

Saint Bernard Municipality, Philippines



The massive landslide in the village of Guinsaugon in Saint Bernard on 17 February 2006 that killed 1,354 people revealed how unprepared the local municipality, in the province of Southern Leyte, Philippines, was. Hazard assessments after the tragedy showed that at least 70 percent of the land area was highly vulnerable to five kinds of natural hazards. As a result, the Municipality of Saint Bernard instituted a community-managed flood early warning system for hazard preparedness.

The system combines technology and comprehensive social preparation and uses sustainable technology that integrates tsunami and (experimentally) landslide warning, aside from warning for floods. Intensive capacity building initiated by a proactive, award-winning Municipal DRRM Council, ensured high community participation. Recent innovations include a simple and cost-effective public address system adopted in 17 villages (barangays). The communications network has drawn communities closer, and not only during emergencies. Vital information on community affairs as well as hazards now reaches all households.

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