



## Professional Satisfaction on the Rise

Angela G. Montes

Capacity-Building Specialist, GDAPD

Direct Beneficiary

PHIVOLCS – Strategic Planning

Sometimes, validation of the importance of one’s work happens gradually. But at times, it comes immediately and without warning— such as in the case of natural disasters.

In 2013, I had just finished facilitating a series of seminar-workshops on earthquake and tsunami awareness and preparedness in the coastal communities of Eastern Samar when an advisory about a tsunami in Southern America hit the news. Since the trench or the active

under-the-sea fault in that region is directly connected to the Philippines’, the threat of this distant tsunami caused alarm among the residents, and prompted them to activate their evacuation plan. This, even if the alert level warning from PHIVOLCS indicated that the incident did not call for an immediate evacuation. Maybe the learnings from the seminar were still fresh in the participants’ minds, or maybe images from the 2011 tsunami devastation in Japan struck fear into their hearts. It may even be a case of over-reaction, but then again, our alerts are recommendatory so it is really up to the local government unit (LGU) to decide on a course of action. Still, as a PHIVOLCS professional, I found that moment satisfying.

A Community Development major, I have been working at PHIVOLCS for the past eight years, building the capacities of its stakeholders towards disaster risk reduction (DRR). I work under the Geologic Disaster Awareness and Preparedness Division (GDAPD), which organises activities in partnership with LGUs, schools and communities nationwide. I usually handle lectures and seminar workshops for GDAPD. We also have Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) products which include exhibits, publications, videos, and CD packages. We translate, package, and disseminate scientific/technical concepts and terms into popular messages and formats.

When the Strategic Plan and the Results-Based Performance Management System (RBPMS) were operationalised, I became more conscious about the timing and scheduling of my work. I now give more consideration to the individual schedules of my team members. While work within the divisions became delineated, it also became more coordinated across teams and units. A new Communication section was formed at the GDAPD, and I also got to appreciate the functions of other team members.

Before, our efforts and direction used to be diffused. When one wanted to do a project, a project proposal was submitted, but this was not definite or anchored to a certain program. When the PHIVOLCS Strategic Plan was formulated, everybody was thinking, “Now, where do we anchor such and such projects?” Our work now is more focused and more anticipative because we the Strategic Plan has defined our path.

The best thing that happened as a result of the PAHRODF interventions was getting to really define the vision, mission, and goals (VMG) of PHIVOLCS. We did have a VMG, but not

everybody knew about it. When the Strategic Plan was cascaded to the ranks, everybody appreciated that we now have a shared institutional vision. It is good to know how you are contributing to the bigger plan or purpose, which used to be unclear. Now, you really feel that you belong.

In terms of planning and assessing our work, aside from the PHIVOLCS Operational Plan, we have a GDAPD-level plan. Based on these plans, I formulate my Individual Performance Plan (IPP), which outlines my job commitments, deliverables, and schedules. It used to be that when our work gets evaluated, we were simply asked to list down our activities. Parameters such as timeliness, efficiency, and quality were not taken into consideration. Now, with RBPMS, we have a defined set of parameters that is focused not only on quantity.

Aside from the welcome organisational changes within PHIVOLCS, my increasing professional satisfaction comes from my belief that we are doing our work effectively. With our monitoring and evaluation tools, we have evidence that we are able to convey messages that we want to put across and get people to act, as was in the aforementioned case of evacuation in Eastern Samar. It gladdens my heart since I work directly with the stakeholders, and I see or hear their positive evaluation—about how they now know how to read maps, how requests for PHIVOLCS input are increasing and becoming consistent, how grateful LGUs are for PHIVOLCS' support, how GDAPD's IEC output gets adapted and disseminated even without acknowledgment, and how, in certain areas, some people think of me as the go-to person in PHIVOLCS when it comes to disaster. I feel their openness, appreciation, and regard for my contributions to their communities.

So far, I could say that our work has become easier in the sense that our functions are now aligned; we are where we are supposed to be, doing what we are supposed to do. There is a palpable change in mood within PHIVOLCS because of the Strategic Plan and RBPMS. While we are still in the learning stage, we are excited about this new system.

There is still room for improvement on how we will craft the actual output that we want. The changes that were put in place still need to be fine-tuned. There are so many things that still need to be done to improve information delivery and I want to be a good contributor to such efforts. As the mother of two boys, ages 10 and five, it is a good thing that my work is not in hazard mapping or other fields that involve lengthy field work. The out-of-town seminars that I facilitate sometimes take three to five days, but once I was invited to a mapping activity that took 15 days. My firstborn was just four years old during that time. Women really make sacrifices to balance work and family.

In the future, I believe that PHIVOLCS will be more recognized as a leader or prime mover in DRR among our partner organisations and within the scientific community here and abroad. I am glad to belong to this organisation.