

Facing imminent threats—a focus on the Philippines

The Philippines, with a population of nearly 100 million people, is the 12th most populous country in the world. It is also one of the most prone to natural disasters. The 7,000 Islands that make up the Philippines lie within the so-called typhoon belt, and are regularly lashed by rains in the summer months, often resulting in heavy flooding. According to locals, these weather patterns have become more unpredictable and extreme in recent years, perhaps as a result of climate change.

The Philippines is an emerging economy, with deep and longstanding economic inequality. This inequality makes for a large number of people and communities highly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters of every sort – people who lack the resilience to cope in times of crisis. With this in mind, the JTI Foundation has focused much resources on populations most at risk, supporting three projects in three different locations across the Philippines.

The first of these, implemented by Asie Tana/ Inter Aide (ATIA) and its Filipino partner EnFaNCE Foundation (EnFaNCE), takes a holistic approach to building the resilience of families in two of Manila's most notorious slums. We also help Caritas Switzerland implement a project combining community-based disaster preparedness with raising awareness of the risks of human trafficking in times of crisis. Most recently, we responded to Typhoon Haiyan by supporting the emergency relief work of Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) – specifically by funding the distribution of Hygiene Kits, and Shelter Repair Kits for families left homeless by the most powerful typhoon on record.

This Newsletter shares the experiences of Filipinos affected by natural and manmade disasters, highlights the challenges still facing communities at risk, and explains how our contributions are helping to meet those challenges.



In the streets of Tondo, Manila

Resilience for the poorest in Manila Slums

The slums of Tondo and Baseco, among the largest and poorest of their sort in the Philippines, lie only thirty minutes from Manila's sleek and modern financial district of Makati.

Sat on a thin mattress with a baby in her arms, while another infant sleeps alongside her, 16-year old Miranda* explains to a social worker that she hasn't yet taken her sick child to the doctor. Her savings, which she hadn't had time to put in the bank, were stolen a few days before by a neighbor. However, on the positive side, the violence she'd endured at the hand of her husband had diminished – and she's planning to take her young daughters to get their birth certificates later in the week.

This snapshot captures something of the reality of life for many residents of the Tondo and Baseco slums in Manila.

The social worker talking to Miranda about her challenges is employed by EnFaNCE – one of the rare organizations providing support to families in these slums. Tondo and Baseco, where EnFaNCE is working on the front line to educate families about risks to health and the importance of financial independence, is one of the largest urban slums of its type.

Areas in Tondo, are only recognized by the government as a 'temporary settlement.' As a result, and although it has been occupied for the past 20 years, it has received almost no investment to

* names have been changed to protect the identity of beneficiaries

improve the livelihoods of its thousands of slum dwellers.

Many residents of the slums scratch a precarious living by sorting garbage – that can be recycled – and from peeling kilos of a local garlic. Sanitary conditions are shocking. While slum dwellers live on the seashore, at risk of disasters including typhoons, floods and fire, manifestly the most serious challenge – a lack of basic hygiene – is staring the community in the face.

EnFaNCE, supported by French NGO Asie Tana/ Inter Aide (ATIA) is addressing the challenges facing Manila's slum dwellers. For the last ten years, EnFaNCE has worked to provide the poorest families with counseling sessions, and in particular, those focusing on basic hygiene and savings. Often, information is spread through collective sessions called 'pulong', where a number of families learn about improving resilience together.

Meanwhile, personal savings, however small, can play a crucial role in building resilience to natural (and manmade) disasters. Nearly 7,000 home visits have been completed, and almost 900 savings accounts opened. Our support to the overall project from March 2013 to May 2014, targeted the poorest in improving their resilience, meanwhile the project continues.

Working in this environment requires physical and mental stamina. Adrien, a trained psychologist on ATIA's staff, has worked in the slums for six months, helping EnFaNCE to build capacity. While witnessing grinding poverty day after day is tough, he says, it's not so hard if you look at what they accomplish, and how much it helps these families.



Counseling session with EnFaNCE social worker and beneficiaries in Tondo



Rubbish accumulates as more and more slum dwellers are sorting garbage for their living



A pulong session on disaster awareness



Women peeling garlic, or *Pagbabalat ng bawang*, are earning 40 pesos (CHF 0.80/day)



Children bathing in a Tondo *barangay*

What is a barangay?

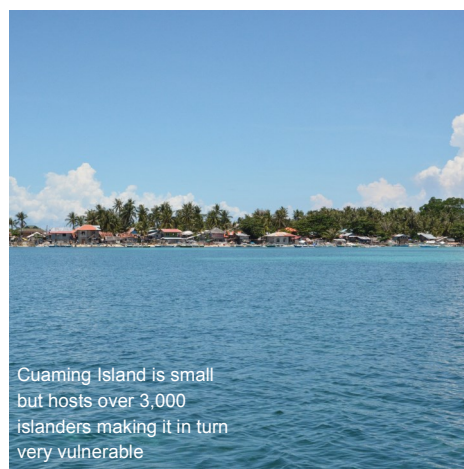
Visitors to the Philippines will quickly become familiar with the term 'barangay' – sometimes shortened to Bgy. A barangay is a small administrative area, equivalent to a 'district' or a 'ward.' There are over 40,000 barangay across the Philippines, and they are generally headed by elected 'Barangay Captains' (or Chairmen). This administrative system has ancient roots, with the word barangay apparently originating from *balangay*, a type of boat used by early Austronesian settlers in the islands thousands of years ago.

Danajon Community WATCH in and around Bohol island



Officials from Cuaming Island await visitors from the Caritas team

This will cover activities such as training in early warning signs, hazard mapping, rescue work, and evacuation plans – and working at the barangay level to improve access to rescue equipment. Going into 2015, the emphasis will shift to the social aspects of the project, and in particular, the prevention of human trafficking.



Cuaming Island is small but hosts over 3,000 islanders making it in turn very vulnerable

The tiny island of Cuaming, just off the coast the larger island of Bohol in the center of the Philippines archipelago, may appear an unspoiled paradise in the Pacific. However, a closer look reveals the many faces of potential disaster the local community have to contend with. For a start, it is a small island supporting a relatively large, primarily fishing-based community of about 600 families, or around 3,000 islanders.

The local 'Punong Barangay' – Barangay Captain, or community leader – explains that much of the terrain is scarcely one meter above sea level, as is the case for much of the main island of Bohol and the surrounding coral reefs. Increasingly severe weather conditions often mean that floodwaters can reach over two meters in height, completely submerging habitations. Despite this, the islanders still have no clear evacuation plan in the event of further typhoons, which are almost inevitable between the months of July and October.

A related, though perhaps less immediately obvious threat, is that of human trafficking – which depressingly, often follows hard on the heels of natural disasters that leave hundreds or thousands homeless and displaced. It's not only the most obviously vulnerable – women and children – who can fall prey – the captain explains that young men have also been forced to go deep sea diving

with inappropriate protection and training.

Back in 2013, Caritas Switzerland, with the Foundation's support, developed an innovative program to build resilience to natural disasters, and to highlight and mitigate the potential for human trafficking that can follow in the wake of crises.

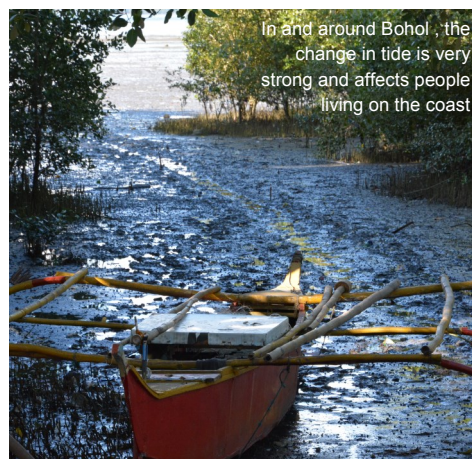
As if to highlight the need for specifically this type of project, the Caritas team was in November 2013 diverted to providing disaster relief in the wake of typhoon Haiyan.

Since 2014 the Caritas team has been intensely working on the implementation of the project, formally titled Danajon Community WATCH (Working for the Advancement of Disaster Resilience to Combat Human Trafficking). Even the pilot phase is ambitious – reflecting the logistical challenges of working in a maritime environment across a number of island and coastal communities – with 12 of the 36 communities selected living on remote islands.

As the project title suggests, Caritas will be focusing on mobilizing whole communities around better preparation for disasters, and then helping them spot the suspicious behaviors often linked to human trafficking. The project is being phased such that activity during 2014 will be focused on disaster preparedness.



Bohol is also vulnerable to earthquakes. The most recent one hit the island one month only before Typhoon Haiyan



In and around Bohol, the change in tide is very strong and affects people living on the coast



Beneficiaries of the Shelter Repair and Hygiene Kits have lost most of their housing to typhoon Haiyan

Typhoon Haiyan, six months on...

A little over six months ago, Typhoon Haiyan (known in the Philippines as Yolanda) made landfall in the Visayas, a group of islands in the center of the country. The typhoon, which struck on November 8, 2013, set records for all the wrong reasons – and has since been recognized as the most powerful tropical storm ever to hit land – with gusts of wind reportedly reaching over 200 miles per hour.

The devastation was immense, and with around at least 6,000 deaths, Haiyan has become the deadliest typhoon in the Philippines' record books. Bodies were still being recovered as late as January this year, while an estimated 11 million Filipinos in total were affected – the majority of these losing their homes to the typhoon.

Much of the Foundation's work is focused on Disaster Preparedness; however, Disaster Response is also a key and complementary part of our work, particularly where those most vulnerable to actual events of disaster are concerned. The Foundation

responded urgently by partnering with shelter specialists, Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI).

HFHI quickly went to work, in the first instance distributing its Hygiene Kits, composed of first necessity non-food items such as soaps, nappies or detergents. It is critical to get these to homeless families in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophe, as they allow for the initial clearing of rubble and dirt ahead of erecting or rebuilding more robust shelters – and is also an important sanitary measure. Our funding secured the distribution of 250 of these to families in Barangay Balibid, Bantayan island, in northern Cebu – where more than 50,000 people were affected by the typhoon.

Reduced sourcing costs meant HFHI was able to also distribute a small stipend to twenty volunteers, and further training to its local staff.

With site clearance accomplished, HFHI turned to distributing 625 Repair Kits that include construction tools and materials and which allow families to start their own recovery as soon as possible.

In addition, tents provided by another JTI Foundation partner, ShelterBox, a UK-based disaster relief charity, were also distributed. Although intended as a temporary solution to homelessness, because they are so robust, their lifespan often extends years beyond the initial crisis. As a result, their contribution to a lasting recovery can be surprisingly substantial.

Our partner ShelterBox also responded to Typhoon Haiyan with the provision of their unique disaster relief tents.



© ShelterBox

HFHI relies on a dedicated cadre of volunteers to support its mission of providing decent housing for all, worldwide. Take Colin, who arrived in the spring from North Carolina, and is expecting to stay in the Philippines a total of six months. He describes his role as ‘anything but a vacation’ – he’s responsible for monitoring the distribution of kits, and assists in rebuilding programs. For Colin, the impact his work has on the wellbeing of the local community is priceless: as he puts it, “When I hear beneficiaries say that even if they had worked a whole lifetime, they wouldn’t have been able to build such a house, it makes for a great feeling.”



Colin has been volunteering for Habitat for Humanity International since December 2013



People started using Shelter Repair Kits to rebuild safer housing

Six months after the catastrophe, the Foundation’s partners can be pleased with their role in the Philippines. Emergency items have been distributed, and the tents are still standing – providing much needed shelter for those who would otherwise be homeless. However, the job of the NGOs is by no means done.

HFHI understands that distributing Hygiene and Shelter Repair Kits is not in itself enough for families to make a self-sustaining recovery. It remains on the ground, providing training on appropriate reconstruction techniques, with a particular focus on improving new dwellings’ resilience to future disasters.

Outside of our support, HFHI started the construction of new homes in locations affected by the Typhoon in Northern Cebu, and is working with government authorities

and other shelter organizations on developing a typhoon-resistant housing model.

HFHI teams are staying on for several more months to ensure that these are implemented effectively. And that’s vital work because – inevitably – the next hurricane season is already approaching, and there’s still much to accomplish before then.

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Children in their communities are thrilled about the positive changes that will be brought about by the project

