



Case Study 29

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Obtaining Objectives with Strategic Planning

Activity-Based vs. Results-Based

Richel de Mesa, Administrative Officer V at the Planning Section, Finance and Administrative Division of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS), is aware of the importance of strategic planning for an organization to see where it is going. It is a guide for

the employees at all levels to know their responsibilities and a road map to direct the organisation on how to plan activities that help attain its objectives. She stresses, “One of the objectives we wanted to achieve was for all the staff in PHIVOLCS to see how they fit in the big picture and how they contribute to the attainment of the vision of PHIVOLCS.”

Before 2011, the planning process in PHIVOLCS did not seem to have a clear direction. Divisions would submit project proposals for the year and these would be discussed during the annual planning conference to determine which projects would be prioritised. However, De Mesa expresses disappointment that reports submitted at the end of each period are activity-based and not results-based. The reports only contain details on the activities and not on their impact to the organisation. She explains, “During the collection of outputs at the end of the year, the project leaders are not focused on reporting the accomplishments. They are more concerned with reporting activities.”

Because she was with the planning section, De Mesa wanted “to collect the results of the projects.” Personally, she also wanted to develop her skills in planning as she hoped to be instrumental in leading and guiding her division as well as other divisions in the development of their plans.

Timely interventions

In 2010, their Director started enhancing the planning process by conducting pre-planning conferences where the strategic directions for the agency were discussed. The objective of the session was to align projects with the strategic directions of the organisation.

It was very timely when PAHRODF came in 2011 to conduct an organisational assessment of PHIVOLCS. The assessment determined that PHIVOLCS needed to further improve its strategic planning systems and practices.

Participated by the PHIVOLCS Director, Division Heads, Senior Staff, and Ms. De Mesa, the strategic planning intervention took place in April to July 2012. In the course of the intervention, PHIVOLCS developed a Strategic Plan for 2012 to 2016. De Mesa explains in detail, “The intervention also included the translation of the strategic plan into operations plans, division performance plans, and individual performance plans.” The intervention introduced the organisation to results-based management which, for her, was “a significant reform in the way things are managed in PHIVOLCS.”

The intervention started with an interview of stakeholders, including the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology, representatives from nongovernment organizations involved in disaster preparedness, local government units, and the media. Analysis of interview results served as guide for the Strategic Plan, which identified two organisational outcomes. One outcome was externally focused – the technical work of the organisation with communities, partners, and clients. The other outcome targeted internal affairs of PHIVOLCS including finance and administration.

Cascading the strategic plans to all

It was a group decision to make the REAP focus on disseminating the Strategic Plan to all PHIVOLCS staff. De Mesa and the participants realised that the organisation’s objectives cannot be attained if they are the only ones aware of the plans and directions. De Mesa emphasises,

“The strategic plan will not be successful if it is just us who know about the plan, so it must be communicated to the entire organisation.” Implementation of the REAP started in December 2012, three months after the intervention, and covered the first batch of PHIVOLCS staff. The second batch took place in February 2013. Everything that was done and learned from the intervention was repeated and cascaded to the staff – from the learning activities to the presentations and even lecture materials. The REAP also indicated that everyone in the organisation had to make their individual performance plans. De Mesa sees this as a way for each employee to identify how one fits into the larger picture and how one can contribute to the attainment of organisational objectives.

From then on, everyone learned how to prepare their individual performance plans and Ms. De Mesa notes that the practice is now done every year. She further explains, “We actually built on it. We developed it and it is now used as part of the results-based performance management system which is the second PAHRODF intervention.”

Impact and learnings

There were challenges during the implementation of De Mesa’s REAP. Even if everyone was receptive to the strategic plan all the way down to the individual performance plan, the change in the culture and system of performing their tasks required constant coaching. “I think the challenge was the shift. People were used to doing or reporting things based on activities, and they found it challenging to shift to results-based reporting,” she explains. With constant reminders on how to present their outputs, things eventually fell into place.

De Mesa reiterates that the shift in the perspective of her colleagues has turned PHIVOLCS into a more organic unit. She notes, “We now feel that we are part of the organisational goal. We can now clearly see how we are contributing.” She cites that during the strategic planning intervention, PHIVOLCS Senior Management emphasised the importance of the Finance and Administrative Division’s support to the technical divisions for the latter to be able to accomplish their tasks.

In putting into practice what she has learned from the intervention and in accomplishing her REAP, De Mesa did not face the challenge of budgetary constraints or the lack of support from Senior Management. Other scholars were also as lucky. In fact, the individual schedules, including those of field station staff, were adjusted to allow them to prioritise the implementation of their REAPs and attend the sessions. The guidance and support from the Directors were cited as a contributing factor to the success of the REAPs and the development of the strategic plans.

De Mesa acknowledges the significant contribution of PAHRODF to their organisation as reflected in the positive outcomes resulting from the interventions. She hopes too that they will continue to receive assistance from the Facility. De Mesa also praised the Learning Service Providers (LSPs) for being knowledgeable and for imparting teachings through structured learning exercises. She further notes the assistance they received from the Facility and the LSPs in implementing and monitoring their REAPs.

Now in the middle of its five-year Strategic Plan, PHIVOLCS is taking initial steps to secure ISO certification by 2016. De Mesa concludes that the development of the strategic plan enabled her Division to identify their own strategic initiatives like the leadership and enhancement development program. Through activities like team building activities and 5S seminars – a workplace organisation method which includes the institution of good office housekeeping practices, De Mesa sees her Division contributing to the achievement of PHIVOLCS’ goal of being ISO-certified.

Richel de Mesa, Administrative Officer V - PHIVOLCS, was one of the participants HR/OD intervention on Strategic Planning for PHIVOLCS