

Conduct of Philippines 2007 POPCEN in Relocation Areas: The Albay Experience¹

INTRODUCTION

The Census of Population (POPCEN) in the Philippines is considered a major statistical undertaking that is met with meticulous planning and entails outstanding coordination, monitoring and supervision strategies. Previous censuses proved to be an evolution of work in progress for the Philippine National Statistics Office (NSO) being the primary statistical arm of the government, as it has constantly confronted census issues with prudence and consistency. The latest 2007 POPCEN had its share of concerns especially in the Province of Albay where problems of environmental disasters brought challenges in the operationalization of accepted census concepts in the country.

THE PROVINCE OF ALBAY IN FOCUS

An archipelago of 7,107 islands that covers a land area of 299,764 square kilometers, the Republic of the Philippines is home to 88.57 million people, as of August 1, 2007. It is geographically divided into 17 regions, 79 provinces, 117 cities, 1500 municipalities, and 41,975 barangays². Bicol, one of the regions and a peninsula lying in the southern most portion of Luzon Island, comprises six (6) provinces (Albay,

¹ A joint paper presentation by Rosalinda P. Bautista, OIC-Director, Household Statistics Department, National Statistics Office (NSO), Manila, Philippines and Cynthia L. Perdiz, OIC-Regional Director, NSO Region V, Legazpi City, Philippines.

² Barangay is considered the basic unit of the Philippine political system into which cities and municipalities in the country are divided. (Source: NSO Philippine Year Book 2006)

Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, and Sorsogon) and has a 4.7 million population. Among Bicol's provinces, Albay occupies 14.5 percent of the region's total land area and ranks second largest in terms of population with 1.19 million residents. Agriculture accounts for the biggest portion of the province's total economic output and source of employment. Its fertile lands produce major crops such as coconut, rice, abaca, and corn. Situated along the typhoon belt, the province is frequently visited by an average of 20 typhoons yearly. With its cities' and towns' modern buildings and structures, close to half of the population still live in dwellings made from native and light roofing materials like cogon, nipa, and anahaw; rendering them vulnerable to strong winds brought about by typhoons. The imposing presence of the 8,000-foot Mt. Mayon, the country's most active volcano defines Albay's tourism. Several towns in the province surround its slopes.



In November 30, 2006, eight (8) months before the 2007 Population Census' actual enumeration, Super Typhoon Reming (internationally known as Durian) pummeled the Philippines' Bicol region with strong winds recorded at speeds of up to 240 kilometers per hour which prompted the country's weather agency, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical

Services Administration (PAGASA) to issue its highest warning level of Public Signal No. 4 over Bicol Region. However, it was the torrential rains accumulating up to 460mm (18 inches) that triggered the millions of cubic feet of volcanic debris from Mt. Mayon's recent eruption to rapidly cascade from its slopes into the surrounding towns,



ravaging everything within the flows' paths and devastating populated lowland areas. The widespread flashfloods that accompanied it buried settlements, farmland, livestock, and claimed hundreds of lives making Albay the hardest hit province in the region in terms of destruction to infrastructure, livelihood, and human life. The Albay Public



Safety and Emergency Management Office reported a total of 618 dead and 419 missing individuals and a computed total damages amounting to PHP 3,230,435,702.00.

While it was evident that NSO Albay Provincial Office's emphasis for special treatments to affected enumeration areas was mainly after Typhoon Reming, similar problems

were already noted when Mt. Mayon's major eruptions specifically in the years 2000-2001, displaced residents around its slopes and eventually relocated to other barangays of the province. For the 2007 POPCEN, the NSO particularly identified the following municipalities and barangays of Albay as special areas of enumeration having been sites of partly abandoned/relocation areas:

Table 1. List of city/municipalities and barangays in Albay with relocated households due to typhoon Reming and mud slides and previous eruption of Mt. Mayon.

CITY/MUNICIPALITY	BARANGAY	CITY/MUNICIPALITY	BARANGAY
Camalig	Anoling Cabangan Gapo Ilawod Quirangay Salugan Sua Tagaytay	Daraga	Bañag Binitayan Budiao Canarom Malobago Mi-isi Tagas
Guinobatan	Iraya Maipon Masarawag Morera San Rafael Tandarora Travesia Minto	Legazpi City	Brgy. 47, Arimbay Brgy. 37, Bitano Brgy. 39, Bonot Brgy. 41, Bogtong Brgy. 54, Mabinit Brgy. 50, Padang Brgy. 44, Pawa Brgy. 32, San Roque
		Sto. Domingo	Buhatan Fidel Surtida Lidong San Isidro

The abovementioned special areas were considered as such in anticipation of confusions and complications that may arise due to the cultural and economic tendencies of people to return to their original settlements despite their permanent relocation to other barangays. Possible disputes regarding the Internal Revenue

Allotment³ (IRA) or simply the budget of every barangay/municipality, where population is a significant factor of the share were also given appropriate consideration. The complexities of Philippine bureaucracy and the devolution of the local government were likewise respected, thus the consultations made by NSO Albay Provincial Office to local officials with due recognition of their respective Sanguniang Bayan Resolutions.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

1. Difficult in the pre-enumeration mapping due to destroyed landmarks.

Due to the destruction of some natural and man-made boundaries in the areas vastly affected by typhoon Reming and mud slides, the pre-enumeration mapping operation was conducted by the NSO Albay Provincial Office with great difficulty. The pre-enumeration mapping operation started June 2007 when the enumeration areas were recuperating from the destructions. The cartographers were met with destroyed landmarks such as rivers, bridges, creeks, barangay markers and the likes.

2. Issue on where to include relocated households/population counts.

The damages brought about by typhoon Reming and mud slides greatly affected the life and property of the residents of barangays in the following city/municipalities of Albay: Camalig, Daraga, Guinobatan, Legazpi City and Sto. Domingo. After all the immediate responses made possible by the Local Government Units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs), foreign and local aids, the officials executed plan of

³ Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) is a local government's share of revenues from the national government.

action to relocate permanently the displaced households from temporary shelters, holding and evacuation areas to safer and permanent locations. LGUs and NGOs financed housing projects for the relocated households. The NSO Albay Provincial Office foresaw the situation as early as December 2006 and referred the matter to the NSO Central Office. The problem was where to count the relocated households found in the designated relocation areas in the province.



Generally, a census credo states that the physical location of the dwelling unit of a person/household is the place where one should be counted. The issue on whether to count the relocated persons and households in the original barangay or in the receiving barangay cropped up when the Memorandum on Resettlement and Temporary Relocation Areas was issued on July 9, 2007. With that memorandum, the Operational Strategies in Areas with Households in Resettlement and Temporary Relocation Areas was also issued. The guideline provided that the LGU's legislative body called Sangguniang Bayan shall resolve the issue where to include the count of households residing in permanent relocation areas but still bearing the name of the barangay of origin.

3. Delayed legislative decisions of LGUs.

The NSO Albay Provincial Office coordinated with the respective Local Government Units to settle the issue on the resettlement areas which still bear the name of the original barangays where the relocated households came from. The matter was referred to the local officials to inform them of the office's guidelines in resolving problem 2 and to avoid conflict with the local officials. The pressing issue was very critical because of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of every barangay, which 50 percent of it is determined by population. As stated in Republic Act 7160 known as The Local Government Code of 1991:

SECTION 285. Allocation to Local Government Units. - The share of local government units in the internal revenue allotment shall be allocated in the following manner:

- (a) Provinces - Twenty-three percent (23%);
- (b) Cities - Twenty-three percent (23%);
- (c) Municipalities - Thirty-four percent (34%); and
- (d) Barangays - Twenty percent (20%) Provided, however, That the share of each province, city, and municipality shall be determined on the basis of the following formula:
 - (a) Population - Fifty percent (50%);
 - (b) Land Area - Twenty-five percent (25%); and
 - (c) Equal sharing - Twenty-five percent (25%)

The LGUs made a stand on this matter. It was just however sad that some were not prompt to give action that the enumeration phase already commenced before the final decision was made. The Sangguniang Bayan of three (3) municipalities namely, Camalig, Daraga and Guinobatan approved a resolution to count relocated households

in the original barangay except for one barangay in the municipality of Daraga with only one household that was counted in the receiving barangay. On the other hand, the LGUs of Legazpi City and Sto. Domingo declared a status quo condition in the issue. Thus, the office's guideline was followed to count the relocated households in the receiving barangay.

STRATEGIES ADOPTED

1. Study tour and table discussion with NSO Pampanga Provincial Office.

Upon the recommendation of the Administrator of NSO, a study tour was realized by the NSO Albay and Pampanga Provincial Offices key personnel in the affected areas in Albay. Originally, it was advised that the NSO Albay Provincial Office personnel shall conduct the study tour in Bacolor, Pampanga, which experienced similar case during the enumeration phase of 1995 Census of Population (POPCEN) and 2000 Census of Population and Housing (CPH) due to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo⁴.

The study tour was conducted by the NSO Albay and Pampanga Provincial Offices personnel on May 25, 2007. They visited the affected areas and laid down the situation for the part of the host; and experiences and strategies adopted for the visitors' part. From there, the coordination was intensified among LGUs and line agencies at the local level. Feedbacks on the results of office visits; ocular inspection and

⁴ The Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991 "...destroyed 4,979 homes and damaged another 70,257. The following year 3,281 homes were destroyed and 3,137 were damaged. Damage following the Mount Pinatubo eruption was usually caused by lahars - rain-induced torrents of volcanic debris that killed people and animals and buried homes in the months after the eruption. Additionally, another Mount Pinatubo eruption in August 1992 killed 72 people."
(Source: <http://geography.about.com/od/globalproblemsandissues/a/pinatubo.htm>)

Provincial/City/Municipal Census Coordinating Boards (P/C/MCCBs) convening were sent religiously to the NSO Central Office for their action and advice. As a result, the Memorandum on Resettlement and Temporary Relocation Areas was issued on July 9, 2007 together with the Operational Strategies in Areas with Households in Resettlement and Temporary Relocation Areas was also issued.

Cases and situations not covered by the guidelines were referred to the NSO Central Office.

The visit of the NSO Pampanga and Census Planning and Operations Division (CPOD) personnel paved way for table discussion of strategies adopted by the office in their enumeration problems. They also related experiences which were helpful in the proper conduct of enumeration. With the said strategy, the enumeration was planned and organized by the office to avoid the same problems such as resistance from respondents and barangay officials.

2. Coordination with various agencies such as Department of Local and Interior Government (DILG), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and LGUs concerning the location and number of relocated households.

The NSO Albay Provincial Office, as early as March 13, 2007, coordinated with the local offices of the DILG, DSWD and offices of the local chief executives. The office gathered data and list of households permanently or temporarily residing in resettlement/relocation areas and status of barangays declared to be “no man’s land” by the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) and their respective enumeration area maps to be able to provide inputs to the NSO Central Office as to how these

relocation areas be covered. Enumeration area codes were specifically assigned to relocation areas for proper delineation and reference during the tabulation phase.

The coordination yielded to the gathering of information on the number of relocated households and list of designated evacuation centers, temporary holding areas and relocation areas. The office convened the local census coordinating board and urged the Sangguniang Bayan of the affected areas to pass resolution on where to count the relocated households. It was just however sad to note that some of them were not prompt to give action that the enumeration phase already commenced before they made their stand on the matter. Nevertheless, the enumeration was conducted in the relocation areas and arrangements were made during the manual processing phase basing from the guidelines provided by the NSO Central Office.

This strategy also proved helpful to cartographers of the mapping operation. The hired cartographers sought the assistance of the local planning and development offices in the cities and municipalities of Albay.

3. Inclusion of data items on relocation areas, previous residence and plan to return to the original residence in the 2007 POPCEN questionnaire.

In the 2007 POPCEN, the CP Form 2 Household Questionnaire was designed to capture data on relocated households. The items were not present in the questionnaires of the previous censuses conducted in the country. They were included to address the clamor of the provincial offices such as the NSO Albay Provincial Office which faced the result of the disasters such as typhoons and volcanic eruption including the erratic weather conditions through the years. The inclusion of items or questions for

households in temporary relocation area such as item H2 Current Residence, H3 Date Moved to Current Residence, H4 Previous Residence and H5 Intention to Reside in Previous Residence helped in identifying the temporary shelters which were used to validate the number of households relocated from the original barangay where they should be counted as decided by the LGUs.

QUESTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY RELOCATION AREA		
H2. CURRENT RESIDENCE		
IF THE HOUSEHOLD IS RESIDING IN TEMPORARY RELOCATION AREA, WRITE AN X MARK IN THE BOX FOR YES. OTHERWISE, WRITE X IN THE BOX FOR NO.		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 No	END INTERVIEW
H3. DATE MOVED TO CURRENT RESIDENCE		
When did your household move to the temporary relocation area?		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
MM	YYYY	
H4. PREVIOUS RESIDENCE		
Where was the household's usual place of residence before moving to the temporary relocation area?		
IF THE SAME BARANGAY AS THE PRESENT RESIDENCE, WRITE 000 IN THE BOXES FOR BARANGAY. IF ANOTHER BARANGAY, SPECIFY THE NAME OF BARANGAY, CITY/MUNICIPALITY AND PROVINCE ON THE SPACES PROVIDED.		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
BARANGAY	CITY/MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE
IF H4 IS '000', END INTERVIEW.		
H5. INTENTION TO RESIDE IN PREVIOUS RESIDENCE		
Within one year, does your household intend to reside in _____ (MENTION PREVIOUS RESIDENCE SPECIFIED IN H4)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 No	

H2 Current Residence item was not asked to the respondent but intended for interviewer as guide on whether to continue asking the succeeding questions for households in temporary relocation area. The Team Supervisor identified the enumeration area based on the report from the Provincial Office. If the answer was “Yes”, succeeding questions should be asked; if “No”, end of interview. H3 Date Moved to Current Residence (When did your household move to the temporary area?) when asked was followed up by asking H4 Previous Residence. This captured the original barangay where the household resided prior the relocation whether from a different or the same barangay. The information gathered from the last item validated the number of relocated households from the concerned barangay. Item H5 Intention to Reside in Previous Residence determined whether or not the household intends to reside in the previous residence.

The strategy provided the information on the relocated households ease in the processing of accomplished questionnaires particularly in paying attention to the case.

4. Constant communication on the issues affecting the enumeration of relocation areas.

The constant communication of the NSO Albay Provincial Office with the Central Office was proven effective in the smooth operation of the conduct the 2007 POPCEN. The issue was raised by the Provincial Statistics Office of the province then, Engr. Cynthia L. Perdiz, who expressed the possible problems the office, may meet in the conduct of 2007 POPCEN in the relocation areas and displaced household. This was brought out in the NSO's 2007 National Planning Workshop in December 2006. She requested a slot for NSO Albay Provincial Office representative in the 2007 POPCEN Task Force to discuss the concerns on special areas.

5. Close monitoring in the actual conduct of enumeration.

Supervision of the interviewers during the enumeration phase was mandatory in every undertaking such as survey and censuses. This has been a proven strategy to ensure adherence to the concepts of the census and proper counting procedures are observed by the hired personnel. The ocular inspection in the last week of August required by the Central Office to all NSO staff was also an effective means to monitor status of 2007 POPCEN. Personnel scheduled his/her ocular visit, following the guidelines, in the barangay where he/she resides and in an adjacent barangay. Reports on the said visits noting the problems encountered and action taken were required from them.

CPOD representatives visited the province for supervision during the mapping, enumeration and manual processing phases. The supervision of the manual processing phase by the CPOD representative, Mr. Guillermo Lipio, Jr., was especially made to ensure proper counting of relocated households in accordance to the issued guidelines of the Central Office.

6. Detailed verification of accomplished questionnaires was done with emphasis on the guidelines provided by the office during manual processing phase.

The manual processing of the questionnaires of relocated households found at the relocation areas was given special attention during the provincial processing. The processors were guided by the Operational Strategies in Areas with Household in Resettlement and Temporary Relocation Areas and the stand of the LGUs as exemplified by their respective enacted resolutions on the treatment of the relocated households in their city/municipality. The municipalities of Camalig, Daraga and Guinobatan resolved to count the relocated households enumerated at the resettlement areas to the original barangays. On the other hand, the relocated households of Legazpi City and Sto. Domingo, which did not have resolution, were counted in the receiving barangay or the place where they were enumerated as of August 1, 2007.

The manual processing team headed by Stat II Cecil G. Brondial patiently identified the number of relocated households in the barangays where resettlement areas are situated. They identified their place of origin and made the corresponding adjustments in accordance to the guidelines.

7. Validation of preliminary results by the Provincial Census Evaluation Team.

The creation of the Provincial Census Evaluation Team was mandated by the Central Office to look into the preliminary results of 2007 POPCEN. Members were appointed from the provincial offices staff who had direct involvement in the phases of census operation to scrutinize the reliability of the result. They noted extreme growth and decline in the population of the barangay and justified the result in accordance with the circumstances surrounding the barangay.

The affected barangays in the province were given individual explanations in order to justify the conditions in the area. The decreases in the population count of the affected barangays of Legazpi City and Sto. Domingo were given remarks as caused by the status quo condition in the treatment of the relocated households. The NSO Central Office's guideline on the said case applied to the situation where the relocated households were counted in the receiving barangay. Likewise, the increases in the population count of barangays where resettlement areas are located were noted and identified the count of the relocated households from different places of origin. For the affected barangays of Camalig, Daraga and Guinobatan, where the Sangguniang Bayan enacted a resolution to count the relocated households to the original barangays, were likewise supplied with remarks. Breakdown of the count of relocated households from different barangays of origin were tabulated in a matrix form to facilitate reporting.

CONCLUSION

For Albayanos, recovery means dealing with the inevitable nature's wrath and its aftermath with much flexibility and perseverance – the same values exemplified by the

NSO Albay Provincial Office in finally conducting a fairly smooth 2007 POPCEN operations. It is also worth mentioning that the eight months interval of the unfortunate Typhoon Reming to the conduct of the 2007 POPCEN provided ample time for the office to prepare and initiate necessary adjustments. The continued support of the NSO Central Office in terms of technical and logistics support in addressing the issues was also critical.

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