and not merely what we perceived for them. We have a clearer picture," he proudly declares.

He shares that NAMRIA has always envisioned being able to deliver timely, relevant, quality land and sea maps, including related geospatial services, while effectively and efficiently managing their internal resources. "This is to support the full socio-economic-environmental and developmental activities of all sectors," he says. Carandang admits, though, that while this had always been the intention, this was never fully realised since they lacked a comprehensive plan. In fact, it was only with the help of the interventions that their plan was concretised.

As a result, he only hopes that PAHRODF can continue on. Addressing the Facility, he says, "We are fully satisfied with the help that we received from [PA]HRODF. To [PA]HRODF, thank you

very much for all the help that you have been giving to our agency. You have done a lot for us, and we would be very happy to still be engaged in your activities in the coming years.”

Efren Carandang, Deputy Administrator, was one of the participants for the HR/OD Intervention on Strategic Planning in NAMRIA.