



**Best Practice Summary
Cebu City, Philippines**

Country:	Philippines
Local Government:	Cebu City
Type:	Municipality
Best Practice Title:	Rescuing in Three Minutes
Aspect of Governance:	Thematic Area 3: Inclusive Urban Public Services
Reported By:	Galing Pook Foundation
Start Date:	Late 1980s
Website:	http://www.eruf161.com/

Description:

Background

The Problem:

The city of Cebu serves as the centre of commerce, trade, education, transportation and communication in the Visayas because of its strategic location right in the middle of the Philippine archipelago. Thus plus the entrepreneurial spirit of its people caused the economic boom and industrialisation of Cebu City and of the nearby cities of Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu. Rapid economic and population growth, however, brought with it attendant problems of traffic congestion, greater demand for quality social services and quick responses to health needs.

Especially the quick response to health needs became a serious problem in the 1970s and solutions were looked for, even before the passage of the Local Government Code that gave local governments greater responsibility for emergency services.

Results Achieved and Relevance to Public Life

The Programme:

In response to the great need for emergency services, Cebu City started devolving the delivery of health services, primarily pre-hospital care and

ambulance services, to civil society. Called Rescue 161, the programme involved the formation of a search and rescue team that would help in the formulation and implementation of policies on disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention. The programme was based on the American Rescue 911 and was under the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) programme.

Beginnings

In 1975, then mayor Demetrio Cortes of Mandaue City started the Mandaue Emergency Rescue Unit as a civic project attached to the Mandaue City Fire Department. This disbandment of the Rescue Unit in 1986 led to the formation of the Emergency Rescue Unit Foundation (Phils) Inc (ERUF). The Foundation's personnel were members, volunteers and paramedics of the earlier emergency unit.

Partnership with Cebu City

The ERUF proved its worth, catching the attention of other LGUs in Cebu Province. Mayor Tomas Osmena of Cebu City forged a partnership between the city government and ERUF.

Main Features

- ERUF was given the primary responsibility for answering medical calls, providing emergency medical services and handling disaster preparedness and safety promotion activities.
- In return the government subsidised the operation.
- ERUF was directly accountable to the office of the city mayor.
- Budget spending (76% from the city government) mainly on personnel, maintenance, operations and capital outlays.
- Rest of the budget came from donations, foreign assistance, membership dues, honoraria from lectures, and service fees from private hospitals.
- The ERUF had 40 full-time paramedics assisted by 150 paramedic volunteers, 10 operations personnel, 26 communication personnel, and 55 medical doctors.
- The full-time paramedics and more than a hundred volunteers worked 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.
- ERUF had a response time of three minutes from the time of the call.
- The area of service area covered the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu.

Activities

- Responding to alarms and emergency calls;
- Providing emergency ambulance service;
- Giving medical back-up assistance during special events;
- Safety promotions;
- Workshops for disaster preparation, mitigation and prevention;
- Organising barangay (municipality) disaster brigades
- Training of paramedic volunteers in first aid, basic life support, safety promotion and disaster preparation and control, fire-fighting, search and rescue, towing and water rescue.

Results

- ERUF saved the lives of 20% of the 10% critically ill patients, a very satisfactory performance in the field of emergency medicine.
- Reduction of medical expenses for patients through the ambulance service and pre-hospital care.

- Reduced mortality rate also amongst accident victims.
- Savings for Cebu City.

Lessons Learnt

Originally there was a problem of a high turnover rate of paramedics and volunteers who left after a short period for more attractive jobs abroad. This was traced back to the lack of security of tenure and minimal incentives and benefits paid to the workers. This problem was addressed and the situation improved.

Sustainability

The dependence of the previous emergency services on the city government for its budget was a perennial source of insecurity. The programme was in constant danger of being closed due to political changes. Once ERUF was in place, the dependence on government good will and funds was lessened since service fees were collected from private hospitals. There was also a trust fund established to ensure continuity.

Transferability

The programme was a successful example of the power of private-public-people partnerships (PPPP), since it was giving responsibility to civil society to manage the emergency service (the people element) with funds from the government (public) and additional funding raised from the private hospitals (the private sector). Such cooperation can be set up quite easily in other municipalities across the region.



Madridejos Medical Mission, December 2013