

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



'22 JUL 18 A9:41

SENATE
S. No. 680

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada

**AN ACT
REQUIRING DISASTER-RELATED INFORMATION TO BE STATED IN
ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE TO ENSURE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING THEREOF
AND TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines is a country that is prone to natural disasters. The study conducted by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative of the Harvard University, "Perceptions of Disaster Resilience and Preparedness in the Philippines", that was published on June 2018 confirms this by stating that, "The Philippines is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. Located along the boundary of major tectonic plates and at the center of a typhoon belt, its islands are regularly impacted by floods, typhoons, landslides, earthquakes, volcanoes, and droughts. The Philippines also ranks among the top three countries in the world for population exposure and vulnerability to hazards. The Philippine government has developed strong coping mechanisms over their long history of experience with disasters. Yet, significant gaps remain in disaster management capacities across different regions of the Philippines and surprisingly little data are available referencing local levels of disaster resilience and preparedness."

The economic impact of disasters was illustrated in the study, "Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines: Status Report 2019" conducted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) by stating that, "Since 1990, the Philippines has been affected by 565 disaster events which have caused an

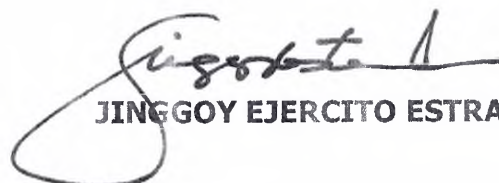
estimated \$US 23 billion in damages (Jha, 2018). Approximately 85.2% of the sources of the country's production have been reported to be susceptible to disasters, and 50.3% of the total land area is considered to be economically at risk (ADB, 2012). Much of the damage has been resulting from recurrent, massive-scale super typhoons, including Ondoy and Pepeng in 2009, Washi in 2011, Bopha in 2012, Haiyan in 2013, Koppu in 2015, Haima in 2016, and Mangkhut in 2018. Much of the country's exports and trade income have relied on resource-extractive industry (Martinico-Perez, et al., 2018), which further create implications in terms of disaster vulnerability and sustainable economic growth."

More important than economic loss is the danger and lost of lives of the people because of insufficient or inappropriate communication from authorities to their constituents. This may range from misinformation, miscommunication, to outright absence of information dissemination in far-flung areas during times of disasters and calamities.

The "*Language Accessibility of Public Information on Disasters Act*" mandates all government agencies and local government units to convert in an easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any appropriate regional languages or dialects all information for the public related to disasters and calamities.


This measure was approved on Third Reading by the House of Representatives in the 18th Congress.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

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**AN ACT
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ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE TO ENSURE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING THEREOF
TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as "*Language Accessibility of*
2 *Public information on Disasters Act*"

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The right of the people to information on
4 matters of public concern is recognized in our Constitution. Indeed, communication
5 and information occupy a vital role in nation-building. In times of disaster and other
6 emergencies, and to render meaningful and effective the right of the people to
7 information, it shall be ensured that announcements, advisories and similar public
8 communications are accessible in terms of the language or dialect used.

9 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

10 a) *Disaster* – a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a
11 society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental
12 losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or
13 society to cope using its own resources.

14 Disasters are often described as a result of the combination of the
15 exposure to a hazard, the conditions of vulnerability that are present, and
16 insufficient capacity or measured to reduce or cope with the potential

1 negative consequences. Disaster impacts may include loss of life, injury,
2 disease and other negative effects on human, physical, mental and social
3 well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss
4 of services, social and economic disruption and environmental
5 degradation.

6 b) *Emergency* – unforeseen or sudden occurrence, especially danger,
7 demanding immediate action;

8 c) *State of Calamity* – a condition involving mass casualty and/or major
9 damages to property and roads, disruption of means of livelihoods and
10 normal way of life in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of
11 natural or human-induced hazard.

12 *Sec. 4. Scope of Application.* – This Act shall cover disasters and other kinds
13 of emergencies which are (1) national in scope, as declared through a State of
14 Calamity or State of National Emergency by the President of the Philippines and (2)
15 provincial, city or municipal in scope, as declared through a State of Calamity or
16 Emergency by the appropriate local government unit.

17 *Sec. 5. Language Accessibility of Disaster-Related Information.* – In relation to
18 disasters and other emergencies covered by Section 4 of this Act, it shall be
19 mandatory for all government agencies and local government units to convert in an
20 easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any other appropriate
21 regional language/s or dialect/s all their announcements, advisories, press releases,
22 issuances and any other information relevant to such disaster or emergency,
23 including:

24 a) Tropical Cyclones, signals, flood warning, storm surge, dry spell/drought,
25 and other advisories by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and
26 Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA);

27 b) Volcanic activity and eruption, earthquake, tsunami and landslide
28 advisories and bulletins by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and
29 Seismology (PHIVOLCS);

30 c) Announcements, bulletins and other advisories of the National Disaster
31 Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Local Disaster Risk
32 Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMC) and network of Disaster

- 1 Risk Reduction and Management Councils composed of national, regional,
2 provincial, city, municipal DRRM councils and barangay committees;
- 3 d) Information on epidemics, disease outbreaks, infestation, and other public
4 health emergencies of the Department of Health (DOH) and the
5 Department of Agriculture (DA);
- 6 e) Advisories and warnings released by the Department of Environment and
7 Natural Resources (DENR) – Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and
8 the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), human-induced hazards, and human
9 security concerns of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the
10 Philippine National Police (PNP); and
- 11 f) Information on the Social Amelioration Program, emergency assistance
12 and other social protection measures of the Department of Social Welfare
13 and Development (DSWD).

14 As much as practicable, such disaster-related information shall be issued and
15 disseminated using plain language and devoid of scientific jargon or technical
16 terminologies. It shall also contain specific information on the extent and scale of
17 impending impact and damage down to barangay level.

18 *Sec. 6. Translation to Filipino and Other Regional Language or Dialect.* – The
19 translation of the information covered by this Act shall be to Filipino and other
20 regional language/s or dialect/s, as deemed necessary by the government agency
21 and local government unit concerned considering the geographical location of the
22 affected communities and the intended recipients of the information. The translated
23 information shall be disseminated as widely as possible through all available media
24 and communication channels.

25 *Sec. 7. Role of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino.* – The Komisyon sa Wikang
26 Filipino (KWF) shall render the necessary technical assistance and expertise to the
27 government agencies and local government units including the Bangsamoro
28 Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and monitor their compliance
29 with the duties mandated by this Act.

30 *Sec. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from
31 the effectivity of this Act, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF), in consultation

1 with other relevant agencies and stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules
2 and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

3 Sec. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
4 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision or part not otherwise
5 affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

6 Sec. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
7 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation
8 contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed,
9 modified, or amended accordingly.

10 Sec. 11. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
11 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,