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**Case 2: Typhoon Haiyan Experience in Tacloban City**

1. **What experiences and examples are you aware of that are being faced by particularly individuals and communities in vulnerable situations (as identified above) that have suffered loss and damage due to the adverse impacts of climate change?**

**Unprecedented strong typhoons hit the Philippines every year.** Filipinos are used to typhoons. An average of 20 typhoons enter the country every year. On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) hit Eastern Visayas as a category 5 typhoon with sustained surface winds of 315 km/h. On record, more than 6,300 people died, but reports on the ground estimated that more than 10,000 people perished. Most of those who died have remained missing and unrecorded because deadly storm surges washed them away. Most were fishermen and their families living in coastal areas. Although people of Eastern Visayas are used to experiencing yearly typhoons, they said that Haiyan was the strongest they have experienced in the last 50 years, overwhelming communities with its strength and the storm surges that never happened in the past.

After a year, in December 2014, Typhoon Hagupit (locally known as Typhoon Ruby) again devastated the Philippines, hitting portions of Eastern Visayas. Typhoon Hagupit came packing maximum sustained winds of 140km/h and gusts of 170km/h **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**. This typhoon hit when people affected by Haiyan had barely recovered and the government was still grappling on where to safely relocate them. Fortunately, Typhoon Hagupit was less intense, and people, still traumatized by Typhoon Haiyan, immediately heeded the government’s warning and decided to evacuate to safer areas days before the storm made landfall

**Displacement of residents in the “danger zones”.** Urban Poor Associates (UPA), a non-government organization in the Philippines, has been a partner of informal settlers in their quest for security of land and housing tenure. When UPA went to Tacloban in December 2013 to do a rapid post-disaster assessment, it saw that thousands of families were prohibited from returning to where they used to live after the government designated these are “no build zones” (NBZ). This policy was yet another blow to the survivors of Haiyan; they were displaced by the strong typhoon, and would then be displaced again by this government order. If residents rebuild their houses inside the no build zone areas, they were told that no help and relief goods would be sent to them. They were to find another dwelling place in safe areas which are mostly private properties. The government wanted to immediately bring these fishermen to relocation sites on higher grounds, far from the sea where they earn a living. The NBZ policy caused confusion and anxiety to the people. UPA was able to organize 11 communities which marched from Tacloban Astrodome to the Balyuhan Center to demand the release of shelter kits and to urge the government to provide them decent permanent housing near their sources of income. The leaders presented their issues to the city government. As a response, the city council issued a resolution ordering the mayor to immediate release the repair/shelter kits. This paved the way for the release of shelter kits from local and international humanitarian organizations to the affected communities. This was the first victory of the people.

1. **What legislation, policies and practices do you think are necessary to provide redress for particularly individuals and communities in vulnerable situations that have suffered and will continue to suffer loss and damage due to the adverse impacts of climate change?**

The Philippines has several legislations in place that provide assistance to communities that suffer loss and damage due to the impacts of climate change:

* Republic Act (RA) No.10121 or the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act underscores the government’s role as duty bearer in disaster mitigation and preparation. This law also highlights the comprehensive, all-hazard, multi-sectoral, inter-agency, and community-based approach to disaster risk reduction and management.
* RA No. 7279 or the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) ensures that affected communities cannot be relocated anytime according to the government's whims. It must first prepare decent relocation sites with all the social services in place before relocating informal settlers.
* RA No. 10174 or the People’s Survival Fund (PSF) was established to provide financial support to local government units and local/community organizations for adaptation projects to increase their resilience and enhance protection of their ecosystems as the climate continues to change.

**Community organizing in times of disaster.** As an organization advocating for basic rights of urban poor, the Urban Poor Associates (UPA) sees how the bureaucracy in the Philippine government and the culture of patronage politics hinder fast, appropriate, and efficient humanitarian response during times of disaster. Moreover, climate change mitigation and adaptation projects in communities have been scarce and few, most especially if the elected government officials have insufficient knowledge on the impacts of climate change on the ground and the value of community preparedness, adaptation, and mitigation measures.

UPA’s social investigation in Tacloban City reflected the need to organize Haiyan survivors. Community organizing helped bond the people together. It allowed them to meet and talk about their issues and find ways to help one another. Meetings and get-togethers became sources of therapy for disaster survivors because they get to share their fears and uncertainties. They did not feel hopeless because the community was thinking ways on how to resolve their issues and concerns. More importantly, with an organized group in times of disaster, the people’s capacity would be increased. They found their voices to call on the duty-bearers to act faster and be more efficient.

**Funding the People's Plan**. UPA started its community organizing efforts in Tacloban City in Barangay 89 in San Jose District. This fishing village is known as one of the “ground zero” where almost all structures were swept away by the storm surge. Almost every family lost a member. According to residents, around 1,000 died and went missing in this fishing district of San Jose.

The fishers of barangay (the smallest political unit in the Philippines) were the first local contacts of UPA in the city. When international and local NGOs started bringing relief aid, they had sufficient food supplies. However, even with enough relief packs, many were still unhappy and dissatisfied most especially with their living conditions in the bunkhouses and makeshift tents. It seemed that aid providers did not adequately consult people to determine immediate needs of people and appropriate forms of assistance. The people did not just need tents. Community organizing served as an effective tool to ask the people what they wanted and what their issues were.

When UPA started meeting the fishers and their wives in Barangay 89, it learned that they wanted fresh food such as their fresh catch of fishes. They needed ply boards for their tents because the sea water seeped into their tents at night. They preferred serving home-cooked foods to their children. The men wanted to resume fishing and earn for their families.

Cognizant of what the people need and want, UPA’s work in Tacloban combined humanitarian assistance and community organizing, which always starts with where the people are and what their aspirations are. UPA’s funding was not as big as the rest of the INGOs sending help in Tacloban, but it was able to efficiently provide relevant and appropriate solutions to some of the problems in the community. After a process of community integration and assessment by community organizers UPA assisted the fishing community in Barangay 89 in terms of:

* Provision of ply boards for the tent’s floorings.
* Provision of hot meals cooked by mothers and given to young children
* Support for boat construction with the help of an expert on fishing boat construction. The male fishers acted as his assistants in this cash-for-work scheme; and
* Consolidation of community plan for a fishers’ wharf. Since most of them were prohibited to stay near the sea, the fishermen suggested a fishermen’s wharf that would serve as their resting place and lodging area before and after their fishing activities. The wharf would also serve as the designated area for safely parking their fishing boats and keeping their fishing supplies.

1. **Please provide examples of policies and practices (including legal remedies) and concepts of how States, business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisations can provide redress and remedies for individuals and communities in vulnerable situations who have suffered loss and damage to the adverse impacts of climate change.**

UPA is an NGO based in Manila working on land and housing rights through community organizing (CO). Using CO as a strategy, UPA contributed to responding to the needs of people affected by Haiyan by working with the local Catholic church, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), and other NGOs. While organizing Haiyan survivors, UPA helped set-up the consortium of FRANCESCO. FRANCESCO shared resources to find and acquire a safe location for an in-city resettlement project that is still near the sources of livelihood of people. FRANCESCO built the Pope Francis Village (PFV) with 566 safe, decent, and resilient houses for the survivors. UPA helped in forming homeowners associations (HOAs) to facilitate the planning of their own housing and negotiating with the government to help them establish their new community.

1. **Please provide examples of ways in which States, the business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisations have provided redress and remedies for individuals and communities in vulnerable situations who have suffered loss and damage due to the adverse effects of climate change.**

UPA together with the organized people’s associations or HOAs initiated the following projects:

* Strengthening of the community organization so that people can collectively “build back better” in a manner that is consultative and participatory rather than the usual top-down approach of many humanitarian organizations.
* Establishment of vegetable gardens as sources of food, additional income, and meaningful productive activities.
* Construction of temporary houses and fishing boats rebuild their communities and recover lost incomes and assets.
* Running of seminars on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) to prepare them when another typhoon strikes. These activities sought to build their capacity for collective action which empowers them to decide on how they will prepare for disaster events, mitigate the effects, and adapt to long-term changes.
* Organizing of training seminars on financial literacy and savings to build their economic resilience.
* Formation of a consortium of NGOs and church organizations to partner with the national government.   
    
  The consortium helped in realizing the people’s plan of the community organized by UPA. The Pope Francis Village (PFV) proved to be a feasible model of how an empowered community of survivors can “build back better” not just their houses but also their dignity. They were victims not only of Typhoon Haiyan but of policies that displace and exclude them, but they were able to “survive” these. PFV was made also possible with the help of INGOs, namely the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), Christian Aid, Misereor, and Mercy Relief. Support also came from local NGOs such as the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) who facilitated the beneficiary selection, values formation, and social preparation related activities and the Foundation for the Development of the Urban Poor (FDUP) who led a workshop on settlement management participated in by HOA leaders. For ensuring the families’ access to water, Megacrest, a private service provider, helped.

The following are the government’s responses:

* The national government proposed to build a tide embankment, a four-meter-high wall from Barangay 31 to the town of Tanauan in the south of Leyte island. The government said that the embankment will save people’s property and homes against storm surge in times of strong typhoons. The people living along coastal areas, most of them fishers, opposed the project and proposed to build evacuation centers instead of cutting off their access to the sea by forcing them to be move to another place. With the guidance of UPA, communities developed a “people’s plan” that would substitute the dike. With Fr. Robert Reyes, a Catholic priest-advocate known as the “running priest”, over a thousand marched to Tacloban City Hall to talk with then city executive, Mayor Alfred Romualdez, and present to him their “people’s plan”. UPA’s COs accompanied the people during meetings with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to explain their reservations about the tide embankment and present the urgent needs of the communities. UPA also organized a forum inviting Dr. Laura David, an oceanographer from the Marine Science Institute of the University of the Philippines to discuss the possible effects of tide embankment. Dr. David said that no amount of protection can significantly reduce the impact of a storm surge[[1]](#footnote-1).

To bring together the thoughts and sentiments of the fishers regarding the tide embankment project, UPA helped form fishers’ groups in all barangays to lobby for the mangrove forest and fishers’ wharf.

The tide embankment project, however, pushed through. DPWH and JICA paid the owners of all the affected structures. Although some areas had setbacks were residents just moved their houses, families in other parts of the city had no choice but to accept the payment and move to the northern part of the city, kilometers away from the sea. DPWH granted the demand of the fisherfolk to have docking areas for their boats which are useful to them up to the present.

* DPWH and Philippine Army provided resources for the site development works in PFV. The Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) and National Housing Authority (NHA) contributed funds for house construction. The city government of Tacloban expedited the release of required certificates and building permits. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) led the training for the construction team composed of the volunteer workers who spent 800 hours of sweat equity.
* The NHA provided funds to Leyte Electric Company (LEYECO) for the electrification of at least 54 model units in PVF. Before 2021 ended, LEYECO was able to provide electricity to all PFV households after complying with the cooperative’s requirements.

1. **What international, regional and national policies and legal approaches are necessary to protect current and future generations and achieve intergenerational justice for particularly for individuals and communities, from the adverse impacts of climate change?**

***Humanitarian response can be effectively done with a community organizing lens to come up with an efficient, appropriate, and timely response to the people’s needs.*** With UPA’s experience in community organizing in Tacloban during times of disaster, it saw the lasting impact of increasing the capacity of vulnerable communities to mitigate future loss and damages to lives and properties. If people are informed and their capacity as individuals and groups is increased, then they no longer have to wait for the government to solve their problems. When UPA started serving hot meals to the children going to school, the mothers realized that their sources of vegetables within their city were scarce. This prompted them to start vegetable gardening on the empty lots of private resorts whose operations had stopped. They talked to the owners and asked them to temporarily plant vegetables on their lots. This eventually improved their supply of vegetables and the surplus harvest was given to their neighbors while some were sold for additional income.

In October 2013, as the mothers started earning from their vegetable gardens and the fishers were able to return to the sea, UPA started giving seminars on financial literacy and community savings. They community members saved not just for personal purposes but also for their emergency fund that can be shared with other members. So when Typhoon Hagupit happened, the savings clusters with emergency funds opted to rent a hotel room and stayed there for the entire duration of the typhoon. They had a choice not to go to overcrowded evacuation centers.

**I*nstitutionalize, recognize, and fund people’s plans and let community-based organizations directly access climate change funds.*** The Philippine government enacted in 2012 Republic Act No. 10174 or the People’s Survival Fund (PSF). Since then, however, there were only 6 grants approved (see [Climate Change Commission](https://climate.gov.ph/our-programs/climate-finance/peoples-survival-fund)). This reflects the glaring inefficiency of the Climate Change Commission to disburse its funds despite the Philippines being a disaster-prone country.

Making "people’s plans” as basis for approval of grants for the Climate Change Commission will help the government disburse their climate change funds in a faster and appropriate manner. People can plan and propose projects devoid of political interventions of government officials. Communities should also be guided by experts, including scientists, in following safety standards to ensure resilient structures and to monitor their funds.

***Localization of humanitarian and developmental interventions.*** Post-disaster recovery interventions must be locally led. To the extent possible, people on the ground must lead initiatives and interventions because they know better the context and the culture of the locality. Localization empowers community-based associations in terms of decision-making, project implementation, coordination, and resource mobilization.

***Access funds to build decent, resilient, and sustainable housing projects of organized communities for those living in danger zones and high-risk areas based on their “people’s plan”.*** Disasters that leave massive destruction in their wake indeed overwhelm governments, and in many cases the quality of projects and services suffers . The resettlement project of NHA is one example. The government’s knee-jerk reaction after the typhoon was to prevent the people from returning to where they used to live by declaring these areas as “no build zones''. The city government even considered prohibiting humanitarian and developmental organizations from giving housing assistance and shelter kits to affected families if they will not move out of the NBZs.

1. **In 2021 at 26th session of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), some Parties and civil society organisations proposed a new financial facility to support loss and damage.**
2. **Please provide ideas and concepts on how a new facility would operate and how the funds needed to underwrite this fund would be established and maintained.**

The People’s Survival Fund is not easily accessible. It must always be in partnership with the local government or any government agencies whose interests do not always align with what the people need. The people, the community, and disaster survivors must be at the center. They are not mere aid recipients but partners whose voices and opinions must be taken seriously. UPA proposes the following:

* Make “people’s plan” the basis for funding projects most especially when the projects are for the affected vulnerable communities.
* Make access to financial facilities easily available to organized groups and CSOs. Let local NGOs and community-based organizations directly submit proposals and ask for grants for their projects regardless of scale.
* Streamline requirements and processes to make access to financial facility simple and easy most especially if the ones asking are survivors of disasters.
* Appeals for aid should not be confined only to bilateral or government-to-government appeals. Local NGOs and community-based organizations must also be recognized as potential partners to distribute aid and to help those who have suffered loss and damages due to adverse effects of climate change.
* INGOs must share adequate and accessible funding for humanitarian assistance without the tedious proposing and reporting requirements for local partners.

1. **Please provide ideas and concepts on how a new financial facility for loss and damage could provide redress and remedies for individuals and communities in vulnerable situations who have suffered loss and damage due to the adverse impacts of climate change.**

* Make in-city relocation and, where feasible, on-site/in-situ upgrading as options. Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures should not be at the expense of vulnerable communities’ basic rights including their right to housing and livelihood. Ill-prepared off-city resettlement sites do not consider the cultural, social, and economic impacts of uprooting families from their communities, and in the process lead to their further exclusion, displacement, and deprivation.
* Come up with an internationally agreed and compensation packages to persons and communities who suffer loss and damages due to the impacts of climate change. Using digital technology, these compensation packages must reach the survivors in a fast and timely manner.
* Shared Aid Fund for Emergency Response (SAFER) is a fruit of an advocacy for locally managed humanitarian funding in the Philippines in times of disaster to lessen local NGOs’ dependency to INGOs and to do timely response. SAFER can be a “model” in amplifying voices in terms of managing funds for humanitarian response.

1. **What actions are necessary to enhance actions by States, business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisations to dramatically increase efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses, including through support to developing countries, in particular small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing States, to limit the human rights impacts on particularly individuals and communities in vulnerable situations to the adverse impacts of climate change?**

* The government to shoulder the cost of installing renewable sources of energy or subsidize its cost so that the poor can be encouraged to consider renewable sources of energy when they do their people’s plan.
* Support communities and entrepreneurs to establish and create more green jobs at the community level to improve people’s mobility (and reduce their carbon footprints) and create more jobs in the community.

1. **What actions are necessary to enhance actions by States, business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisation to increase efforts to ensure that actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change contribute to reducing, and not exacerbating, the vulnerabilities of individuals and communities in vulnerable situations to the adverse impacts of climate change?**

* Legislate to ensure that “people’s plans” are adopted in government projects that will affect vulnerable communities.
* Require the consultation with affected communities and their participation in planning, implementation, monitoring, and assessing post-disaster responses.
* Inputs from the experts and scientists on climate change and its adverse impacts are significant and must be clearly understood by the vulnerable sectors.

For more, UPA stories in Tacloban City, you can visit this link: <https://youtu.be/dIW0IOZXzo0>

Sources:

[Typhoon Hagupit sweeps across Philippines - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30365721)

[Climate Change Commission](https://climate.gov.ph/our-programs/climate-finance/peoples-survival-fund)

1. People Build Back Better: A Tacloban Diary, Urban Poor Associates, p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)