

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



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THE CONTRIBUTION OF
ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON TO
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad, India

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Title: The Contribution of Zenaida Delica-Willison to Disaster Risk Reduction

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Mr. Mihir R. Bhatt, and Professor JC Gaillard as guest editor of the submitted articles.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AIDMI	All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
ASSI	Asian Safe School Initiative
CBA	Community Based Adaptation
CBCDRRM	Community-Based Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Management
CBDM	Citizenry Based Disaster Management
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CBDRR	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CCJD	Center for Community Journalism and Development
CDP	Center for Disaster Preparedness
CDRC	Citizens' Disaster Response Center
CDRN	Citizens Disaster Response Network
CRED	Centre for Research in the Epidemiology of Disasters
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DLGCD	Department of Local Government and Community Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction Management
GFDRR	Global Forum on NGOs for Disaster Reduction
GNDR	Global Network of Civil Society Organizations
IDNDR	International Decade for Disaster Reduction
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
INSI	International News Safety Institute
JAC	Joint Assistance Centre
NDRRMC	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
OCD	Office of Civil Defense
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UCL	University College London
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNSECO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ZENBEN: OUR SISTER IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

By Mihir R. Bhatt,

Managing Director, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), India

Zenben, sister Zen, as we call Zenaida Delica-Willison at All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) has dedicated her professional life to building the resilience of at-risk communities in the Philippines and around Asia Pacific. She has over 40 years of experience in development and disaster risk reduction practice in the Philippines and in other Asian countries. She has done so by facilitating community-based disaster risk reduction projects, trainings and advisory services often all three converging with each other to enhance the overall impact.

Throughout her distinguished career, Zenben has been a pioneering figure behind Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) at the national, regional and international levels. She served as the director of the Citizen's Disaster Response Center (CDRC) for ten years before co-founding the Centre for Disaster Preparedness (CDP), which builds the capacities of non-government organizations and the government sector on various aspects of the CBDRM framework as the need arises, and reinvented it as the context demanded.

Zenben has held executive director posts in two NGOs and an advisory post in some NGO and the UNDP Office for South-South Cooperation, leading teams and programmes, developing strategies and undertaking training and facilitation, research, consultancy and evaluation. In all this, AIDMI has found her focus on women and poor unwavering. Her humility seamless. She developed the concept and implemented South-South Community Based Development Academy in South and Southeast Asia. Co-organizing these Academies with local and national partners, she also served as facilitator and resource person in the successful implementation of six Citizenry-Based Development Academies in Gujarat, Banda Aceh, Camarines Sur, Delhi, Kupang and Odisha with AIDMI, putting emphasis on the importance of building opportunities that encourage voices of community members – women, men and children – to be heard.

Zenben managed the Global Facility for Community Based Disaster Risk Management, and organized the Training and

Learning Circle for CBDRM of which AIDMI was the lead partner. She co-facilitated the initial formation of the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations (GNDR) with the UNISDR in 2006. GNDR is now the largest network on DRR, with 800 member organizations all over the world. Her leadership style combines democratic and strategic aspects in perfect balance. AIDMI found in its work with Zenben that she always explores transformative power of communities.

A seasoned disaster risk reduction (DRR) professional, Zenben has experience of all stages of project management and capacity development activities. She has carried out work for agencies including Citizens' Disaster Response Centre, Centre for Disaster Preparedness, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, World Bank, Disaster and Emergency Committee, (UK), Humanitarian Alliance (Canada), and many more. First Community Based Disaster Risk Management course at ADPC by Duryog Nivaran was actively shaped by her in 1995. She has also done advisory and consulting work for many local and international organizations. For example, she was a CBDRM consultant of the World Bank for Vietnam, Bhutan and India; of IFRC in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam; of Tearfund for its training on DRR in Sri Lanka; GNDR's assessment planning for Asia-Pacific in 2015 and the internal reflection and evaluation of the Asian Safe School Initiative (ASSI) in 2016. Zenben was the course director for the Disaster Risk Management Course and Presentation Course organized by the ADPC and IFRC for the government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2014 and a resource and co-facilitator in 2015. Zenben focused on not "building" capacities but "unleashing" capacities of citizens to reduce risk they face.

Zenben's personal philosophy on development and disaster reduction practice is guided by empathy along with cultural and gender sensitivity. She believes that women, men and children have different perceptions of risks, different needs and priorities. Therefore, DRR work should acknowledge these differences and take a long term view by addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability. Her expertise and dedication to disaster risk reduction is only matched by her courage to speak truth to power.

A staunch supporter of grassroots empowerment, her community mobilization work during the authoritarian regime of late president Marcos landed Zenaida in jail for two and a half years while her daughter was incarcerated for a month before

being sent to an auntie she had never met before. Undeterred by these threats, she nonetheless persisted with her work of resilience building of at-risk communities at the grassroots level. Though not from Latin America, Zenben's words ring of modernist music from Latin America.

Even after her retirement from UNDP in December 2012, she has still been actively involved in DRR and development work. She was elected President of the Centre for Disaster Preparedness in June 2014 and she holds the position until now. She continues to act as a resource for NGOs (local and international) and for government agencies, such as the Climate Change Commission. She is a member of the Global and Asia Board of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, operating in more than 120 disaster affected and conflict ridden countries and advised the WB for its "Building Resilience to Landslide and Geo-Hazard Risk in the South Asia Region Program", as a facilitator on South-South

Zen facilitating a workshop on the South-South Development Academy in Bangkok in August, 2012.



Learning until June 2019. Role of such lateral learning in the renewal of the social environment is crucial.

Zenben has questioned what is authority; why formal systems make communities nervous; and why real simulation is action with community. An immersive experience. The many accolades and awards bestowed upon her are a testament of the deep impact of her work. In March 2010, she was awarded the Excellence in Performance Award by the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in New York. In July 2013, she was made the recipient of the prestigious Mary Fran Myers Award. This award is administered and managed by the Gender and Disaster Network (Global) and the Natural Hazards Centre in the State University of Colorado, USA and Northumbria University, UK. In 2018, Zenben was also the Gawad KALASAG National Awardee on Special Recognition on Individual Category for Excellence on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Humanitarian Assistance. As humanitarian action is turning into a profession where results matter more than reality and money matters more than meaning of actions, Zenben shaped the shape of our thinking about humanitarian values at the centre of humanitarian industry.

Through her professional expertise and achievements, Zenben has transformed her personal beliefs of community and gender empowerment for effective DRR into an actionable reality for all to follow. Through her work, she has championed the meaningful participation of communities and demographic groups that are disproportionately affected by disasters into DRR policies and plans. In achieving these successes, Zenben has not only exhibited women's leadership in the humanitarian sector but has also paved the way for like-minded and strong willed women to achieve similar success.

ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON: PIONEER OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

By JC Gaillard,

The University of Auckland, New Zealand

I first encountered Tita Zen's name back in the late 1990s when I was conducting my PhD research on recovery following the Mt Pinatubo eruption. Two of her papers proved crucial to my understanding of this particular event and of disasters in general. The first one, published in *Disasters* in 1993, is well known and narrates the experience of Filipino practitioners, gathered around and led by Tita Zen, in pioneering what was then called citizenry-based disaster preparedness. The second is rather obscure and appeared in the *Philippine Planning Journal* in 1999. The latter is however a landmark piece on the crucial role local people should play in designing and implementing early warning systems. These two articles, which have had an enduring influence on my own scholarship and practice of disaster risk reduction, well reflect Tita Zen's contribution and legacy to the field; those of a pioneer and inspiring leader.

Much of what is nowadays known as participatory or community-based disaster risk reduction owes to Tita Zen's ideas and vision back in the 1980s. For Tita Zen, people's participation is a political struggle. One that should focus upon providing a voice to those who are usually less-heard or unheard in the political arena and whose everyday lives are controlled by people with more power in society. This struggle is one that should be inclusive rather than exclusive, an approach that should pull people and stakeholders together rather than one that focuses on working let's say with the poor or women alone. It is, in fact, amazing how Tita Zen, a former activist who deeply suffered from the dictatorial and repressive regime of President F. Marcos, has always been willing to engage with national and local government agencies. As such, Tita Zen is not only a pioneer of community-based disaster risk reduction. She is more broadly a pioneer of disaster risk reduction as a multi-stakeholder game. If this seems like an evidence in 2020 it was far from being so 30 years ago.

If Tita Zen's ideas and vision have spread well beyond the shores of the Philippine archipelago it is because of her inspiring leadership. She is well known for being committed and humble at

the same time, an incredible combination of strength, energy, creativity and humility that has proved critical in garnering attention and support for the causes she has fought for over the years. I have met tens of practitioners and colleagues who recognise Tita Zen as their mentor and it is always the same praise for her leadership, ability to band people together, and tireless will to share and learn. The South-South Citizenry Based Development Academy that she pioneered during her stint with the United Nations Development Programme is a perfect example of this leadership: a creative platform to facilitate the sharing of experiences amongst practitioners and local people whose voices are less-heard or unheard in the development arena, in particular in disaster risk reduction.

When I finally got to meet Tita Zen in person, a decade after I encountered her Disasters and Philippine Planning Journal articles, it was more than putting a face on an author's name. It was meeting a legendary figure in the field, someone that I had heard so much praise about and whose writings had profoundly inspired me. We have since met many times in many different settings, exchanging very frequently on many different things. I have also become close to the Center for Disaster Preparedness and got mentored by Tita Zen herself as well as many of her fellow pioneers of participatory disaster risk reduction in the Philippines. The learning has been immense, inspiring and has influenced all dimensions of my work, my practice of disaster risk reduction and scholarship but also my teaching at the university. I am therefore deeply and forever grateful.

This festschrift is surely not enough to pay due tribute to Tita Zen's incredible leadership. However, we hope that this collection of essays by friends, colleagues and mentees provides a representative overview of her contribution to disaster risk reduction in the Philippines, Asia and the wild world. One, we hope, that those who do not know Tita Zen will be inspired to carry forward in their own journey to reduce undue suffering in time of disaster.

ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Zen was born on 20 November 1950 in a small village of Batangas City called Talumpok. Talumpok is located 100 km south of Manila. Zen was the second youngest of a family of ten siblings. Since her early age, Zen has been inspired by her parents to serve and love the people, especially those who have no means to send their children to school.

Zen studied at the Talumpok public primary school where she topped her class from grade 1 to grade 6. She eventually studied at the Batangas High School. Zen then wanted to become a doctor. She was inspired by her father, who was an herbalist and the herbal doctor of Talumpok. At the time, she did not like her father's prescriptions made of bitter herbs, boiled tree barks and roots, and the likes. These required to gather plants, make concoctions, and apply them – a laborious process. She thus thought that she could become a doctor so that she could prescribe pills and other chemicals for easier cure.

Later in her life, Zen would however realise that her father was right. When she was young, the people of Talumpok were not going to the hospital when they were sick. Nonetheless, they were all getting better after having seen her dad. People used to die old, in their late 90s. Zen's father, who himself passed at 103 years old, used to say: *"local people never go to see doctors. Yet, they live long until they die of old age"*.

Zen never ended up studying medicine. Because she was small and a woman, her parents thought that she would rather be a nurse. She started to study towards a BSc in Nursing at the Lyceum of Batangas but eventually shifted to Commerce during her second year.

It was at this time, between 1967 and 1970, that Zen became aware of the extent of graft and corruption in the government and other societal issues. She joined the local student movement and eventually stood up as one of the campus leaders. She became a member of the Nationalist Youth organisation (*Kabataang Makabayan*) and took the road to Manila to join a campaign for a just society and against the violent dictatorship of then President Ferdinand Marcos. The idealism of her youth led her to be incarcerated for more than two years from October 1974 to

December 1976. Her two brothers were also imprisoned. The older one for more than three years and the youngest for more than five years. Domingo Luneta, the father of her then baby daughter Mayfourth, and his four brothers and one sister also all spent time behind bars.

Once released, Zen did a brief stint for the government as other former detainees did in a desire to explore how to effect some changes from the inside. She worked for the then Department of Local Government and Community Development (DLGCD). She however resigned shortly afterwards, realising that it proved very difficult to stir any change from within, even the smallest of all. However, this time out of prison was a relief and an opportunity for Zen to earn enough money to send her daughter to pre-school. While her relatives were still in prison, she also assisted the Task Force Detainees under the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and KAPATID, an organization of relatives and friends of political prisoners.

In 1986, after the end of the dictatorship, she was invited by her friend and former boss at the DLGCD to join the newly organised Constitutional Commission, which framed the 1986 Philippine Constitution under the Corazon Aquino administration. Later that year, Zen was asked to help with the establishment of the Management Advancement Systems Association Incorporated (MASAI), a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) meant to assist other NGOs in the country.

In 1988, Zen joined the Citizen's Disaster Response Center (CDRC), an NGO that pioneered citizenry based development oriented disaster management. She stayed with CDRC for more than 10 years where learned the ropes of disaster risk reduction (DRR) alongside a team of dedicated friends and colleagues. Their vision and strategy was to establish a nationwide movement to support DRR across the country. CDRC, together with its 18 regional centres, was then delivering DRR programmes and contributed to raising public awareness- an advocacy that would bear fruits more than a decade later with the creation of the DRR Network Philippines and the passing, in 2010, of Republic Act 10121 designed to strengthen the Philippine DRR and Management System.

While working for CDRC, Zen explored every opportunity to strengthen her academic background. She took a course on sociology at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and

completed a Master of Public Health at the Adventist University of the Philippines. She also earned a Master of Development Practice from Oxford Brookes University and took courses at the University of Oxford where she studied humanitarian and refugee laws.

In 1993, Zen co- founded the Philippines Frontiers Mission, which is about organising dedicated volunteers to serve the far flung areas in the field of health, sanitation, literacy, capacity development and economic and spiritual uplift. This year marks its 27th year in partnering with prioritised peoples' groups".

Zen left CDRC in December 1998. Together with some of her CDRC friends and colleagues she then set up the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP). With the benediction of her CDP friends and colleagues, she eventually decided to join the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in Bangkok to pursue her advocacy beyond the shores of the Philippine archipelago. Zen served as the director for ADPC's Training and Education Division between 2000 and 2004. She led the development of and directed various local and international DRR-related courses through which she promoted citizenry-based development and disaster response all throughout Asia.

Since these CDRC days, Zen has been one of the leading experts and most sought-after speakers on community-based DRR globally. She has received a number of national and international awards such as the Philippine *Gawad Kalasag* Award for Excellence on DRR and Management and Humanitarian Assistance and the prestigious international Mary Fran Myers Gender and Disaster Award in 2013.

In 2005, Zen joined the United Nations Development Programme Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (UNDP SU-SSC) (now the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation). Her initial contract was just for six months so that she could lead DRR programmes through South-South sharing of experiences in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. She however spent eight years with UNDP SU-SSC, serving as South-South DRR Advisor. In this position, Zen developed and implemented the concept of South-South Citizenry Based Development Academy in South and Southeast Asia and the Training and Learning Circle, which is meant to improve the capacity of trainers and facilitators of DRR.

At the same time, in her capacity as UNDP South-South DRR Advisor, Zen, together with Ms. Feng Min Kan of the United

Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, also encouraged and assisted NGOs in setting up a Global Network of NGOs for DRR, eventually renamed the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR). After she retired from UNDP, she was invited by GNDR to become an independent member of its global governance board.

While and after she was with UNDP SU-SSC, Zen also directed international courses on local governance and DRR for the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) in Turin. For several years, she also worked as consultant for the World Bank on community-based DRR in Vietnam and India. Zen further helped the World Bank in facilitating the South-to-South Learning Workshops on Geohazard Risk Management for South Asian countries.

Today, Zen chairs the Board of Trustees of CDP. She is also a member of the board of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International and ADRA Asia, and was a member of the global advisory board of the Partners for Resilience during its initial five years. In addition, Zen is a member of the board of the newly-established Shared Aid for Emergency Response (SAFER) consortium of Philippine NGOs geared to raising funds to assist those involved in emergency response.

Zen is married with Engineer Robin Willison who is an ordained minister in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They met in 2000, while Zen was with ADPC, and got married in 2001. Robin worked with UNDP in Aceh, Indonesia, for two years and with ADRA in seven countries in various capacity. Zen's daughter, Mayfourth, trained in social work and community development at the University of the Philippines and later completed a Master of Public Health at the Adventist University of the Philippines. Mayfouth is nowadays one of the most respected DRR experts in the Philippines.

Zen and Robin currently reside in Zen's native village of Talumpok in Batangas City, where they have an organic farm to promote a healthy lifestyle. Long before joining CDRC, she had also set up a local cooperative, the Talumpok Silangan Multipurpose Cooperative, which now is considered one of the most successful in the province of Batangas. It started with only PHP 2,000 of paid-up capital provided by the rural poor. Now, the cooperative assets are in the millions. Zen is also a board member of a city-wide health cooperative, which set up the first vegetarian restaurant in the city.

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IN DEFENCE OF COMMUNITY: REFLECTIONS ON ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON'S LIFE WORK

By Dr. Ben Wisner,

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While not going as far as former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, some have questioned the utility of the concept of community or even questioned whether this idea has a counterpart in reality. Cannon (2008 & 2014) presents a coherent critique of the limitations and traps that come with uncritical application of community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) methods, as described, for example by van Niekerk et al. (2017), without an adequate appreciation of differences in access to resources and power, including gender power, in localities and the specific trap of elite capture of processes such as CBDRM and the resources associated with them, often funding provided by INGO partners (Cannon, 2014).

I argue that in practice community has been a valuable focus for work on disaster risk reduction, and Zen's work demonstrates how useful the concept has been. I believe it is possible to lay to rest the intellectual objections to the concept by seeing it as a place marker in space, and even more importantly in time, where the past history of solidarity and mutual aid might meet the future. True, power relations must be taken into account, but is it not possible to do that without throwing away the concept? True, local places such as villages and neighborhoods are filled with people whose access to resources, influence, power and identities are different. As the 21st century proceeds, this differentiation is likely to grow. But because these localities lack socio-economic and cultural homogeneity, must we abandon the idea of community? CBDRM runs the risk of being used for selfish aims, but all development initiatives run such a risk from water supply projects to livestock breeding. The danger of elite capture is no reason for abandoning the idea of community.

Zenaida ("Zen") Delica's work in the Philippines over the years shows an appreciation of the uniqueness and dynamism of local social relations that contradicts sweeping condemnation of the idea of community. It is possible to overthink fundamental concepts, and actions may speak louder than words.

1

"[T]here's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. ... and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours."

– in an interview
Margaret Thatcher,
former Prime Minister of
GB, in *Women's Own* in
1987

[https://
www.theguardian.com/
politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-
thatcher-quotes](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes)



Zen Delica-Willison
2013 Recipient of the
Mary Fran Myers
Gender and Disaster
Award.

(Sources: [https://
www.gdnonline.org/
mfm_award_2013.php](https://www.gdnonline.org/mfm_award_2013.php))

Zen was imprisoned by the Marcos regime for her activism in support of human rights. She was and continues to be an activist. Her contributions have been to create organizations and to mentor generations of young activists and researchers. She was a co-founder of the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) in the Philippines. Under her leadership the CDP developed a distinctive form of locally-based disaster risk management that came to be known as citizenry-based disaster management (CBDM). Whilst it is true that this work did not explicitly theorist the idea of "community", over the years CDPs practice has not been blind to power differences in localities. In its own words, CDP developed "gender-inclusive CBCDRRM (Community-Based Climate and Disaster Risk Reduction Management) with emphasis on partnership and complementary roles between men and women" (CDP, 2018). For such work, Zen was awarded the Mary Fran Myers prize for work on gender and disaster in 2013. CDP also innovated in response to age and ability of local people: "The child-

centered CBCDRRM has brought to light the value and role of children and young people in the field of DRRM [Disaster Risk Reduction Management]. ... [D]isability inclusion and whole of society approach has utilized inclusivity in engaging various stakeholders at varying levels in diverse kind of engagements" (ibid.).

Work with local residents and local government is not easy. But such difficulties as lack of trust, misuse of participatory methods to manipulate people, ebb and flow of commitment, struggles over resources and corruption are not due to weak conceptualization of the term 'community'. Despite its relative abandonment in sociology, Brint (2001) argues that there are ways to rethink community that are more reflective of processes of differentiation. No one claims that CBDRM is a panacea or that there would be no change in people's commitment to it.

People living in local-scale aggregations have a mutual dependence that encourages solidarity. This was a survival strategy. In the future as climate change and globalization bring increasing environmental and economic uncertainty and stress, is it not possible that ways of thriving can emerge that build on such solidarity and mutual aid in new forms? To romanticize the past and to dream of a utopian future is a uniquely human trait. I believe this trait is not a cognitive deficiency or mark of childish illusion and wishful thinking. It is creative. It keeps before us values and potentials even though they may not ever be fully realized in ways that immune to change or corruption (Friedman, 2000).

Without engaging in academic debate about the idea of community, Zen has quietly shown the continuing potential of the idea, despite current limitations and trap such as inequality in economic and gender power and elite capture. Communities today may be fragmented and perhaps never existed nor ever shall in a pure form, there is a human impulse toward solidarity, and "community" has and should be a name for that impulse.

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2

A DIALOGUE CONCERNING FAITH AND WORKS BETWEEN ZENAIDA DELICA–WILLISON AND IAN DAVIS

By Dr. Ian Davis,

*Visiting Professor, Kyoto University, Japan; Lund University, Sweden and
Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom and Honorary Visiting Professor;
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Europe*

2.1 CONTEXT

In our secular age, and within the multi-cultural and pluralistic international culture, it is a rare event for one of the global leaders in our field to have the honesty and courage to discuss their motivating beliefs. I have known Zen since the early 1990's when I was co-leading a course at the Centre for Research in the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in Brussels where Zen was a participant. Her grace and ability to naturally acknowledge her deeply rooted Christian beliefs as her motivational force, has always been apparent to everyone.

I share these beliefs and was always encouraged by her passionate devotion to God, her love for others and for her positive approach to reducing disaster risks. 'Love' is the only word to describe her attitude. This is expressed to everyone she works for or with. And this attitude is particularly evident in relation to vulnerable people in acute need whom she has sought to serve throughout her work, perhaps better described as her 'ministry'. Her infectious example grows from the second commandment of Christ, to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

Therefore, when I was invited to contribute to this special issue to celebrate her life and work, I decided to focus on her Christian faith, and its expression and felt that the best way to do this was by interviewing Zen, so that we can hear her own words. After setting out Zen's answers to my questions, she in turn asked me several questions and my answers turned our questions and answers into a dialogue on the subject of faith and work.

2.2 ZEN'S BACKGROUND

Zen is from Batangas City, about 100 km south of Manila, born to a middle-class family. Her father was the village chief, when it was yet an unpaid honorary position as he worked in the



Ian Davis, Mihir R. Bhatt and Zenaída Willison were guests in the first NGO forum in Kobe, Japan. This was organized by Rev. KEN. Kusachi on the Kobe earthquake. Spoked about disaster risk management – lessons. (Photo credit: Zenaída Willison)

provincial capital. Her mother was a busy housewife primarily responsible for rearing 10 children, with Zen as second to the youngest. Zen has two undergraduate courses (Accounting and Sociology) and two masters degrees (Public Health and Development Practice, in Oxford Brookes University), where I had the pleasure of being her supervisor.

Zen worked as executive director of the *Citizens' Disaster Response Center*, and co-founded *The Center for Disaster Preparedness, (CDP) director of Training and Education of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center*. She was also South-South Disaster Risk Advisor in the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP (now UN Office for South-South Cooperation), when she retired. She's now an independent consultant, president of CDP and board member of several national, regional and global Boards of Directors, including the ADRA-International and ADRA-Asia Board. She's also a lecturer at the Adventist University of the Philippines.

2.3 QUESTIONS FOR ZEN FROM IAN

My first question was to ask her In what ways her Christian faith has affected her work?

Working in disaster and development requires compassion towards the less fortunate. Christ is an example and a reminder to

me that whatever I do for the least of my brethren, I do it for Him. Knowing that He has done so much for me, I feel I ought to return something tangible to Him. One way of showing my love and appreciation to God is to love and work for others. My faith has inspired me to work for the people who have lesser means.

My father has inculcated in me when I was young to help others without expecting any return. I guess, it became a way of life. At the end of the day, I am the one benefitted because it makes me happy. I recall that when I was young I came across an author, Herman Hesse, who summarised the meaning of happiness, which stuck in my young mind. 'Happiness means making others happy', as simple as that. It's not about getting rich, acquiring material things, having relationships, etc. Those are additions or bonuses, if they happen to you. When I became a bit mature, I realised that it was Christ who put that desire in our hearts to search for true happiness. And that happiness comes only when we find and accept Christ, as our personal Saviour and Lord.

In your view do Christians bring anything unique to DRR that is not present in people from other religious beliefs or those with no religious beliefs?

Well, I believe that one cannot work in DRR without a desire for the good of others. I don't want to sound as if I am a theologian or a preacher but in my view, those who believe in Christ tend to manifest His '*fruits of the spirit*' in the work assigned to them. – that when Christians do DRR work, they do it with and for love, not just a matter of duty or for payment. That gives them a deep sense of peace and joy and that shows in the way they relate with the people (survivors) and with fellow workers. I believe Christians' emanate a certain aura of happiness that inspires others to do the same.

Honesty is another character that true Christians possess, and people inside and outside the organisation can see this clearly. DRR is a field that we need not preach, just to be honest, diligent and faithful in fulfilling our responsibilities. Integrity also marks the work of a Christian. Being one in word and action and doing the right thing even when no one is watching is the best testimony that a Christian could express, and apply in her/his DRR work.

Can you say something about the book I co-authored with Mike Wall 'Christian Perspectives on Disaster Management' ' The Tearfund book you kindly translated into Tagalog, your native language in the Philippines.

I think you were carrying that book in one of our meetings. I noticed, borrowed and browsed through it and it dawned on me that it would be good to propagate Christian values and ethics in DRR. I then requested Tearfund, for a copy of each of the two books (the second was directed at Trainers who used the Manual) and sought approval to translate. My requests were granted. I should say that that was one of my favourite projects. Cordaid funded the translation and it was one of the first projects of the Centre for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) in 1999. I believe it became the foundation of the CDP with regard to ethics and values. We distributed copies to other organisations and we quoted some passages in training Christian groups. We still refer to it today.

One thing I also observe as one of Christian strengths is the spirit of patience (toleration) with others. In our setting at CDP, all the major Christian groupings are represented. But it was never an issue. Each was able to accommodate the views and beliefs of others. No one would feel isolated because of religious beliefs and practice. I am a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Christian and everyone who knows me in DRR is aware of that, I never felt left out, so with my friends who are Baptists, Pentecostal, Catholics. There are other groups too and they are all respected because of their contributions, we have atheists, Iglesia ni Kristo, and Jehovah's Witness participants in training courses. Christian perspective and experience in DRR is the glue that binds us all together.

How have you responded to disaster survivors who blame God for this or that disaster?

Yes, not only disaster survivors but even some of those who are not directly hit tend to blame God or ask God why did it happen to them? I kindly explain to them that God is not the source of death, diseases, displacement, economic dislocation and property damages, rather He is the God of love. I usually try to explain human interventions and the issues of vulnerability and exposure in the terms that they would understand. There are things that God allows, things that occur for a reason, we just need to trust Him. However, we have the right to engage in dialogue

with God, as occurred between God and Moses in an exchange recorded in the Bible.

Disaster survivors are insecure, not knowing their future. Christian workers can alleviate their emotional and physical suffering by providing them words of comfort and psychological first aid. Blaming God is one of their ways of coping, but once they are assured of God's loving kindness, their trust in Him is restored.

Do local churches have key roles to play in all aspects of Disaster Preparedness, risk reduction and recovery – any examples?

Local churches have always been in the forefront in the response or emergency relief activities in their communities, and they are effective in those roles, even before the proliferation of NGOs. Basically, they help each other. Traditional neighbourhood associations whose individual members belong to a certain local church, religious or Christian groups, are also involved in relief operations. Then the NGOs started to promote the progressive approach in DRM – such as – not only managing disasters, but preventing and mitigating them and preparing communities for them to be ready and to have better emergency response.

The NGOs, particularly the NGOs I was involved with (CDRC in the 1980s and CDP in the late 1990s and 2000s) advocated the wider practice of community-based disaster risk management to the government system and now there are laws that support CBDRM. For the general populace our strategy is public awareness. Now some churches started organising and training their members on preparedness actions. Major church groups have religious organisations that are specifically involved in DRR.

For example, the SDA, a worldwide church organization has the *Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)*, which caters to the physical needs of the vulnerable people in areas where it works. At the moment it operates in more than 130 countries. It has three strategic priorities: health, education and sustainable livelihoods. Disaster risk reduction is often built in as an integral component of development projects addressing those priorities. It trains the Adventist Community Services for preparedness for an efficient delivery of goods and services during calamities. It advocates for gender equality and campaigns to end female oppression. Here are some country examples: In Honduras, ADRA

promotes the use of an ecological stove that is made of local materials. It uses less wood, which reduces the cost of the wood and time required to collect the wood. Ultimately it reduces reforestation and contributes to economic well-being. In South Asia, it has projects on tuberculosis, dengue and other communicable disease prevention. In Rwanda it has a program to help AIDS victims to live decently. In the Philippines it rehabilitates selected affected communities. The beneficiaries or partners of SDAs are those who need most support.

The Catholic church have several organizations that cater to the needs of the vulnerable people. Other Christian groups have also programmes on DRR, mostly on training. Some individual churches ensure that their members are aware and ready for any eventuality, that they need to strengthen their houses, that they know how to secure their livelihood and basic needs, etc. However, individual church groupings need to be better organised and coordinated.

Is there anything else you want to say about faith and work?

'Faith without works is dead!' Faith needs to be manifested in all circumstances, not only in DRR. Basically, manifestation is about practicing Christian principles in whatever situation we are in. We are weak but we can be strong in God's strength and His grace.

Dear Ian, as I have tried to answer your questions I have reflected on the time I was confined to prison for 801 days, when I was not yet a Christian. But my faith was in someone bigger than me, a power in control of everything. That was what sustained me. When I became a Christian, life's puzzle was put into proper perspective.

When I was young and idealistic (I am still...!), I thought we could change the world, our country specifically, that when a dictator is toppled, the place would become better... however It did not! Realizing that there is ONE who would make the world a better place to live, the world I dreamed of, is a massive relief. There is an equalizer, that settled my spirit. And I can say that the best thing that ever happened to me is becoming a Christian. I am certainly not perfect in every aspect but I trust that God is able to do a miracle in me.

I am so grateful for having met you and some Christians in the DRR work. Working together in this field is comforting.

2.4 QUESTION FROM ZEN TO IAN

How did you become a Christian and do you share your faith when you teach, when you speak as a resource and if yes how?

I grew up in a loving Christian home, my parents were both passionate about their faith in God and in their attitudes to their work – my mother as a music teacher and my father as a mechanical engineer. My grandparents were also Christians – Protestant missionaries in South India and Spain. Thus I grew up with strong international awareness eating curry and paella! When I was an architectural student, aged about 17, I decided that I too wanted to invite Jesus Christ into my life, in what was I suppose a 'conversion experience'. I have never regretted the most important decision I ever made. I am convinced that the spiritual dimensions of life are infinitely more important than any of the other priorities – politics, environment, culture, etc.

When I have the opportunity to tell people about my faith, or write about my past experiences, I leap at the opportunity. This is of course unfashionable within our politically correct culture that regards such 'touchy-feely' matters as private, to be locked away in a separate box, remote from the *really* serious professional sphere. We live in a world that cheerfully elects, and then tolerates leaders who say one thing in their speeches while expressing the opposite in their personal lives. I totally dispute this dichotomy since we are all one person and if a leader lies or treats their own family badly, how can they possibly be trusted to treat their nation with integrity? As you have said in one of your answers 'Faith without Works is dead' a succinct phrase coined a couple of thousand years ago by the apostle James, one of the wise authors of a book in the Bible.

But a caveat is needed. My work in disaster planning has continually reminded me that Christians do not hold any monopoly in linking faith with good works, far from it! Thus I have met and worked alongside people of many faiths or sometimes without any religious convictions who exhibit inspirational personal and professional lives.

I am convinced that *all* humanitarian work has to be based on knowledge and skills as well as positive attitudes based on respect to people in need, and to colleagues and authorities. In my case that empathy comes directly from my faith, or more specifically from how Christ is expressed in my life- listening, sharing, teaching, painting, writing, consultancy, advocacy and within relationships. Therefore, I seek to show and explain that link and challenge others in my teaching to say what motivates them?

In my 83rd year I still have the opportunity to shape the lives of others by teaching, by encouraging and by supporting them. In my life and career, I have received massive help from others and want to pass this on. I feel that God gives me the incentive, strength and occasional insights to build others in their career paths, particularly those who may be almost 60 years younger than myself.

As I write I am preparing to spend a week in Helsinki assisting PhD students and teaching students and the general public concerning humanitarian issues. My preparation includes times of prayer that I will be shown their needs and respond effectively. To see people, grow in confidence and knowledge in front of your eyes is such a great privilege and will always be one of my greatest joys.

Were you ever been prejudiced because of your faith?

Not to my knowledge. When I was an architectural student in the 1950's I was the object of bemused curiosity with patronising encouragements to 'say something religious' for the general amusement of cynical colleagues.

As an icon in DRR, do you or other people around you attribute your status to your Christian faith?

Thank you Zen, but I would not call myself an 'icon' of anything! Perish the thought, since I am very conscious of so many personal weaknesses, failures or missed opportunities. But God's abundant grace is ever forgiving and puts me back on my feet.

I have little idea what people feel about me and that may be just as well! Recently the AIDMI have been producing a special issue about me: *'The contribution of Dr. Ian Davis to Disaster Risk Reduction 1972-2019'* Some of the eight generous contributors made reference to my Christian beliefs and my close links with Tearfund, a Christian based NGO. Whenever I am asked to talk about my

career path I discuss my faith and its positive impact on my work, relationships and entire approach to disaster work. But in the words of John the Baptist, *'He must increase while I must decrease.'*

Thank you for your questions Zen, and may you continue to inspire others through your life and Christian ministry to vulnerable people in acute need and the many who seek to assist them.

The last word from Zen:

Ian, this dialogue provided me opportunity to revisit the past and recall the good old challenging days about our faith and work, something we have never done before in the thirty years we have known each other. You raised an interesting point that resonates in me particularly, that as you help shape the life of others through teaching and encouragement, you were also blessed in so many ways in your life and career. You have helped so many, including me. I wish that I could be as active and as inspiring as you, even when I reach your age of 82. Your gentle and humble spirit motivates me to continue to seek His will and purpose for me. I pray for His guidance to both of us and those who strive to make others' life more meaningful.

TESTIMONY FOR ZEN

By Lorna P. Victoria,

Board of Trustees, Center for Disaster Preparedness & Former Deputy Executive Director, Citizens Disaster Response Center; Former Global Board Member, GNDR; CBDRM Consultant

I have the pleasure to provide details of how Zen was at the forefront of developing and applying concepts of inclusive risk reduction and resilience of communities and society.

1. Zen was actively engaged in bringing to the attention of the international community the need for community participation, especially the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as the poor, women, children and youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples within the International Decade for Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). Using the experience of the Citizens' Disaster Response Center and Network (CDRC/CDRN) in the Philippines, Zen underscored that "disasters was a question of vulnerability" and mobilizing the capacities of vulnerable groups was an important starting point in vulnerability and disaster reduction.

3

Starting with Community Involvement for Successful Disaster Reduction

- D Designing strategies that will ensure community involvement
- I Incorporating risk assessment into development planning
- S Sustaining the natural environment as a resource base of a community
- A Addressing the root causes of vulnerability
- S Strengthening the community's structure and coping strategies
- T Targeting the most vulnerable
- E Empowering the communities to participate in making decisions on issues that affect their lives
- R Reducing vulnerabilities of the communities by increasing the people's capacities

- R Reaching a broad consensus on priorities
- E Enriching the disasters and development discourse
- D Documenting the best practices on community-based disaster management to draw lessons from experience
- U Uniting on a fundamental shift from science to practical application and from sectoral to interdisciplinary action
- C Complementing community skills and resources
- T Translating theory into practice, commitment into policies, policies into plans and plans into implementation
- I Improving the socio-economic status of people
- O Organizing local activities to highlight community achievements in disaster reduction
- N Networking among us and with various groups outside of the disaster management circles

Zenaida Delica, 1999

From the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) closing ceremonies in Bangkok, 1999.
Source: http://www.adpc.net/v2007/About%20Us/Downloads/ManagingDisasters_1999.pdf

At the closing ceremonies of the IDNDR in Bangkok in 1999, she made a stirring presentation among which highlighted community involvement as the future of disaster reduction:

"is it because, despite consensus that disasters can be reduced and people protected, current strategies are still anchored on the hackneyed analysis of blaming nature as the prime culprit for the devastation or is it because the present structures in disaster prone developing countries are nurturing the causes of vulnerabilities, instead of reducing them?"

2. Zen was among those members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the academia who led in shifting attention from emergency response to comprehensive disaster management later renamed disaster risk management. She emphasised that the communities and vulnerable groups are key actors in bridging bottom-up and top-down approaches in risk reduction, thus fostering inclusive climate and disaster risk reduction.

Zen was co-lead of the Global Forum on NGOs for Disaster Reduction (GFDRR) after the mid-term review of IDNR in Yokohama, Japan in 1995. She delivered the Closing Statement of the CSOs during the last day of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 18-22 January 2005, at Kobe, Hyogo, Japan. During the

preparatory meeting of the formation of the Global Network of NGOs convened by UNISDR in October 25-26, 2006, she discussed the lessons learned in the experience of GFDRR. At the Global Platform in Geneva in June 2007, she played a facilitative role in the formation of the Global NGO Network now the Global Network of CSOs in Disaster Reduction (GNDR). She is presently a member of the Global Board of GNDR.

3. After leading the CDRC/CDRN, she co-founded the Center for Disaster Preparedness in 1999 which carried on with citizenry-based development disaster

Zenaida Delica-Willison, delivered the closing statement on behalf of civil society at World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Kobe, Japan, 2005.

(Sources: <http://enb.iisd.org/isdr/wcdr1/>)





A first “Consultative Meeting” of the Global Network of NGOs was organized by the UN/ISDR secretariat on October 25-26, 2006 in Geneva, in collaboration with the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok.

response, which eventually became known as community based disaster management (CBDRM). The Center for Disaster Preparedness would bring CBDRM to communities, CSOs and local governments in the Philippines, particularly developing and promoting community based disaster risk reduction and management, child-oriented disaster risk management, gender-response disaster risk management, disability inclusive disaster risk reduction and integration of DRM in local governance. For her pioneering work in the Philippines, she recently received the Gawad Kalasag Award in 2018 with the following citation:

"20th Gawad Kalasag National Awards Search for Excellence in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Humanitarian Assistance Special Recognition for Individual Category is awarded to Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison for her pioneering work in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM) in the Philippines since 1988 developing framework, discourse and processes to put communities at the forefront of disaster risk reduction and management.

For bringing Philippines CBDRRM experience into an international awareness: For training community leaders, public servants and private Individuals in the concept and practice of proactive and development-oriented disaster risk reduction and management:

For promoting the engagement and active participation of the vulnerable sectors through fostering multi sectoral partnership: and,

For her inspiring leadership that led many development workers to dedicate their lives to helping communities reduce their disaster risks.



During Preparatory
Global Platform for DRR
2007, Geneva.

(Source: <https://https://www.unisdr.org/2008/partner-netw/ngos/rd-ngo-eng.htm>)

Those accomplishments are all notable contributions to the national effort to build a safer climate change adaptive and disaster resilient Philippines worthy of emulation by our people and recognition from Gawad KALASAG.

Given this 4th day of December 2018 in AFP Theater, DeJesus Avenue, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City Metro Manila Signed by Undersecretary Ricardo B. Jalad, Executive Director, NDRRMC, Chairperson National Selection Committee and Civil Defense Administrator SECRETARY DELFIN N. LORENZANA, Chairperson NDRRMC and Secretary of National Defense".

4. Zen also developed the concept and practice of the South-South Citizenry Based Development Academy (SSCBDA) wherein participants from CSOs, national and local governments, academia learn from communities in risk reduction and building community resilience. From 2010 to 2013, there were 7 SSCBDAs with the support of the Special Unit for South South Cooperation at UNDP Regional Center in Bangkok. These happened in India (organised by the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute), Indonesia (organised by the Tsunami & Disaster Mitigation Research Center in Aceh and the Partners for Resilience), the Philippines (organised by the Center for Disaster Preparedness with Central Bicol State University of Agriculture and Partners for Resilience).

2010-2013	Theme	Location	Participants	Countries
First	Earthquake Recovery	Bhuj, Gujarat, India	62	9
Second	Tsunami Recovery	Banda Aceh, Indonesia	60	4
Third	Harmonizing DRR and CCA for Preparedness	Camarines Sur, Philippines	134	8
Fourth	Child Rights	New Delhi, India	66	11
Fifth	CCA, DRR and Ecosystem	RMKupang, NTT, Indonesia	174	5
Sixth	Application of Cash Transfers for DRR and CCA	Odisha, India	31	5
Seventh	Integrating DRR and CCA	Cagayan de Oro, Philippines	50	7

New Generation of Risk Reducers, page no. 9, Southasiadisasters.net Issue no. 100, November 2013. AIDMI. Source: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/35765_35765100snetnewgenerationofriskredu.pdf

5. Zen trained, mentored and inspired many members of communities, CSOs, government, academia, international organizations and other stakeholders in inclusive disaster risk reduction and management and strengthening community and society resilience.

Today, she continues to engage in consultancy and volunteer work in various areas of resilience strengthening with professional excellence and high ethical standards - truly walking the talk in inclusion, partnerships for risk reduction and development, and sustainable living.

With Zen's co founders of the Centre for Disaster Preparedness. (Photo credit: Lorna Victoria)



4

THE SOUTHEAST ASIA NEWS MEDIA AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

By Girlie Alvarez,

Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), Philippines

One of the enduring legacies of Zen Delica-Willison when she was with the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation-UNDP Regional Office in Bangkok was bringing together various sectors from the Southeast Asian region to examine and take action on how the news media could be engaged sustainably in disaster risk reduction.

Through her initiative, the Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), a Philippines media development non-profit, and the International News Safety Institute (INSI), a global coalition of media organizations, organized in December 2006 in Bali, Indonesia the first ever Southeast Asia Media and Disaster Risk Management: A Regional News Safety Conference and Training for Frontline Journalists.

The project, which aimed to heighten regional media awareness and understanding of disaster risk management and their own vulnerabilities while covering human-made and natural phenomena, brought together 20 frontline journalists from Southeast Asia.

The initiative opened opportunities for the journalists and disaster risk experts to share information and explore areas of cooperation especially with regards to disaster reporting while at the same time jointly developing safety protocols and guidelines before, during and after news coverage. Participants came from Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

The conference/training covered topics like:

- **Common understanding of disasters.** Popular understanding of disasters (from the point of view of participants) and key concepts as developed over time by experts. It included a discussion of each country's hazard and vulnerability profile in the context of disaster preparedness which aimed to enhance journalists' awareness and understanding of the relationship between disasters and development, e.g. impact of disasters on the environment, public health, economic, social and political infrastructure.

• **Addressing disaster risks.** Covered specific themes such as prevention, preparedness, emergency response, recovery and reconstruction in the context of media reporting especially in the preparedness phase.

• **The role of media.** Disaster risk reduction as a continuing responsibility of media, government, other stakeholders, and the community. Workshops and discussions centered on disaster risk communication and how journalists can increase and ensure public awareness by education themselves first. The session also covered the politics of disasters, media coverage of disasters, and application of ethical framework in disaster risk reporting.

• **Safety and security.** Workshop on how to address personal risks faced by journalists in disaster situations and hostile environments.

• **Organizing the media for disaster risk reduction.** Initial agreement on the formation of a loose grouping of media practitioners from the region called the Southeast Asia News Safety Network or SEANet. It was an envisioned as a forum and mechanism for, (a) Information and resource generation, sharing and exchange; (b) Platform for regional discourse on disaster risk and news safety; (c) Continuing media education on disaster risk awareness and management.

Zen Delica-Willison also helped sharpen the project objectives given the regularity by which natural hazards and human-made disasters have been pummeling the region during that period, illustrating vividly their impact on the most vulnerable sectors. Disaster risk was at a premium but the news media that was supposed to provide the lens through which people can understand and cope with the effects of disasters was also hobbled by a number of constraints.

These constraints include the lack of academic curricula on disaster risk including the impact of disasters on regional, national and local development as well as training courses for journalists on reporting disaster and disaster risk. Media tended to focus heavily on issues like loss of lives, damage to properties, mismanagement of relief and rehabilitation funds or skewed policies on disaster management. Critical themes like disaster preparedness, mitigation, citizen and private sector participation, government relief and rehabilitation efforts are often underreported. Lack of media training likewise often put the lives of journalists at risk while doing their jobs.

5

TRIBUTE

*By Mayfourth Luneta,
CDP, Philippines*

Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison has been the colleague (and even mentor for some) of my mentors in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Let me share with you what I have heard from them and from my personal point of view.

My mentors speak highly of her saying that she has been very bold in pursuing her advocacies in development, disaster management (now evolved into DRR) and progressive collaboration with stakeholders. Not only talking about these advocacies but also practicing and showing good examples.

So let me share from the top of my head what have been her advocacies. First and foremost, the heart of her DRR advocacy has focused on Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) or Citizenry Based-Development Oriented Disaster Response as framed by her former organization, the Citizens' Disaster Response Center. She believes that the most vulnerable should be part of DRR. Nowadays, this framework is articulated in implementing both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and DRR in our communities, focusing on the most vulnerable as main actors of both development and disaster-related initiatives.

She was also a very good initiator of localization way before the concept became popular. In the Philippines, she has bargained with partner INGOs how to use project money for the communities and was very successful with it. In Asia, she has promoted the value of local voices through South-South Cooperation. At the international level, she has boldly raised the value of engaging and supporting NGOs in development and DRR. These stories were also shared to me by her colleagues in CDRN (national network), ADRRN (Asian network) and GNDR (global network).

These are just a few of her advocacies that I believe in and adhere to. These were passed on to me by my mentors and colleagues whom she has influenced. These have helped and guided me in my own practice of DRR for the past 20 years. That is why I am thankful to her legacy in DRR.

But more than this, I am forever grateful to Zen my mother for molding me into someone who finds joy in serving and working



with the most vulnerable, and also for teaching me the basics of life (my 47 years) and more importantly sharing to me God's love and hope, something to hold on to as we continue to serve in these challenging times. It has been easy for me to understand how to love your fellow and how to sacrifice for others for she has shown good examples in life.

As a youth she fought for the rights of the oppressed even if her freedom was at stake.

As a mother, she gave her all to me. She made sure I got the best education. She made sure I would not go hungry and that I would eat healthy food. She taught me life-saving Christian values. She has implanted in me the passion and joy of helping others. All this she has done out of love.

Zenaida Delica-Willison
in Chamonix, France, in
May 2009.

(Photo Credit: JC Gaillard)

6

ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON, DRAGON-SLAYER IN THE REALM OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

By Red Batario,

Executive Director, Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), Philippines

Her slight build and impish demeanor could be misleading. The less observant could easily miss the steely strength and resolve that lies beneath that fragile-looking exterior. To some she is an anachronism, holding on to the traditions and values of another age to challenge modern-day assumptions in managing and addressing disaster risk.

To someone who has known her since she started promoting the concept of community-based development-oriented disaster management in the Philippines, the main tenet that guides the Citizens Disaster Response Center since it was founded in 1984, Zenaida Delica-Willison is simply a person unafraid to debunk

With DRR colleagues Lorna Victoria, Adelina Sevilla Alvarez, and Red Batario at GPDRR, June 5-7, 2007, Geneva, Switzerland.

(Photo credit: Red Batario)



long-held beliefs and assumptions, battling both bureaucratic structures and systems she deemed to be cumbersome.

Given the chance, she also will not hesitate to push the envelope further if this will serve a higher purpose and benefit a larger constituency.

Nothing could illustrate this more clearly than when she argued forcefully for supporting an initiative to bring together Southeast Asian journalists and various sectors to examine and take action on how the news media could be engaged sustainably in disaster risk reduction. At that time, media engagement was not yet on the table of disaster and development agencies (see also G. Alvarez' contribution to this volume).

Bringing decades of experience in disaster risk reduction in the Philippines and in other countries, Zenaida, or Nanay Zen (*Mother Zen*) as she is fondly referred to, helped sharpen our advocacy given the regularity by which natural hazards and human-induced disasters have been pummeling the region during that period, illustrating vividly their impact on the most vulnerable sectors. Disaster risk was at a premium but the news media that was supposed to provide the lens through which people can understand and cope with the effects of disasters was also hobbled by a number of constraints.

These include the lack of academic curricula on disaster risk including an examination of the impact of disasters on regional, national and local development as well as training courses for journalists on reporting disaster and disaster risk. Media tended to focus heavily on issues like loss of lives, damage to properties, mismanagement of relief and rehabilitation funds or skewed policies on disaster management. Critical themes like disaster prevention and mitigation, citizen and private sector participation, government relief and rehabilitation efforts are often underreported. Lack of media training likewise often put the lives of journalists at risk while doing their jobs.

This is but one example of how, unobtrusively and quietly, this wisp of a woman has been contributing immensely to reshaping the disaster risk reduction landscape not just in the Philippines and the region but in many parts of the world as well. In 2013, Delica-Willison received the Mary Fran Myers Award established in 2002 by the Gender and Disaster Network, recognizing that

"vulnerability to disasters and mass emergencies is influenced by social, cultural, and economic structures that marginalize women and girls." And for her continuing efforts at increasing knowledge and enhancing capacities she was recognized by the Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) - Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in its Gawad Kalasag Search for Excellence in DRRM and Humanitarian Assistance Awards as the Champion of CBDRRM in the Philippines and around the globe.

In the course of her career and life mission, Zenaida Delica-Willison has slain many dragons, the likes of misconception, misinformation, mismanagement, misogynism, and misunderstanding, to name a few. Defying the onset of years and at the rate she is going, she could well be on the way to slaying more for the benefit of us all.



Zen Delica-Willison with Lorna Victoria of the Center for Disaster Preparedness and Adelina Sevilla Alvarez of the Center for Community Journalism and Development in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2007.

(Photo credit: Red Batario)

TRIBUTE TO ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON UPON HER RESIGNATION FROM THE CITIZEN'S DISASTER RESPONSE CENTER (CDRC) IN 1998

By Eufemia Andaya,

Former Deputy Director and member of the Board of Trustees of CDRC

I consider it as an honor and privilege to give tribute to a well loved colleague and friend. I have known Zen since I started working with CDRC and that was 10 years ago. Those years saw the rise of CDRC from a struggling organization to one that is recognized locally and internationally as a development-oriented disaster response organization. This came about through the able leadership of Zen.

Some were born to lead, others were made to lead. Zen was both. She has the natural talent to inspire people, She also kept on honing her management skills. She does not know how to rest on her laurels, she just keeps on moving on. She is always a student, always a teacher, a sure way to keep learning. And also a sure way to keep oneself forever young.

"Small but terrible" a phrase that aptly describes Zen. She was responsible for the turn around of CDRC. I remember when I joined CDRC, Zen was its new Executive Director. At that time, CDRC did not enjoy the trust of its partners whether it be the partner local NGOs or the donors. But, Zen was not deterred by the not so friendly external environment. She just knew what to do. She knew that we have to improve on how things are being done. Our first task was to revise our management systems and procedures. I remember that my first assignment was to review the different guidelines for the funds that CDRC manages. I was also made a member of the committee that set-up the new office policies and procedures. While we were working on improving our operational systems, Zen was always out consulting with the regional members of the Citizens Disaster Response Network(CDRN) to improve the working relationship with them. Then she had dialogues with current donors and she also explored possibilities of working with other funders. Slowly, the poor relationship with the regional members of CDRN improved and slowly also CDRC regained the trust of donors. When the July 1990 earthquake struck, CDRC got full support from its network of local and international partners. That is when we knew that CDRC





Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison which was screen grabbed from the video produced by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company. The advertisement featured CDRC's work. This was aired in the early 90's.

(Eufemia Andaya)

has become what we wanted it to be, an organization recognized and supported for its role in promoting and implementing citizenry-based development oriented disaster response.

For all the work she has put in, Zen was never selfish to claim the honor all to herself. She credits each and every staff of CDRC for their hard work and proudly introduces each one to our partners whenever there is an opportunity to do so. She has this way of making one feel that one can be as good as she is, if not better. She dreams big things for the staff. She wants, if

possible, for the staff to get as much exposure as herself. Of course, there were times when she was misunderstood for her big dreams, when people felt like bursting at the seams because of the pressure of her expectations. But the good thing with Zen is she knows when to stop, when to backtrack. And she takes efforts to take away the strain in her relationship with her staff. Truly, a leader with a heart.

Zen always says that she is boastful because it is a trait of the people from her province of Batangas. Well, she is in a way, in the right way. She does not boast of her own accomplishments but of what CDRC and CDRN have done in the service of the vulnerable sectors. The truth is Zen is a humble person and I think everyone who has worked with her knows that. She knows how to say, "I am sorry" when she makes a mistake. Everyone here knows how difficult it is to apologize and to truly mean it.

Zen is not all serious work. She is a fun person to be with and the staff are all comfortable relating with her. When she serves as trainer/facilitator she makes learning fun and participants learn new concepts easily. She also makes assessment-planning sessions with the staff interesting inspite of the heavy discussions by inserting activities that lighten the mood of everyone.

Well, I can say a lot more about Zen but I think each one of us can say a thing or two about her so I would end here and give a few of you the opportunity to also pay tribute to our beloved ED.

We can say a lot of nice words about Zen but I am sure that she would like to be known simply as a Christian who has lived life in the service of the vulnerable sectors of society for the glory and honor of God.

CHAMPION OF CBNDRM IN THE PHILIPPINES

*By Adelina Sevilla Alvarez,
Convener, Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines*

With over 40 years' experience in development and disaster risk reduction practice in the Philippines and in other Asian countries, Zenaida Delica-Willison is the acknowledged "mother" of community-based disaster risk management. She has trained community leaders, non-government and government persons in the concept and practice of proactive and development-oriented risk reduction and management by promoting the active participation of the vulnerable groups in partnership with less vulnerable groups of Philippine society (before, during and after a disaster).

In December 2018, the Philippines' National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and the Office of Civil Defense (NDRRMC-OCD), through its National Selection Committee, honored her with the Special Recognition Award during the **20th Gawad KALASAG Search for Excellence in DRRM and Humanitarian Assistance**. It is the country's premier recognition program for various stakeholders who implement and promote disaster risk reduction and management that protect and



Special Recognition Award given to Ms. Zen Delica-Willison by the Philippines' National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council – Office of the Civil Defense (NDRRMC – OCD) through its Gawad KALASAG Search for Excellence in DRRM and Humanitarian Assistance, 2018.

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shield high risk communities against hazards and making them more capable of addressing their vulnerabilities and coping with disasters.

Part of her Citation read--

... For her pioneering work in Community Based Disaster

Risk Management in the Philippines since 1988, developing framework, discourse, and processes to put communities at the forefront of disaster risk reduction and management (then called community based development-oriented disaster management). She advanced the Philippine Community Based Disaster Risk Management experience into the international arena.

... Through her leadership she has inspired many development workers to dedicate their lives to helping communities reduce their disaster risks.

Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison therefore is recognized as the champion of CBDRRM in the Philippines and around the world.

TRIBUTE TO ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON'S CONTRIBUTION TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

By Man Thapa,

Program Manager, ADPC country representation in Nepal

Zenaida Delica-Willison from the Philippines is a well-known disaster risk management/ reduction professional. She has contributed significantly in the field of community based disaster risk management initiatives in Asia. Since the beginning of her career in the field of DRM/R about 40 years back, she has been able to empower communities across and has successfully implemented rural development activities in general and DRM/R in particular the Philippines and other parts of Asia. Due to continues and tireless efforts, she has received several awards such as the "Mary Fran Myers Award" (2013), "KALASAG National Award" (2018) on Special Recognition on Individual Category for Excellence on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Humanitarian Assistance and so on.

I know Zenaida (Zen) since late 90s and we organized several national and regional levels events together. We jointly organized the first of its kind training for UN agency heads in Nepal on joint UN Preparedness and Response Plan. Nepal was the first country to develop such one UN Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan in 2001. Zen and her team from Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) facilitated the 2-day long training based on the plan developed by us.

Since then, we both organized several national and regional events together. In 2008, while I was with UNDP Sri Lanka as a DRR Advisor, we organized a regional workshop on Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) where Zen and other colleagues shared their experiences on CBDRM which supported government of Sri Lanka to develop a CBDRM guidelines (2008). Zen also visited Afghanistan to evaluate the UNDP Afghanistan's DRR program.

Zen has over 40 years of experience in development in general and disaster risk reduction practice in particular in the Philippines and in other Asian countries. She facilitated the development of the community-based disaster risk reduction in the Philippines and globally through organizing, training, projects

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development and wide promotion through sharing of her experiences and advisory services. She has held executive director posts in NGOs and advisory post in the UNDP Office for South-South Cooperation, leading teams and programmes, developing strategies and undertaking training and facilitation, research and consultancy and evaluation. She developed the concept and implemented South-South Community Based Development Academy in South and Southeast Asia. She also managed the Global Facility for Community Based Disaster Risk Management, and organized the Training and Learning Circle for CBDRM. She co-facilitated the initial formation of the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations (GNDR) with the UNISDR in 2006. GNDR is now the largest network on DRR, with more than 1,000 member organizations all over the world.

Zen is a true DRM/R practitioner from Asia and her contribution to make Asia a disaster resilient region is significant.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZENAIDA DELICA-WILLISON

*The following interview of Zenaida Delica-Willison was taken by
Bruno Haghebaert,
Risk and Vulnerability Lead, Disaster and Crisis Prevention, Response and
Recovery (DCPRR), IFRC, Geneva, Switzerland*

Bruno: Would you please elaborate on the history of GNDR?

Zen: Let us go way back during the mid-term review of the IDNDR in 1994 in Yokohama. There were a few NGOs present there and the Citizens Disaster Response Center (CDRC), which I was representing was one of them. We felt marginalized as there was lacking in opportunities to participate. Our voice was not loud enough to be listened to. In a small corner of the venue, the NGOs gathered and decided to form the Global Forum of NGOs for Disaster Reduction (GFNDR) with advocacy on community based approaches on disaster reduction in mind.

It was a loose organization. There was no strategy to recruit members globally, so members were only those who were present during the IDNDR mid-term review. At that point, I was elected to become the president, and M.K. Jain of Joint Assistance Centre (JAC) in India volunteered to become the secretary. After the conference, JAC coordinated with and followed up members. JAC managed to generate minimal funding to hold several forums – at least for some logistics. Participants had to shoulder their travel costs.

GFNDR organized several forums: one in India, one in Nepal, one in the Philippines, and one in the US. We did not have support of encouragement either from international NGOs nor from the government. IDNDR supported us minimally by designing the GFNDR poster, sending its staff in a meeting in Arizona, funding my participation in selected IDNDR events and inviting me to speak during the closing of the decade in Asia Pacific. Because the individual members' concentration was on strengthening their own national NGOs, the GFNDR suffered and so when the Decade closed, it also ceased to operate. However, it has always been our desire to one day continue the agenda of disaster reduction on a global scale.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Conference in Kobe in 2005 was very different in terms of NGO participation. There were many NGOs present and we were given

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a time to present the NGOs concerns. I was requested by INGO friends to read the NGO joint statement. I hesitated because in a week's time, I would be joining the UNDP as DRR Advisor to the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP.

Early in 2006, the then UNISDR officer, who later became the UNISDR Asia Pacific Director, Dr. Fengmin Kan, discussed with me the idea of organizing a global NGO for DRR. She knew of my involvement with the GFNDR. We were both excited about the possibility. Then and there, we produced the concept paper for the GNDR. Dr. Kan is a woman of action and by July and September 2006, we already held the first and second consultations with international NGOs in the ISDR office in Geneva, called by the UNISDR and the UNDP. I presented the lessons from the GFNDR, and challenged all the NGOs present there to organize and come together, taking advantage of the UN promising to give a platform to NGOs, which was absent during my time. Though apprehensive by the UN offer, the NGOs agreed and by 2007, Global Network of NGOs on Disaster Reduction (GNDR) was launched at the First UN Global Platform. Ever since, the GNDR reads its statement at the Global Platform.

I believe that the NGOs on their own would have also organized itself. It has changed its name to Global Network of Civil Society Organization for Disaster Reduction or GNDR.

Bruno: Did the views from the frontline help?

Zen: Yeah. The views from the frontline (VFL) was a platform for the NGOs to issue their statement and put across their collective voice. The UN is mostly a government platform to showcase their various achievements. Now, the GNDR could challenge their reports or at least could tell them that "while there is a cloud, there is no rain". Individual national NGOs did not have any clout, but with the involvement of INGOs the voice of GNDR was beginning to be heard.

Having an NGO background and working with the UN, I had to be very careful in order to achieve DRR objectives. As NGOs, we need to present our message in a way that could be tolerated by the decision makers, because we need their support to make things happen. We also don't want to lose the meaning and essence of the statement. We need it to be strong to have an impact but not overly critical to be rejected. And that was quite stressful to be navigating uncertain waters with our feet in two boats at the same time.

Bruno: Now, even the NGOs are more constructive in their criticism saying that it's important for them to work with local governments to contribute effectively. But they barely criticize the system.

Zen: Definitely, the landscape on GO-NGO relation has changed. But it does not mean that NGOs do not criticize the government anymore, it depends on which country an NGO operates. It is just that now the NGOs give credit where the credit is due. They also acknowledge that they too are essentially a part of the governance structure and need to work with governments by offering tested solutions. They advocate to the government their agenda and create awareness on the ground. On the other hand, governments have realized that they cannot do the work alone and need the cooperation of all sectors including NGOs to achieve goals. The UN helped in facilitating that kind of process. Partnership is strongly embedded in the Sendai Framework for DRR document. So I think we are moving in the right direction. I can't say that I'm fully satisfied but I definitely believe that we have made incredible incremental progress.

I have spent almost 45 years in this sector where people involved want to contribute. It's always a good thing to reinforce each other's ideas. It's also encouraging to see that you are not alone. And you, Bruno is very good in facilitating this connection. Like in the 90s, you helped with the training material for disaster reduction for UNESCO. Ever since, our partnership has grown. We were together in the ProVention Consortium-funded Training and Learning Circle. We together produced several good materials which are still being used.

Bruno: Were you an influence on the UN?

Zen: That's difficult to say. While with the UN, I was able to organize seven South-South Development Academies in three countries. It was a version of the international high level meetings but "lower" level meetings participated by local communities. These were meaningful to me. I believe it is important for community leaders and local NGOs to gather together and exchange views and experiences about their development solutions and explore possibilities of replication to address their current challenges. The community or local people are not invited in national, regional and international meetings nor they ever validate their solutions with others outside of their villages. So the academy is for them to validate their solutions, and so before these old leaders die at least they would know the satisfaction of having made a meaningful contribution to their communities.

Bruno: Just for your information, 26% of the participants came from the civil society. So compared to traditional conferences and meetings, this is a huge success. And even if you doubt about your influence, indirectly it has made a huge difference in terms of their commitment. The interesting thing is that the NGOs also see these meetings as a valid platform to promote their stuff. So they really like the engagement with governments, private sector and academics. So I think that it's a huge progress.

Zen: Yes it is. And to think that when local governments see their counterpart NGOs in Geneva or any other international forum, there's also some kind of recognition and respect from the government for these NGOs. There's also the implicit acknowledgment that they will continue the work back home.

Bruno: You have planted a lot of seeds to make this all possible.

Zen: For me what's important is the result. I don't want to think about what I contributed but to see what has been the result of these efforts, whether they are worth celebrating or not. For me, meeting gurus at various forums and discussing with them are important learning opportunities.

Bruno: I also think that young generation does not know this history of DRR and they have a very short time span as a frame of reference. For instance, they take so many things for granted like thinking that there is a link between disasters and development. And they think they've discovered that. I think it is quite important for them to know that a lot of people have already thought about it three decades ago.

Zen: Yes, it happens all over, concerning many development and DRR concepts. I see myself 30 years ago in these youngsters. For example, we thought that we came up with the term "internal refugees" only to discover that it has already been used in some publications long time ago. So, it is important to know the history and realize that ideas are continuing and developing. They should also come up with new and innovative solutions to avoid regurgitating previously discovered concepts.

Bruno: How do you see the future for DRR? They always say that it is something that should be mainstreamed and that over time it would disappear and would make itself redundant. But you don't see that happening.



Zen: No actually it is becoming a part of the system. Continued advocacy is having an impact too. Lots of changes are taking place in the system. For instance in the Philippines, the old law on disaster or emergency management has been repealed to disaster risk reduction and management. Institutional arrangement has also been set up from the village to the national level. However, implementation and enforcement of the law is another thing. Universities now offer courses on disaster risk reduction. Preparedness and aspects of preventions are tackled in schools. School and hospital safety are given priorities. The community based disaster risk reduction and management is now widely accepted and recognized. So it is now becoming a practice.

Bruno: But Philippines is way ahead of other countries.

Zen: Well from your Western perspective? The engagement with the NGOs operating in disaster risk reduction has also paved that way. But the significance of the NGO should not be diluted. I mean, NGOs should not be co-opted and should never fall for complacency of resting on their laurels. And also not fall in the trap of advocating old things that have been accepted by the establishment long time ago. And if there's no collective memory then there is no sense of history.

Bruno: Thank you so much for your insights.

Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison discussing CBDRM with local communities in Bhutan in June 2010.

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SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATORY ACTION IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN AFRICA

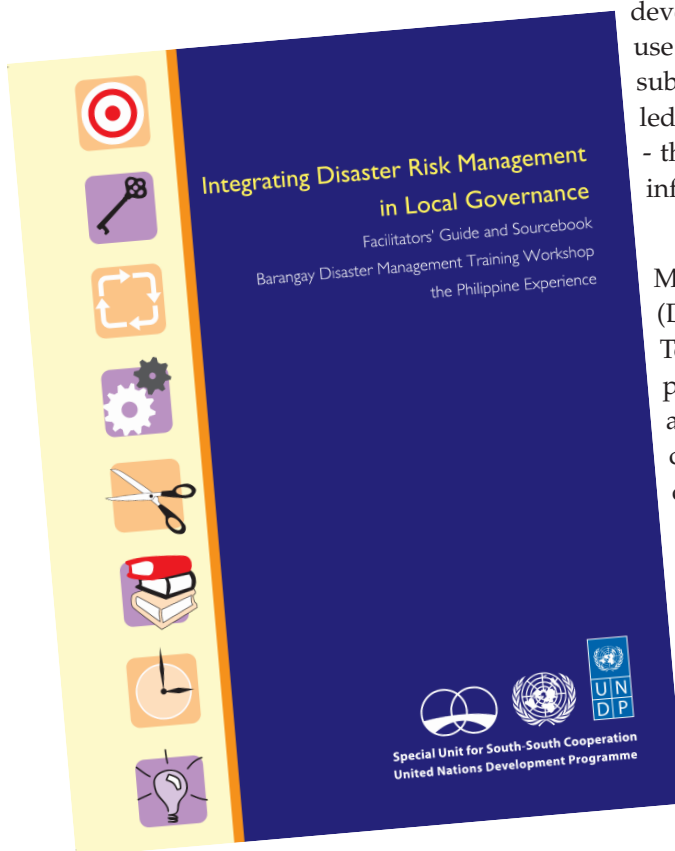
By Dr. Ailsa Holloway,
Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand and
Formerly, Research Alliance for Disaster and Risk Reduction (RADAR), Stellenbosch
University, South Africa

Zen's commitment and support for participatory action in disaster risk reduction extended well beyond Asia and the Pacific. Her expertise in local disaster risk management, honed through decades of work in at-risk communities in both urban and rural settings, helped guide similar processes in Africa.

One of Zen's many significant contributions to participatory disaster risk reduction in Africa was her generous sharing of the 'near-to-complete' publication *'Integrating disaster risk management in local governance: a facilitators'¹ guide and a sourcebook for Barangay disaster risk management training workshop, the Philippine experience'*. This 2006 guide and source-book,

developed collaboratively for local level use in the Philippines, helped to substantially inform the thinking that led to a South African facilitator's guide - that has become widely used in informal settlements.

At that time, the Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods (DiMP) team at the University of Cape Town was conceptualising a similar process and guide that would be applicable in at-risk South African contexts. They were sourcing proven community-based disaster risk management facilitation approaches that had been effective in other developing country situations, and that actively engaged local government representatives. The Integrating disaster risk management in local governance resource materials Zen helped to develop were instrumental in

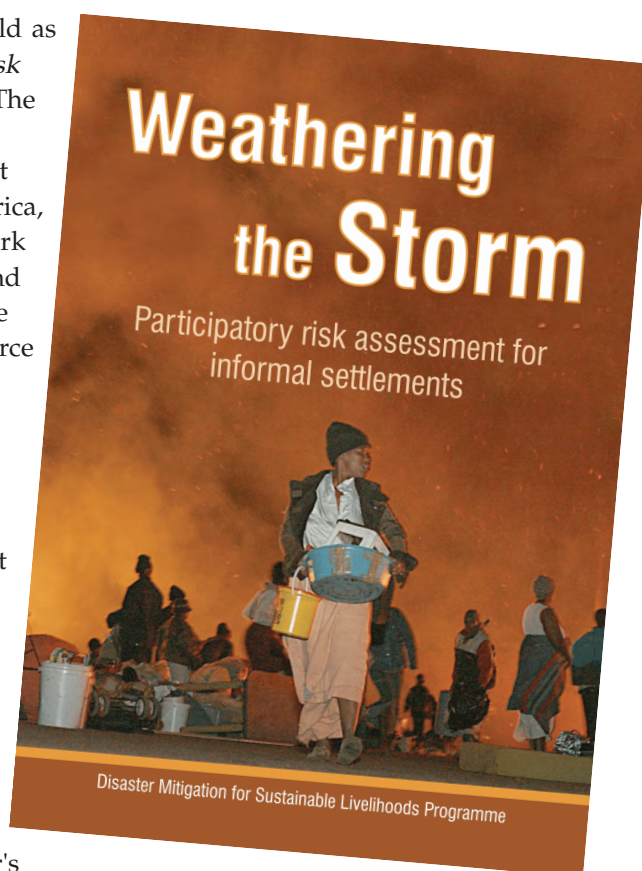


informing what would eventually unfold as *'Weathering the storm: participatory risk assessment for informal settlements'*². The South African publication went on to become a key resource for development and disaster managers across South Africa, underpinning post-graduate course-work at both the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University. Weathering the storm also became a widely used resource in more than a decade of short-course training sessions on participatory engagement in urban risk, especially in African informal settlements. These reached participants from across the length and breadth of Africa, who went on to transfer and adapt the approach to their own specific risk environments.

As the South African publication was nearing completion, Zen also set aside time to review the draft, substantially improving the final participatory risk assessment facilitator's guide. This has become a widely applied and adapted resource with multiplier effects across the African continent.

This small example of Zen's determination and skill to advance community-based and community-led disaster risk reduction shows how her thought- and moral leadership has reached far into Africa, guiding practitioners, educators and students committed to inclusive development.

It foregrounds her unwavering generosity of spirit and deep commitment to improve development prospects of at-risk households and communities wherever they might be.



1 https://issuu.com/cdpfoundation/docs/undp_publication_of_twg_output_integrating_drm_in_

2 <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/4163>

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UP, CLOSE AND A BIT PERSONAL

By Wilson Maranan,

Country Director, ADRA Sri Lanka

When I was approached by All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) through an email request to write something about (Ms) Zenaida Delica-Willison whom I personally call, "Auntie Zen", I started to gather my thoughts on how well I can speak of this diminutive but dynamic lady who happens to be *a force to reckon with* in her own right in terms of her own accomplishments and achievements.

Zenaida Delica-Willison shows her multiple engagements not only in community work, disaster risk reduction and mitigation, international development and humanitarian intervention, to name a new – highlighted by a number of recognition she received both locally and internationally, but also, her intentionality of making sure that her holistic approach on things are marked by her active involvement of such in her own life and faith practice.

I am coming from a very personal sort of introducing her through the way I have seen and witnessed her working with a number of church people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church where we both belong, including leaders and regular members alike. She brings with her the same level of zeal and professionalism on how to improve lives through the basic social unit – the family, and the ripple effect of collective action of a community working together towards a common goal based from biblical concept of faith community.

Her take on making lives better is quite inspirational with sound sociological principles as part of her basic skillset punctuated with her *past life* as a street parliamentarian and incarcerated activist demanding for radical changes are ingredients in making her effective catalyst for change, cliché it may be.

After her newfound faith in God, Auntie Zen worked vigorously and concentrated on harnessing God's expectations for His followers as prescribed in Micah 6:8 on acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly while emphasizing the empowerment of all peoples intricately link together in the web of humanity.

12.1 ZEN – HER CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ACTIVE WORK WITH THE SDA CHURCH

Zen's dynamism is not only limited in her previous role in disaster risk reduction initiatives while she worked with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) but also, in her deep longings for things which are spiritual in nature.

In the realm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a community of believers, Zen is a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Pasig and in her home town in Batangas City, Philippines. She is thus part of the 25-million member religious organization with its main base in Silver Springs, Maryland USA known globally for its unique emphasis both on health and education. Through its diverse ministries, the SDA church operates at least 8,215 educational institutions worldwide, (second to the Roman Catholic church's educational system) and manages 198 hospitals globally.

Zen's passion of giving back to God for what she believes is her true Source of knowledge and strength, her love for the Supreme Being is what motivates and propels by her genuine love and care to work for others.

She finds joy and a sense of fulfillment by sharing what she has without expecting anything in return as part of her upbringing. By rather "living the Gospel of Jesus", she delights working with the less fortunate ones and believing that whatever she does for the least of her brethren, she is doing it for God.

As a firm believer of God's incarnational ministry exemplified through the life and works of Jesus Christ, Zen's exemplary and selfless commitment and dedication of making a difference in the lives of those who are at-risk, disenfranchised and marginalized is both inspiring and encouraging as she continue to share her God-given gift of empowering people through knowledge transfer in the field of disaster risk reduction and development work.

Keen on doing things based from biblical principles of Christian ethic and of looking at things with spiritual lens of how God values His created beings – ultimately, humanity, Zen exemplifies a strong servant-leadership posture and render her acts of kindness in simple and inclusive way.

12.2 ZEN AND HER ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY (ADRA)

Zen's passion and expertise in the field of international development and humanitarian work did not escape the Church's radar to tap and entrust her to be part of its highest decision making body of the worldwide Church's official humanitarian and development agency – the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) established in 1956.

As a direct response of the rebuilding effort of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a community of believers together with other leading international non-government organizations (INGOs) after World War II, it aimed to contribute to the early development initiatives of nations to make sure that the loses and the atrocities of war will be rebuilt.

Her professional and unquestionable solid portfolio in development and humanitarian work is pivotal in her role as a resident Board member and one of the longest serving decision-makers for 20 years in ADRA International.

On top of that, Zen is also currently serving as the longest member of the ADRA Asia Board since 2000 with its headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand.

ADRA was created to augment the work of the Church in reaching out to those who are in need through its humanitarian and development initiatives and is considered to be one of the biggest faith-based humanitarian organizations and is currently operating in 134 countries globally.

As one of the most active global humanitarian agencies, ADRA continue to maintain its mandate in societal change and development initiatives and the United Nation's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) granted ADRA general Consultative status by the United Nations in 1997.

Through her engagement with ADRA, Zen finds her niche of actively training church members locally and internationally in the Church's own department, the Adventist Community Services.

Facilitation of Training-of-Trainers (TOT) activities on disaster risk reduction and prevention, as well as introducing the church members on topics and discussions on gender equality and inclusion are given high priority by her.

Believing that she is only contributing on God's bigger picture of a better world, Auntie Zen is playing her role in a profound and inspiring way!

