

Community first responders saving lives in the Philippines

Interest Story

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Silay, Philippines – From June to late December every year, the Silay city in the Philippines' Negros Occidental province suffers from constant rainfall and flooding. With the changing climate, flooding is sometimes present even during the dry season.

Jessie Chongo is a local motorized tricycle driver and a community first responder. He graduated from the Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) training in 2012, and has a lot of responsibility before flooding. Whenever there is an impending flood, the volunteer drives around the community calling for people to evacuate.

Chongo will always remember the flood in late 2013. He was out on duty when he heard someone calling for help from inside a house.

"I went into the house and saw a disabled 13-year-old boy sitting on a chair. He was alone at home, in danger of drowning in the flood water and calling for help," Chongo reminisces.

He knew exactly what to do thanks to the CADRE training.

"Using the fireman's carry technique, I lifted the boy on my shoulder. It was difficult to carry him in the water, but I got him on my tricycle and drove him to the Barangay Mambulac clinic for treatment," Chongo tells, adding that the training taught him a lot about dealing with victims of flooding, vehicle accidents and fire.

"Had I not taken CADRE, I wouldn't have



Jessie Chongo, a local tricycle driver, calls people to evacuate in times of flooding.

known the right way to deal with the situation. I probably would have dragged him out of the house, which could have caused him severe injuries," Chongo says. "The boy's family was grateful to me for having saved their son."

Swift action can protect from damages in times of fire

Merly P. Garsola, also a graduate from

the CADRE training in Silay, was on her way to the city center of the coastal Barangay Mambulac sub-district, when she suddenly heard people shouting that a house was burning.

"I immediately called the fire station," says Garsola, a health worker from Silay.

Arriving at the scene, Garsola saw the upper floor of the two-story building on



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Merly P. Garsola's swift action helped extinguish a house fire.



Communities to act for disaster response

Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) training equips community members with the basic skills to respond to a disaster event in their community. The training is part of the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) initiated in 1998 by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID-OFDA).

When a large-scale disaster hits, it can take up to 48 hours for professional responders to reach affected areas. Community members need to be equipped to respond quickly to save lives. CADRE works to increase the capacity of communities in Southeast Asia in responding effectively to disasters.

fire. She started organizing a bucket brigade – a skill she had just learned at the CADRE training a few months earlier.

“I told the people to form a line and bring water with buckets from their houses nearby. They did what I asked,” Garsola reminisces.

The fire brigade that arrived soon after appreciated her performance. The fire was already in control thanks to Garsola's determined action that not only helped extinguish the fire, but also prevented it from spreading downstairs.

“I couldn't have done what I did without the CADRE training,” Garsola states.