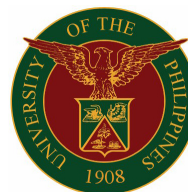




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# FOUR YEARS ON

Rebuilding disaster affected communities for a sustainable future



Policy Take-away for Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon Yolanda

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# Introduction

Super typhoon Haiyan (local name Yolanda) struck the Visayas Islands in the Philippines on 8 November 2013, displacing 4.4 million people with more than 1 million houses destroyed. The total number of people affected by the typhoon, in terms of their livelihood, environmental and food security, was approximately 16 million. A vast area of agricultural land was devastated and whole towns were destroyed. More than 6,193 individuals died, 1,061 went missing and 28,689 were injured. Many of those affected were among the poorest as the region is home to some of the poorest provinces in the Philippines.

Four years after the typhoon, the affected communities in Leyte are still undergoing rehabilitation and rebuilding. Restoring the employment and livelihood of people in the community is a vital component of post-disaster reconstruction and this process can be protracted for people living in poverty. Currently, a lack of sustainable livelihood, inadequate and unsafe housing, the inadequate provision of utilities such as water and electricity and incomplete infrastructures such as roads and drainage in the resettlement areas continue to threaten the human security of these communities. In the aftermath of Yolanda, INGOs and NGOs were extremely active, but by November 2015, many of these aid agencies had pulled out from the region and aid dried up. The region has since entered a new phase of recovery and rebuilding.

**This policy paper focuses on answering the following questions:**

1. What are the important lessons from Yolanda?
2. How can we engage with the different stakeholders for better rebuilding outcomes?
3. How can government-led post disaster projects be people-centred, participatory, inclusive, transparent and accountable?

Haiyan brought death and devastation, but at the same time invaluable lessons that we could integrate in our future responses to increasingly frequent disasters. This policy paper assesses the challenges encountered by the stakeholders during the rebuilding process and provides innovative recommendations on how to withstand new and unanticipated vulnerabilities.

These findings were based on field data collected from informant interviews, focus group discussions with various stakeholders, documents review, and a survey of 800 households in selected communities of Palo, Tanauan and Tacloban City, yearly from 2015 to 2017. Data about aid received, recovery, community support, and employment and livelihood were gathered to identify strategies for poverty alleviation in the wake of a disaster. This policy brief, released on the fourth anniversary of typhoon Yolanda, discusses the partial results of the field research on poverty alleviation in the wake of Yolanda. This paper will discuss challenges and recommend solutions in areas of engagement with communities, policy makers, local and international NGOs and women.

## **COMMUNITIES' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS:**

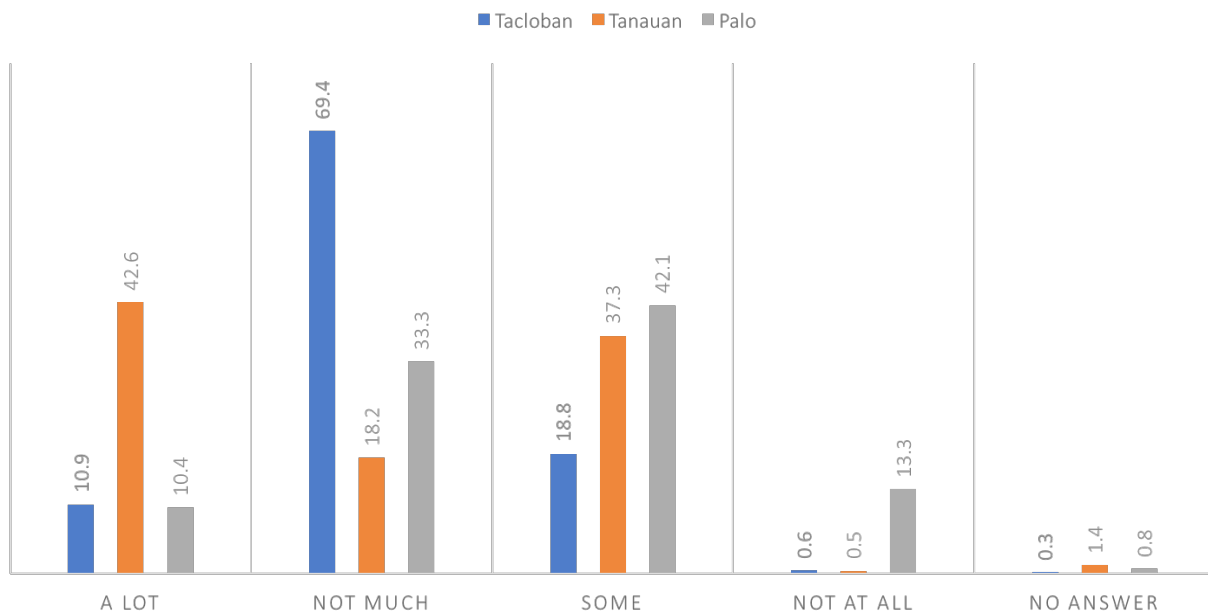
Educational attainment is generally low. About 28 percent reported that they only reached elementary level while 45 percent reached high school level. More than half (53%) of the survey respondents reported that they are unemployed. There are more females than males (65% vs. 18%) who are currently unemployed. Most of them are engaged in elementary occupations, working as pedicab drivers, food vendors, manicurists, construction labourers and house helpers. A large majority of them (83%) earn less than 10,000 pesos per month. For an average household size of 5, per capita would be 2,000 pesos per month or roughly 40 US dollars per month. Based on the household data, dependency ratio is 57.2. As expected dependents are mostly children, child dependency is 52.1 while old dependency is 5.1. There is higher female dependency (62.4) than male (52.4).

# Engaging with **Community**

Community is an important component of Philippines' everyday life. This is particularly true of poor communities where social, as opposed to material, capital can facilitate mutual support networks. Resilience must incorporate the social life of communities as well as material housing and infrastructure. Coordination and active participation by state agencies, local communities and other sectors are necessary for effective rehabilitation. Community networks and reciprocity are the predominant mechanisms through which Filipinos cope with risk.

After the disaster, 67% of survey respondents drew support from their community through personal loans, baby-sitting while they are at work, etc., while about 17% reported that there were organizations that help people in the community to have a regular source of livelihood.

Without inputs from local communities disaster relief often inadvertently rebuilds structures of vulnerability. Therefore local communities should be tapped for information that will support resilient and sustainable disaster relief strategies. 'Top down' donor driven strategies may fail to account for local socio-economic and environmental realities. This may lead to erroneous assumptions about local beliefs and values and how power and allegiance operate in local communities. These issues are of key importance as they dictate how people behave and why they cooperate or come into conflict. Local configurations of power can control or distort information gathering and in turn the distribution of goods and services.



## To what extent have communities helped themselves in the two years since Typhoon Yolanda?

Note: The data in the charts in this document are drawn from 800 x 2 surveys conducted in 2015 and 2016.

If communities and individuals do not have an input into how resilience is built and maintained, then their rehabilitation may be fragile, and the ability to manage risk will be limited. Sometimes well-meaning strategies may just swap one risk for another, e.g. risk of flooding for risk of lack of livelihood. Nevertheless, those whose interests were well served by the pre-disaster status quo are likely to resist change and endorse the power structures that rendered people and communities vulnerable in the first place. Our research found that there were some excellent examples of community-level projects such as boat building, weaving and community farming; however perceptions of self-help in communities were surprisingly low, with Tacloban being the worst performer.

Organizations that helped the most		Percent	N of cases
Self/family	Yes	31	209
	No	69	466
Barangay government	Yes	18.7	126
	No	81.3	549
Municipal/city government	Yes	30.2	204
	No	69.8	471
National government	Yes	54.1	365
	No	45.9	310
Provincial government	Yes	0.9	6
	No	99.1	669
International NGO	Yes	87.9	593
	No	12.1	82
Local NGO	Yes	24.6	166
	No	75.4	509
Foreign government	Yes	11	74
	No	89	601
Other	Yes	1.5	10
	No	98.5	665

One of the most important aspects of rebuilding and engagement with the affected communities is rebuilding livelihood options. When asked which are the top three organizations that helped them the most, they answered international NGOs (87.9%), national government (54.1%) and local government (30.2%). Thirty-one percent of interviewees indicated that they did not receive external help and were dependent on their own and family resources to help them re-establish their livelihood.

A quarter of the respondents (25.6%) own a micro-enterprise. These are mostly “sari-sari” or small variety stores, which are home-based. Other enterprises that were mentioned include small canteens, tailoring and barbershops. The majority of them (65.7%) drew their initial capital from personal savings or loans from relatives. They perceive that they have adequate knowledge to manage their business but they mentioned that they need more training in financial management (42%) and marketing (26%).

Previous experiences have demonstrated that livelihood-centered approaches to disaster risk reduction (DRR) provided people with new opportunities and enhanced ways of earning a living and that community support is key to making such ventures sustainable. Those in the most affected areas or the urban poor communities of Tacloban as well as the depressed communities in Tanauan and Palo would certainly benefit from livelihood assistance that would introduce people to other ways of making a living other than putting up a “sari-sari” store. Providing them with new knowledge and opportunities would consequently decrease livelihood vulnerability of their communities.



### CHALLENGES:

The move to permanent housing in Tacloban has been painfully slow and many more houses have been constructed than are occupied. This is primarily because of a lack of utilities in the newly completed residential areas in the northern barangays, specifically water and electricity. As a result, many people are still living in the 'no-dwell' or 'no build' coastal zone or temporary/transitional housing. The Tacloban City government has abandoned trying to stop coastal dwellers rebuilding their houses in the zone. Due to the slow pace of housing provision many coastal dwellers are living in limbo as they wait to see if and when they will be rehoused. In Palo, there are still numerous households to be moved to the permanent housing but the process is painstakingly slow. This is because the fisher folk are resisting, as the permanent sites are located far away from the sea, which affects their livelihood feasibility and also because some of the permanent housing sites are poorly selected and now constantly flooded. The lack of urgency to resettle communities to safe housing necessitated a marching order from the new president to fast track and improve government completion targets. Beneficiaries expressed frustration on the lack of information made available regarding the government's relocation/housing plan. There was little explanation or justification on the location, design and cost of the housing units. Lack of information and involvement of the local beneficiaries on the planning and progress of housing only precipitate further resistance to move from danger zones.

### Policy take away for engagement with communities:

1. Ensure communities, particularly the most vulnerable ones, are empowered to play an active role in preparedness, recovery and resiliency plans.
2. Ensure equity in distribution of aid. Community cohesion will be undermined if residents perceive that aid or housing is allocated unfairly, either by accident or design.
3. Engage the local government at various levels in validating the list of aid and shelter beneficiaries.
4. Promote community self-policing in the aftermath of disasters. Communities effectively self-policed in the immediate aftermath of Yolanda and this should be promoted as future good practice.
5. Encourage family and community cooperative action such as bayanihan which is an important coping mechanism in the immediate and mid-term aftermath of disasters.
6. Enhance communication channels between communities, local governments and aid agencies. Failure to do so will exacerbate the vested interests of national and local elites or the working practices of aid agencies which have direct implications on the affected communities.

**(L1).** A make-shift house in Anibong, Tacloban City. (Photo taken by Pauline Eadie)

**(L2).** A sari-sari store in Anibong, Tacloban City. (Photo taken by Pauline Eadie)

**(R1).** A man in a 'padyak'. (Photo taken by Clarinda Berja).

**(R2).** Water containers lined up in one of the resettlement sites in Tacloban North waiting to be filled by the water trucks of City Hall that bring water daily. (Photo taken by Maria Ela L. Atienza, November 2016)



# Engaging with **Policy-makers and Implementers**

Political leadership is a key aspect of effective governance, especially in the context of the local government. Primary responsibility in disaster response and management rests on the shoulders of the local chief executives. The Philippines has a strong set of policies, frameworks and plans for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Law of 2010 (Republic Act 10121) created the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and established local councils at various local levels to replicate the NDRRMC's responsibilities. The frontline role of local government units (LGUs) is given prominence because of the decentralized nature of the Philippine government, owing to the 1991 Local Government Code. However, local DRRMCs are often understaffed or lacking professionalization and efficiency. Many local councils do not have local DRRM plans and adequate budget. A significant gap also exists as the NDRRMC cannot supervise all the local councils.

Two main laws are deemed as sources of the formal rules or rules-in-form governing disaster management in the Philippines: (1) the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 and (2) the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (PDRRM) Act of 2010. The LGC of 1991 already provided for disaster-related duties and responsibilities to the lower tiers of government. A municipal mayor, for example, is tasked to carry out emergency measures during and in the aftermath of any man-made and natural disasters and calamities. The same law also provides that local municipal councils (i.e. Sangguniang Bayan) are supposed to come up with plans to protect their residents from the harmful effects of disasters, provide relief services and assistance for victims during and in the aftermath of disasters, and assist in their return to productive livelihood.

A more recent legislation, the PDRRM Act of 2010 provides more detailed and disaster-specific roles to the LGUs. Aside from the conversion of local disaster coordinating councils (LDCCs) to local disaster risk reduction and management councils (LDRRMCs), the law created a local DRRM office, which serves as a secretariat to the LDRRMC and is under the office of the municipal mayor. LGC provisions are more concerned with how local governments respond during and after the calamities. These rules do not necessarily consider

## **CHALLENGES: Problems of coordination among various levels of government**

While the primary task of ensuring the safety of residents during disasters and calamities rests in the LDRRMC, the LGU, and the municipal mayor, the PDRRM Act of 2010 provided for mechanisms where other levels of government and DRRM bureaucracy are mandated to provide support and assistance (see table below).

<b>Affected</b>	<b>Lead DRRM Council</b>
One barangay	Barangay DRRMC
Two or more barangays	Municipal DRRMC
Two or more municipalities	Provincial DRRMC
Two or more provinces	Regional DRRMC
Two or more regions	National DRRMC

This particular provision has led to confusion and varying interpretations especially during Typhoon Haiyan. Local authorities claim that it is the national government's responsibility to respond to and assist in recovering from aftermath. On the other hand, the national government claims it is the primary responsibility of the LDRRMCs and the NDRRMC is only supplementary.

pre-disaster preparation. PDRRM Act, however, does not only limit itself with the management of disaster alone, but also includes responses to climate change, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. Because of these, political leadership can be very critical to emergency response in disaster situations.

**Policy take away for engaging with policy-makers and implementers:**

1. Place those experienced in disaster management to lead emergency response.
2. Clarify and streamline the laws and regulations on disaster management in terms of responsibilities.
3. Approve, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the LDRRMPs and regularly review and test the plan consistent with other national and local planning programs.
4. Ensure the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local development plans, programs and budgets as a strategy in sustainable development and poverty reduction.
5. Recommend the implementation of forced or pre-emptive evacuation of local residents, if necessary.
6. Convene the local council once every three (3) months or as necessary.
7. Enhance capacities and accountability mechanisms of LGUs as they are working on the ground with communities.
8. Enhance the capacities and mechanisms of the national government, particularly key agencies in coordinating and monitoring.
9. Increase the knowledge and skills capacity of government officials working on safe housing.
10. Involve beneficiaries on rehousing decisions to ensure people are relocated to safer areas and prevent them from returning to their former houses.
11. Establish a formal feedback channel regarding vital rebuilding issues such as livelihood, housing and other related matters for the government improve their planning.
12. Ensure transparency and openness in the decision making process by ensuring public participation and public availability of information.



**(L).** Shorelines in Leyte. (Photo taken by Joy Spiliopoulos, June 2017)



**(R).** Construction of a gymnasium in Tacloban. (Photo taken by Joy Spiliopoulos, June 2017)

# Engaging with **International and Foreign Actors**

Foreign and international agencies played an important role in the Haiyan / Yolanda response efforts, particularly in the communities studied. There are guidelines and protocols for partnership and coordination with foreign and international agencies. There are also existing national government cluster system and the United Nations (UN) cluster system that pre-date Haiyan and allow for partnership and coordination with foreign and international agencies during and after disasters. The national government cluster system approach was adopted by the Philippine government in 2009 after the flooding caused by Typhoon Ondoy which affected most of Metro Manila. The UN cluster system had been institutionalized since 2008, and was implemented by the Philippine government during Haiyan. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinates extensively with the national government through meetings with its relevant Philippine government counterparts during disasters.

Based on assessments, the government played an integral role during the response efforts with the international UN cluster system joining the government cluster system and with most foreign agencies saying that coordination was good for the most part. However, different reports also highlight significant tensions between the government and international nongovernment organizations (INGOs) as the latter's response led to the sudden influx of international actors which undermined the usual procedures and relationships established by the Philippine government. Some foreign agencies did not even consult government agencies and communities in terms of the priority needs of affected communities.

International and foreign agencies have contributed to many new infrastructure projects like barangay health centres, schools, resettlement housing, and multipurpose buildings. Despite challenges in terms of coordination among themselves and with the Philippine government, their contribution to the immediate rebuilding and mid-term rehabilitation have been invaluable. However, access to health services and insurance like affordable medicine is still an issue in many areas, especially in resettlement areas. Some sections of society such as the elderly and people with disabilities need more assistance in these areas.

## **CHALLENGES:**

There are also cases of different actors working in parallel and duplicating efforts alongside cases of exemplary programming and collaboration. Parallel efforts occurred because of the following:

1. Some NGOs were unaware of the cluster system.
2. Some LGUs were also weak and/or unaware of the cluster system.
3. Some INGOs and individuals distrusted the national and local governments and avoided collaboration and coordination.
4. Coordination was difficult due to the scale of the disaster.
5. NDRRMC also had a number of shortcomings.

Thus, the duplication and parallel efforts resulted in market distortion and inefficient distribution of assistance, i.e. many families and individuals received multiple cash and other items but others did not.



**Policy take away for engaging with international and foreign actors:**

1. Ensure that understanding of external aid is only temporary to avoid long term dependence.
2. Improve coordination between foreign and international actors with national and local governments in terms of identification, distribution and prioritization of appropriate aid.
3. Be aware of local tensions over the allocation of resources.
4. Ensure continuity of leadership in these organizations to build trust. Relationships are important and the rotation of aid agency staff did not facilitate community relations.
5. Incorporate local socio-cultural norms into relief and rehabilitation strategies as they relate to risk and resilience are more likely to succeed.
6. Enhance knowledge exchange and skills transfer between the foreign partners and the local actors.



(L). A poster at the entrance of the Tacloban City Hall thanking NGOs, the private sector, and international agencies who helped the city after Haiyan. (Photo taken by Joy Spiliopoulos, November 2016)



(T). The Catholic Relief Services has been helping barangays in DRRM readiness through drills, equipment transfer, assessment and monitoring. In the photo is the readiness chart of Brgy. San Roque, Tanauan. (Photo taken by Maria Ela L. Atienza, November 2016)

(B). The names of foreign governments and international agencies are acknowledged as sponsors in a poster displayed at the Cali transitional shelter area in Tacloban North. (Photo taken by Maria Ela L. Atienza, November 2016)



# Engaging with **Women**

When typhoon Yolanda hit the Eastern Visayas area in November 2013, it did not discriminate between men, women and children. It is inevitably vital to take 'gender' into consideration during the rehabilitation and rebuilding process, as major disasters tend to exacerbate issues such as gender inequality and poverty. While the magnitude of Yolanda was felt by all the people in the areas hit, the impact was not necessarily the same for men and women, as women are often in a more disadvantaged and vulnerable position.

In planning for how individuals and households can become more resilient, the specific needs of women and the role they play in their own homes and communities should be considered. There are good practices implemented by NGOs, where women's needs are taken into consideration and addressed – such as initiatives which address health needs (prenatal training and birthing clinics [Sailors' Society]) and risk management and resilience (community evacuation centres with segregated facilities for women [UNDP]).

Women need to be trained and employed in order to contribute and thus ensure some financial stability and protection from highly sensitive incomes such as those dependent on agriculture. However the majority of efforts being made from the local government and non-governmental organizations focus on providing livelihood for the men/heads of households, with investment for materials and businesses being offered to fishermen and those wishing to start businesses such as pedicabs and sari-sari stores. While some female-focused efforts are taking place, the examples are still few; one of the barangay captains stated:

The women in the villages are sitting around doing nothing [...] We would be grateful if there are some kind of livelihood options available to us, such as an investment to buy an oven so we can start a bakery cooperative, or a weaving cooperative, so we can weave and watch over our kids, and make money at the same time [...] (November 2016)

The above statement highlights that there is a need for more training and programmes that are tailor-made and sensitive to women's needs. Women have the potential to become independent and bring additional income, talent and skills that could be invested in businesses which would benefit whole communities.

In some communities, non-governmental organizations seem to be doing better compared to government officials in terms of having specifically targeting women. For example in offering capital for rice production [CONCERN], or supporting women's groups with cocoa production and starting up businesses such as a bakery by offering capital and support with their business plan [UNDP]; or supporting individual beneficiaries and helping them increase productivity and income [UNDP]; or working in partnership with the local government to create a stronger link between labour supply and industry and to specifically focus on young men and women [Save the Children].

Another underlying issue connected to training and employment for women is the provision of care for young children so that women can be relieved temporarily of their care responsibilities and take on education and employment. The picture differs from community to community in terms of lack of day care centres. Plan International stressed the importance they place in reaching out to the most vulnerable groups in society such as pregnant and lactating women, women with young dependents and also female-headed families and offering them training in the community, so as to enable them to seek employment. Community training was complemented by other significant support measures such as supervised neighbourhood playgroups which were manned by volunteer parents.

### CHALLENGES:

Women play a crucial part in microfinance schemes as recipients of such services. Different kinds of microfinance schemes and businesses, official and unofficial, place different criteria for membership but it would seem that post-Yolanda, such schemes and businesses have become more popular options for households and communities. However, cultural and gender expectations and financial hardship put pressure specifically on women to be active in seeking financial support through lending. Lending enterprises seem to favour women as beneficiaries for a number of reasons, such as confidence in women's repayment capacity and in being more responsible towards finances than men, a very 'stereotypical' attitude towards women. Women, on the other hand, feel more pressure by husbands and families to avail themselves of such schemes, or as one of the barangay captains mentioned - *'most of them are women because they are the ones tasked by their families or husbands to join these facilities'*. Other reasons are lack of other employment opportunities and thus availability during the daytime and finally, they have a good understanding of the family's financial needs and may feel additional pressure to care for them.

The benefits of women joining such schemes depend on the service and support offered. One of the NGOs [Plan International] collaborated with a banking company on a project for community savings groups. One of the target groups is women and through such initiatives the group can raise money and the NGO can then match the amount raised. Such projects are potentially beneficial financially but also in helping members learn vital skills in managing finances. From the perspective of NGOs which implement such schemes, helping set up community groups is a more sustainable way of implementing a livelihood programme compared to cash handouts. However, a representative from another NGO [Save the Children], when discussing the popularity of microfinance schemes, also raised concerns in terms of rogue financing schemes and exploitative lenders who place their customers in disadvantaged position by charging large amounts of interest or by withholding their cash cards and holding them in financial bondage.



(L). FGD with Tacloban women (Photo taken by Maria Ela L Atienza, March 2016)



(R). Interview with Brgy. Captain Jane Mercado of Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Tanauan. (Photo taken by Ciray Morante, November 2016)

### Policy take away for engagement with women:

1. Provide education for women and the general population about the risks of using microfinance services which can be exploitative and potentially lead to a more permanent 'poverty trap', especially as previous support and expertise given to the local communities by NGOs is becoming more scarce.
2. Promote the exchange of knowledge in terms of best practices from one community to another on gender-focused programmes. The sustainability of such projects is also highly dependent on a local regulatory body as support from NGOs is limited.
3. Support women in other aspects of livelihood, such as day care schemes to allow them to enter the workforce, and also support from governmental bodies in terms of capital, know-how and ensuring business plans are viable and sustainable options.

# Conclusion

Many communities and individuals have been much divorced from the rebuilding process, as they neither have the power to determine the locations of their new housing, nor been given adequate livelihood options to rebuild their lives. They have little control over the trajectory of their recovery, which further entrenches them in their marginalized position in society. Resilience remains an aspiration rather than a sustainable reality. Genuine ‘building back better’ should be rights-based, with the goal of improving adaptive capacities and addressing and reducing vulnerabilities and risks. Resilience must be about bouncing ‘forward’ rather than bouncing ‘back’. Different government agencies and other sectors should hence come together and work closely with international organizations for the transfer of knowledge and skills in terms of global best practices. In addition, these stakeholders should engage the local communities to enhance their ability to rebuild their communities, and engage them in the process of sustainably developing their security, dignity, and resilience, much like what the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is doing. In the end, communities must be empowered to be able to develop suitable livelihood and resilience programs that they can truly call their own.



Colored houses in the Peninsula-GK Village, a resettlement site in Maribi, Tanauan, Leyte. (Photo taken by Pauline Eadie)

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