

Empowered Devolution: The COVID-19 Preparedness and Response System

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Executive Summary

The Local Government Code of 1991 allowed the Philippines to undergo a state of devolution. Through local government unit (LGU) autonomy provinces can adapt customized efforts. By using the Adapted Pandemic Interval Framework, LGUs can be guided to contextualize, prioritize programs and respond more efficiently. Coupled with simulation, LGUs can be better equipped and prepared to fight the pandemic. Simulation is a method of assessment that evaluates plan effectiveness and organizational robustness in crisis situations. This abridged handout provides resources for simulation and frameworks to facilitate preparation and response to the COVID situation across the Philippines. More information can be seen in the technical brief.

Recommendations

- **Adapt the CDC's Pandemic Interval Framework.** Using this will improve DOH's and LGU's pandemic surveillance and monitoring.
- **Tap the Field Epidemiology Training Program to strengthen health security.**
- **Create, Test, and Implement a preparedness and response plan.** Contextualize a plan based on the LGU's health response elements and system. Test this using simulation-based interventions.

Results & Discussion

I. CDC's Pandemic Interval Framework¹

- a. The current national alert system of the DOH doesn't consider the different provincial situations with regard to the outbreak.
- b. By adapting a devolved approach to the outbreak, resources can be better allocated by the national government according to each province's needs.
- c. The major recommendations from the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2018 assessment were commitment to advance implementation of international health regulation, a national plan for health security, strengthening monitoring and evaluation practices, detection and response and further optimize public health emergency preparedness and response action.

¹ See "Appendix for V112".

- d. Combined elements of the CDC framework, DOH system, and WHO recommendations result in Table 1 and Table 2².

II. The Importance of Simulation

- a. Simulation is an important step in health care system preparedness and response.
- b. Using the framework discussed, contextual action plans may be formulated based on the interval and corresponding actions listed.
- c. Table top simulations go through unexpected scenarios with each person carrying out their roles. Understanding what is expected of each scene, the degree of influence the players have and the structures in place will reveal the need for adaptation of procedures while taking stock of the resilience and robustness capacities of the organization. With each plan iteration repeated simulations are needed. Looking to standards or keeping up to date with regulation specifications assimilates others' experience in order to create reinforced plans.
- d. Links for tabletop simulation exercise:
 1. Pandemic preparedness exercise:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SEvpLrGo8KOKthZ3YJAQtL0-cBoh2sWw>
 2. Risk communication-specific:
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/emergency-risk-communication-training/pandemic-influenza-simulations.pdf?sfvrsn=3e8d9423_2

Recommendations

Policy

1. Use both CDC's Pandemic Interval Framework and DOH's Pandemic Alert system to aid in provincial COVID-19 surveillance and monitoring.
2. To use this framework, the following steps are given:
 - a. Situate the LGU in the framework according to its current context.
 - 1) Determine the number of cases the province currently has
 - 2) Determine travel history to establish whether the transmission is imported or local
 - 3) Depending on the above, identify the pandemic interval the province is in
 - b. Adapt the recommended actions listed under that particular interval.
 - 1) Under each interval, there are particular containment and mitigation measures recommended
 - 2) Depending on where the province situates itself, the actions differ but are appropriate for that current situation.
 - c. Prepare for the next interval by managing resources to effectively carry out the next steps should the outbreak progress further. The framework functions in a cyclical way, meaning that as the outbreak progresses, eventually it transitions into the next interval. Knowing this can allow the province to prepare for this eventual transition because the appropriate steps for the next interval are already available for them to refer to.
3. Tap the Field Epidemiology Training Program which specializes in surveillance, risk assessment and response at the local, regional, and national level to strengthen health security.

² See "Appendix for V112".

Action

1. Create and test a preparedness and response plan to prevent deficits in LGU's health response.
2. Simulate the plan based on these steps:
 - a. Define the unusual, crisis, or pandemic situation to be simulated and gather all involved stakeholder representatives and agency groups, modelling the organization.
 - 1) Agree on the organization's priorities and objectives
 - b. Run through the situation, step by step but pay attention to the organizational structures, relations and meanings of each agency's decision.
 - 1) Identify human and organizational factors and not only technical factors of safety
 - 2) Discussion is geared toward determining the best practices in very situation to be done by the most suitable agent
 - 3) Agreed upon decisions and noted gaps should be recorded
 - c. Upon completion, the group should go through the scenario again with the corrected decisions and with the gaps bridged over by another coordinated body or by an agent with a revised functionality.
 - 1) Solutions may involve but are not exhausted by reviewing the existing protocols, inconsistencies in roles, creation of new guidelines, opening new lines of communication, and clarifying assigned responsibilities
 - d. Plan revision can now be accomplished according to simulation results with an agreed period after which the plan's effectiveness will be revisited.

Conclusions

The goal now is to transition from interval to interval until the COVID-19 cases decrease and ultimately, the country stops the local disease transmission. By using simulation exercises and the adapted interval frameworks, LGUs can have more effective preparedness and responses at each stage of the situation.