

ACT PHILIPPINES FORUM

actalliance

HOPE

Arising

STORIES OF HOPE FROM THE ACT ALLIANCE
TYPHOON MANGKHUT RESPONSE

THE LAND FALL

On the 15th of September 2018, the 900 km-wide Typhoon Mangkhut, locally named as Ompong, made its landfall in Baggao, Cagayan. Mangkhut is a Category 4 typhoon that wreaked havoc to Northern and Central Luzon and left a trail of destruction in its path with its strong winds and torrential rains. Over 3 million individuals residing in largely agricultural lands were affected by major landslides, flooding, destruction of properties, leaving about 70 fatalities and 130 injured.

A massive damage in agriculture registering as the highest damage since Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013 placed at Php35 billion, further enhanced the problem of food insecurity in the affected regions. Typhoon Mangkhut also came at a time when the country is experiencing a significant increase in inflation rates (6.4% in August), thus adding more burden to the already impoverished, disaster-affected communities.

It is in this crucial circumstance that hope sheds light the brightest. Through amplifying the voices of the disaster affected populations, defining priorities from contextualized humanitarian needs, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerabilities of the communities, and building partnerships and promoting collective local action; the ecumenical response of ACT Alliance seeks to save lives committed to the core humanitarian standards where people is put first.

With this document, we share and celebrate stories of hope that is embodied in the action of churches and local communities together. In retrospect, we'll continue to learn from the successes, as well as, challenges from the ACT response which we hope would foster lessons of selfless and compassionate service - which leaves no one behind.

ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE

Anticipating that this will be a huge disaster event, the ACT Philippines Forum coordinated days before the landfall to discuss possible joint response. With the wide scope of the typhoon's path, the Forum decided to focus on different areas but closely coordinating each response.

Three days after the landfall, Christian Aid and the NCCP Emergency Response Team set out to assess the damage and needs of the affected areas in the regions of Cagayan, Ilocos, and Cordillera. The ACT implementing members conducted rapid needs assessment with its network of churches, ecumenical partners, and people's organizations.

Families of small farmers, farm workers, and indigenous communities living in hard-to-reach and remote areas who have the least access to emergency assistance were prioritized.

Based on the assessment results, Christian Aid and National Council of Churches in the Philippines launched a complementing humanitarian response, through ACT Appeal PHL 181, that would address the immediate need of the disaster affected families. This included food assistance, cash based and community-led support, shelter repair kits, agricultural assistance through seed dispersal and provision of farm tools. The response also provided potable water to communities whose water system were damaged.

Partners also helped existing community groups, organizations, and institutions to identify, design, and implement projects or actions to respond to their expressed needs, including help restoring their lost livelihoods. To promote disaster preparedness and resilience, CA and NCCP have integrated awareness raising on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) for the local communities to understand their vulnerabilities and capacities, and better prepare and cope with future disaster occurrences.



One month after Typhoon Mangkhut, Typhoon Yutu (Rosita), brought strong winds and heavy rains a few hundred kilometers from the same path. These two successive typhoons cumulatively affected 1,098 barangays that resulted to repeated displacements in six provinces. Through the continuing assessment made by the ACT implementing members, the appeal PHL 181 was revised to accommodate increased need and additional number of affected families which were jointly implemented by the ACT implementing members.

Food Security



WAKING UP AFTER TYPHOON MANGKHUT

By NOE CENAL

A wet and cold morning woke up the residents of Maradodon after Typhoon Mangkhut, swept through the Northern Philippines.

Looking outside, the residents are faced with the miserable reality that the rain and extreme winds made their crops no longer good for harvest - crops that they tirelessly cultivate and depend on to feed their families. It was only a week away before the harvest – a morning they cannot forget.

“When the water from the nearby rivers overflowed, traveling to and from the city center to bring in food, resources, and other daily needs was hardly possible. People were stranded,” recalled Lee Biscarra, a volunteer from Solidarity of Peasants Against Exploitation.

Surrounded by the Cordillera Mountains near the boundary of Ilocos Norte and Abra, the community in Maradodon was among the areas that experienced significant destruction by the typhoon.

LIVING IN THE OUTSKIRTS

The community hardly received aid from the government nor any organization at the time they need it the most, as they lie in the outskirts of Cabugao municipality and distant from the city center. These challenges were surfaced during the continuing assessment by the local actors. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), a member of the ACT Alliance, enlists Maradodon among its priorities for the emergency response - filling in the gaps from the aid given by the government and other organization.

In partnership with the local churches through the Cagayan Valley Regional Ecumenical Assembly, and in coordination with the local government units, the communities received relief goods which are enough to provide for a family of five for two whole weeks, enough to augment for the family's nutritional needs while focusing on other aspect of their lives as they slowly get back on their feet.

Local partners commend the relief effort saying that it serves as a benchmark for other organizations and especially for the government to follow. "It was a remarkable and tangible expression of love by the church to actively be in solidarity with the affected communities especially in this pressing situation," Lee said.

DOUBLE-EDGED RESILIENCE

While Lee acknowledged the "double-edged" resilience of the people, he also recognized the harm it could bring. "Since Filipinos are strong to endure challenges and hardships, we often forget about our rights and the need to fight for it. May this accountable service from the churches stir the people to reorganize themselves and claim what is rightfully theirs."

It is in this light that NCCP found it relevant to pair its humanitarian assistance with educational activities such as the community-based disaster risk reduction and management orientations. “The relief distribution by the NCCP helped sustain my family last year, the relief goods came at the most opportune time as we had lost all hope. I also appreciate the help I received from the NCCP and the training on disaster management they have delivered to the community members, it will help us to stay educated in case of another typhoon,” said fifty-one-year old Rogello Inay as he participates in NCCP's educational activity.

These community-based educational activities aim to raise awareness on the rights-based analysis to DRRM. It highlights the the government's role as the primary duty bearer that should provide appropriate and timely assistance to disaster-affected population and the right of survivors to receive quality assistance. It also underscore the shared role and strength of the community members in disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

Lee helps organize the community people, such as Rogello, as he envisions a dawn when people would wake up realizing their significant role bringing positive change in their own communities. Their collective voice should assert their rights that regardless of their geographical distance from the city-center, they should not be excluded from, but rather, given higher priority in receiving sufficient and fast relief programs.

Just like what the joint efforts of the communities and churches did towards meeting the sunrise again.



A photograph of a woman in a wheelchair, wearing a blue polo shirt, smiling and interacting with people at a table. She is surrounded by others, some of whom are looking at documents on the table. The image has a teal overlay.

Cash Assistance

CASH FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

By PATRICIA DE GUZMAN

At the international level, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) is increasingly becoming a major modality of humanitarian response as a complement for in-kind assistance, such as food and hygiene kits, during emergencies. Christian Aid rolled out its cash assistance through collaborative and strategic methods with the local players of communities affected by crisis.

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Christian Aid's partner NGOs worked closely with the local government units from the provincial level down to the barangay level in targeting the most vulnerable members of the community.

In Cagayan Province, HRC formed a Barangay Selection and Distribution Committee (BSDC) in all its project barangays. BSDCs are comprised of representatives from various sectors in the community (i.e. farmers, senior citizens, barangay council, barangay health workers, indigenous people, fisherfolks, etc.) that are crucial in the meticulous profiling, targeting, and monitoring of the most vulnerable households deserving of the limited resources at hand for emergency response.

PHILRADS, on the other hand, tapped the strength and capacity of the local churches to influence and engage the target communities in Divilacan and Maconacon, Isabela Province in the response initiatives. Church volunteers provided a deep understanding of the local context that made the implementation context-informed and sensitive to the priorities of the affected communities.

Meanwhile, CODE-NGO utilized its partnership with local cooperative networks in Kalinga Province that are also engaged in overseeing the Philippine Government's conditional cash transfer program. Additionally, its provincial NGO partner, Mandiga, activated its alliance with indigenous community leaders to coordinate the response activities in their project areas in Kalinga. They provided briefings and seminars relevant to the response and basic household financial literacy that are culturally appropriate for the indigenous communities.

All of these strategic interventions in project implementation are central to Christian Aid's adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) that is geared towards the protection and dignity of survivors and communities affected by crisis.

BAYANIHAN AND EQUALITY

One early morning in November 2018, Fr. Jeorge Manisem of Mandiga gathered the IP community members of Barangay Magao-gao, Pinukpuk, Kalinga outside his house for a community consultation and profiling for Christian Aid's cash

assistance. The goal was to have a compendious discussion of the cash transfer intervention for disaster response, and to validate the list of target beneficiaries in the community.

Mandiga Ob-obbo Community Center, Inc. (MCCI) is a community-based organization in Kalinga and is a member of CODE-NGO. Ob-obbo is the Kalinga term that refers to a system of cooperative endeavor wherein the whole community works together for a common goal such as construction of a neighbor's house or repair of a community irrigation canal. This is similar to the Filipino custom of Bayanihan or cooperation among community members to help their neighbor families establish or move their house to sustain livelihood.

As people and tribal leaders settled with coffee and some snacks prepared by Mandiga volunteers, the same mindset was underscored, that they are gathered to work together on a project that is aimed at helping their community recover from the disaster.

The community had a strong sense of equality. A tribal leader proposed to get the aggregate of the cash grant and just divide it by the population, so everyone receives assistance to avoid tribal conflicts. Fr. Jeorge explained the intention of the cash assistance and the initial criteria of identifying the most vulnerable families to receive P2,500 cash grant each.

Finally, community members agreed to prioritize the families with least income streams. As the team went through the initial list of beneficiaries, people were imparting their recommendations and were honest about why they felt one member was more deserving to receive cash grant from the other who was in the list. Others even gave up their spot for the sake of their neighbors who they think were most in need of the assistance. This kind of active community participation during emergency response is crucial to ensure that interventions are always people-centric, relevant, and culturally-informed.

Cash Assistance



CASH ASSISTANCE AND THE POWER OF CHOICE

By NOE CENAL

It was not only the house of Pacita Lomatac, a 57-year-old resident of Dananao in Kalinga Province, that was affected by Typhoon Mangkhut, but also her entire livelihood. “Where would I get food for my family?”, was her sorrowful question when she first saw how the typhoon destroyed her crops including black beans, cabbages, and onions. Pacita’s eyes expressed hopelessness as she was reminiscing her experience from the typhoon. Her first expected harvest was miserably washed by the typhoon. Still with hope that she might reap again, she planted the second half of her borrowed seeds, but unfortunately, like with several others from the community of Dananao, another typhoon which followed the same path as Typhoon Mangkhut left her with almost nothing to eat and to sell.

Another mother from Camalog, Consuelo Bayle, 28 years old, also shared how Mangkhut's heavy winds blew away half of their humble home which was made of bulo, a very thin type of bamboo. She and her children braved the night at a relative's house while their father was staying in another town away from home. Moreover, with little soil that was ready to farm, Consuelo, like other laborers, have suffered even worse during the recovery phase after the two typhoons. "We only depend on being hired by land owners to farm day in and day out and get paid with only a few amount" she said. The typhoon left her family with destroyed house and an uncertain future of how they could rebuild their life again. What was certain was that a long time of labor and a significant amount of assistance was needed for these residents to get back on their feet.

A month after the ill-fated tragedy of Typhoon Mangkhut and Yutu, the team from Christian Aid-Act Alliance and other local actors, visited the recovering community of Dananao and Camalog. Through the cash relief assistance, beneficiaries received cash grants that aim to provide for the families' immediate needs. Beneficiaries include local residents of the affected area whose properties, crops, and livelihood were damaged by the typhoon. Vulnerable families or groups including poor families, landless farmers, and indigenous peoples, among others, were carefully selected to receive cash support. The amount received by each family was equivalent to more than ten days of hard labor for someone else's farm whose lands were also destroyed by the typhoons.

Cash assistance provided Pacita and Consuelo the power of choice to allocate the money based on their contextualized urgent needs. Now, they could provide for their family's needs in dignity -no longer begging or asking anyone for financial support and prevents them, and other beneficiaries, from the burden of so much debt.

The morning after, Pacita with one of her child bought 25 kilos of rice amounting to more than half of what she received. She mentioned that the rest of the grant would help provide for the schooling needs of her seven children. Filled with hope, Consuelo, will allocate the support she received to building a better house which could stand the next typhoons to come.

A photograph of a man in a blue polo shirt standing in a cornfield. He is holding a large green corn cob in his right hand, extending it towards the camera. The background shows rows of corn plants under a clear sky.

Cash Assistance

DEBT RELIEF SUPPORT FOR FARMERS AFTER TYPHOON MANGKHUT

By SIMON CHAMBERS

“Every time it rains my children get scared that it will happen again,” said Rema Orden, a survivor of the typhoon and mother of two. “I will never forget how wet and cold my children were and how there was nothing that I could do.”

Residents of the Sitio Laoc, Barangay Pateng, are still recovering from the effects after Typhoon Mangkhut battered the province of Cagayan. Sitio Laoc is predominantly a farming community of indigenous peoples who migrated to Cagayan in search of a better life. Many rely on their harvest for sustenance and live in poverty where basic amenities such as safe drinking and potable water are difficult to access.

Given the financial constraints of the community, many small-scale farmers in the Sitio Laoc have no choice but to borrow money from local investors to purchase seeds, fertiliser and other farming equipment, repaying the loans when they sell their crops. Farmers whose livelihoods are the most vulnerable to natural hazards faced the brunt of the impacts of Typhoon Mangkhut which destroyed their crops shortly before the harvesting season, leaving families unable to complete the planting cycle or repay their debts.

“My house was completely destroyed, and I lost most of my harvest,” said Valentino Gonzalez, a farmer from the Sitio Laoc. “I was only able to harvest 20 bags of rice which I shared with the other families who were affected by the typhoon,” he continued.

Gonzalez is one of the many farmers whose debt has increased since the typhoon. “This typhoon doubled our debt because we still had to buy seeds for the following planting cycle even though we were not able to sell any of our harvest from the previous cycle,” said Valentino.

ACT Alliance member Christian Aid in partnership with the Humanitarian Response Consortium and the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council responded to the needs of the most affected residents of the Sitio Laoc. An unconditional cash transfer of USD 48 (based on the minimum monthly wage) was distributed to two hundred and fifty of the most vulnerable families in November 2018 to help them to get through the season.

“Typhoon Ompong has had a huge impact on our lives. The cash transfer has helped us to meet our daily needs and the needs of our children,” said seventy-eight-year-old Kag Asaid Gonzales.

While some families used the unconditional cash transfer to repair their homes and clear their debt, other families faced great difficulties getting back on their feet.

“Before my husband died we worked very hard to build our house. Typhoon Ompong has destroyed it. I am now living in

my small store under a tree. Now I am the only one working to pay off our debts so it has doubled. With the support of ACT Alliance, I have been able to pay off some of my debt and to buy some rice. I have also kept a small amount of money in case there is another emergency," said indigenous farmer Charlita Taoil.

Despite the challenges faced by the residents of the Sitio Laoc during and after the typhoon, a spirit of Bayanihan (community unity) prevailed. Residents shared whatever harvest they were able to salvage, and those whose houses remained intact took in other members of their Barangay.

"We planned to get to the evacuation center but galvanised iron sheets were flying because of the strong winds, so we went to our neighbour's house instead. We thought that there was no hope for another day, but we prayed as one family, asking for the guidance of the Lord. In times of disaster, the love of family becomes stronger," said Larmie Bayangan.

Eighty-one-year-old pioneer settler to the Sitio Laoc, Juan Bainan also emphasised the unity of the residents, "Even though we all came to Laoc from different tribes, through every disaster our spirit of Bayanihan has remained strong. I am proud to see that peace and unity prevail above all."



The freedom of choice that comes with receiving cash as aid is essential for families recovering from disaster. Being able to meet their priority needs is a crucial part of their healing process. Similarly, community-led projects enable local organizations to identify, design and implement relevant initiatives that build solidarity and strengthen sense of community. This is the essence of our Mangkhut response illustrated by the stories in this document.

Joana Villaylor

Christian Aid Program Officer

NCCP-ACT ALLIANCE WRAPS ITS TYPHOON MANGKHUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE

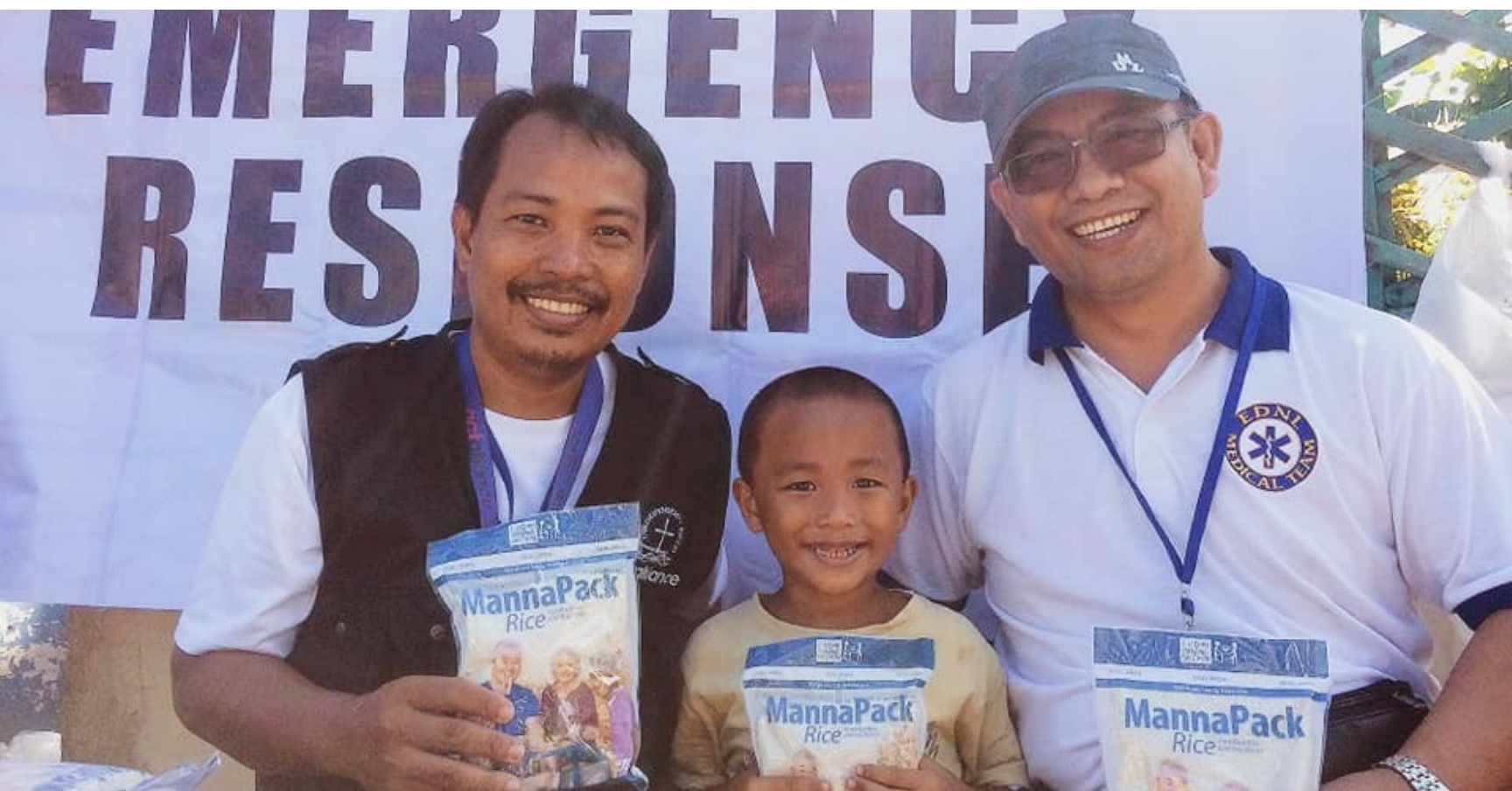
By PATRICIA MUNGICAL



The NCCP-ACT Alliance emergency response has reached 6,975 families in 18 municipalities within 8 provinces and across five regions.

“Based on the results of our assessment, we opted to concentrate on food relief. We focused on areas that were not immediately reached by the government and those that did not have assistance from other organizations,” said Almond del Rosario, NCCP’s Emergency Response Officer.

Food packs were distributed to provide survivor families with food security for at least two weeks. The faith-based group, International Care Ministries, supported NCCP's emergency response with a generous donation of 45,000 nutrient-enriched rice packs, known as 'Manna packs' which were distributed in addition to the standard food packs.



“We ensure the quality of food relief to help alleviate hunger and to support the capacities of survivors to recover from the disaster,” said del Rosario.

The Council assisted isolated families affected by Typhoon Rosita in Natonin, Mt. Province. It also responded to the needs of the Dumagat, indigenous people in Rodriguez, Rizal that were affected by the monsoon rains that followed Typhoon Mangkhut.

CONTINUED SUPPORT TOWARDS EARLY RECOVERY

Issues of landlessness and inadequate government support to the agricultural sector have placed Filipino farmers among the poorest in the country.

The poorest farmers of Northern Luzon faced the brunt of the disaster inflicted by Typhoon Mangkhut, “at the time when the typhoon struck the Northern Luzon region, farmers in the Cagayan area were just a few weeks from harvest,” said del Rosario.

“The vulnerabilities that Filipino farmers experience are escalated in disaster situations. Some families scavenged for crops that were meant as feed for livestock for their consumption after Typhoon Mangkhut swept through their farms,” said del Rosario.

The NCCP continued to provide recovery support through agricultural assistance initiatives, including the provision of farm inputs, tools and equipment. The Council also supported the rehabilitation of community water systems and repair of shelters destroyed by the typhoon.



CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY

“Typhoon Mangkhut came when we were about to wrap up our emergency response to the flooding caused by monsoon rains in the southern parts of Luzon. But the strong partnership between the local churches and the affected communities helped make the seemingly huge tasks lighter. The accompaniment and active response of local churches inspired the community to organize themselves and move towards resilience,” said Edward Santos, NCCP’s Humanitarian Program Manager.

The Council’s interventions in the impacted communities are in partnership with its member churches in the affected regions including, the Cagayan Valley Regional Ecumenical Assembly, Ilocos Regional Ecumenical Council, Regional Council in the Cordillera, Pangasinan and Central Luzon



6,975

TOTAL ACT RESPONSE

families received food packs plus 2,300 for Amity Foundation



1,030

families have access to safe and potable water after the repair of five (5) community water supply system



5,564

disaster affected families received unconditional cash grants as support to their immediate needs



192

families received shelter repair kits



4,841

families were provided with agricultural assistance through distribution of seeds and farm equipment



849

individuals participated in community-based DRRM orientations in 8 communities



8

local groups were able to implement projects and activities that will strengthen their capacity in coping with disasters

Livelihood and Agriculture



SEEDS OF HOPE

By SYLWYN SHEEN ALBA-SALVADOR

"We do not lose hope. We cannot."

These were the words of community leader Joseph Foronda, a farmer from Malawat Tribe in Canaam, Vintar, Ilocos Norte. Foronda recalled the devastation brought by Typhoon Mangkhut in their houses, crops, and livelihood stocks. "From 1 hectare, only 10 bags were harvested out of the usual 50 bags of rice. What is worrying is that we haven't paid our fertilizers yet, and now, we only have our produce for our family's consumption," he said.

Typhoon Mangkhut incurred a massive damage in agriculture at Php 26.7 billion, affecting 157,591 hectares of agricultural land.

The heightened insecurity for food and the farmers' falling into the debt trap, is a replication of their fate two years ago, with Typhoon Haima battering their land. The increasing impacts of hazards, such as stronger tropical cyclones and

longer droughts brought by climate change, pose a cycle of debts and pay offs, which has always put farmers in a disadvantaged position. "Typhoon Mangkhut is just one of our hurdles. There are also problems such as droughts and monsoon rains which we cannot stop. When it happens, we have to loan for our living. It is our only choice," Foronda added.

The situation is an exacerbation of a problem that has been existent ever since - the unequal tenant-landlord system and the lack of sufficient support from the government which keeps our farmers looking at the same solution – loaning money to be able to replant.

"There will be less planting in June since it's a dry season. We do not have an irrigation system which should have help us in times of drought," he stated. Aside from natural hazards, there were also factors of unfair trade – traders usually purchase their produce at a very low farm gate price and sells it at a higher price in the local market.

"We are anxious of course, but we must feed our families. We have to brave the uncertainties, hoping these will not be in vain."

Foronda is one of the 4,841 farmer beneficiaries of NCCP's agricultural assistance. "We are so grateful that you have reached out to us and gave us seeds, so we do not have to loan again. This is our first time to receive this much. We will be able to replant without loaning again," teary-eyed Foronda exclaimed upon receiving rice and vegetable seeds.

Aside from farm inputs, NCCP also provided farm tools and equipment to farmers' organizations to help increase their production, after Mangkhut destroyed their only source of income. These are collectively owned and managed by local peasant groups.

"We cannot thank you enough for reaching our community. You are the concrete source of light amidst our darkened path. Starting anew is not easy, but with your support, we will overcome," he ended.

Livelihood and Agriculture



COMMUNITY LED EFFORTS FOR LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY

By PATRICIA DE GUZMAN

A people-centered approach is meant to be holistic in the sense that people affected by crisis are engaged in every step of the way. They are heard through active participation in identifying the issues at hand and thinking collaboratively with them on how these key issues should be resolved through concerted efforts of the community members and partner NGOs. Through this, micro-finance interventions designed with community partners are ensured of sustainability because of the community's ownership of the projects for livelihood recovery designed and implemented with them. Partnerships like this in humanitarian work also enrich local capacities that enable them to be the front-liners in emergency response whenever it is needed in their locality.

GRANT FUND AS SEED CAPITAL

PHILRADS conducted a participatory analysis with Barangay Dicaruyan in the municipality of Divilacan, Isabela Province to assess the context and priority needs of the community. Christian Aid, through PHILRADS, provided a grant worth Php65,000 for each local partner to support their identified priority projects. Crops were damaged due to the typhoon and farmers were spending money on expensive farm inputs. To address this, the Dicaruyan Irrigators Association proposed to use the grant fund as seed capital to enable them to purchase bulk farm inputs at a lower price and provide their local farmers cheaper source of farm inputs needed to start cultivating their farmlands again for livelihood.

SUSTAINABILITY OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

In April 2019, Christian Aid and its partner People's Disaster Risk Reduction Network launched a Micro-finance Project with Afusing Bato Farmers' Organisation (ABFO) in Cagayan Province as part of a joint effort to ensure sustainability of response initiatives through Community-Led Projects (CLP).

The objective of the project is three-fold: first is to increase access of farmers to low-interest loans to address livelihood and food gap during lean months; second is to increase farming families' access to loan during emergency situations; and third is to strengthen the local capacity and stability of the organization to support the financial needs such as livelihood capitalization of its members and help enable inclusive microeconomic development.

Christian Aid's CLP initiatives, such as this micro-finance project with the Afusing Batu Farmers' Organisation, are deemed as crucial step towards ensuring sustainability of humanitarian response in the most vulnerable communities. With this microfinance project in place, for instance, Afusing Batu farmers are now more capable of leading emergency response actions within the community when the need arises.

Shelter



REPAIRING HOUSES, REBUILDING HOMES

By NOE CENAL

“33 Dead in Itogon, Benguet; Toll May Rise After Mining Site Landslide”

This is the headline after Typhoon Mangkhut triggered landslides in Itogon which buried a bunkhouse of miners and their families. 91 fatalities were recorded after search and retrieval operations for landslide victims have ended. Although dominated by large scale mining companies, the news urged the government to order halt of small mining activities leaving families of local miners with limited or no alternative livelihood.

Indigenous miners from different tribes in Benguet and Cordillera region lost the only job that most of them knew.. Mothers and fathers of Garrison had no choice but to seek jobs outside their community, and away from their family. During a discussion, a group of women jokingly agreed that, “This [their

husbands leaving] is worse than Typhoon Mangkhut.” Most fathers had to leave to the city to do carpentry, while mothers and other women had to look for work as saleslady or vegetable washer. To further augment the household’s financial needs, and also because there is no money to send them to school, some children had to stop studying and look for work. Despite being away from home and the unsecure nature of working for por dia or per day jobs like these, it is better to think that there could be no job for tomorrow than having no food for today. “After working for por dia, I need to ask around the neighborhood if there is another work I could get myself in. We, women, just wait to whatever job available for us,” Evangeline Daplisan, a 51-year-old and a mother of four, shared.



This was not the only concern that Evangeline has. Like many others in Garrison, the disaster also partially destroyed her house. But though the shelter repair kit assistance of ACT Alliance, 192 disaster affected families received shelter repair kits.

Asked about when the government will lift the ban on small mining activities, Evangeline said that, “To be back to the livelihood that we were used to is uncertain. So, we have to continue on working for per day basis.” With the shelter repair assistance, what is certain for now is that fathers, mothers, and children in Garrison who work away from their families would now come to repaired houses, with hope of rebuilding homes together.

Water System



WASH INITIATIVE ADVANCED WITH THE PROVINCIAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By PATRICIA DE GUZMAN

Water is an indispensable resource that people need to survive. And for most isolated and disadvantaged areas in the Philippines, potable water is scarce and expensive. And, it is the Government's mandate to provide access to this basic need for the people. It was identified that there is a gap on the local government's capacity to design proposals for WaSH projects. The Provincial Government of Cagayan pointed out that this is the reason why they are not able to utilize WaSH financial resources integrated on different government programs.

As a response to this need, A Single Drop for Safe Water's (ASDSW) came up with a WaSH Project Proposal Making Workshop to improve the local government's capacity in preparing project proposals on WaSH and empower its newly formed Municipal WaSH Task Force (MWTF) in Gonzaga and Sta. Ana to spearhead WaSH projects in these municipalities.

Provincial Environmental Sanitation Coordinator Engr. Felizardo Taguam Jr., noted that the training is crucial to the "local government unit's need to address health and sanitation [issues] during emergencies since the province of Cagayan prone to natural and manmade disasters."

The Project Proposal Making Workshop provided in-depth and interactive discussions on utilizing actual data from technical assessment report and actual experiences were done as learning approaches. Participants shared that making project proposals is not new to them. However, WaSH project design is different from the templated proposals the government requires them to use. At the end of the three-day workshop, each LGU drafted a crude project design and proposal which they polished upon their return to their respective offices for submission to potential funders and the Provincial Government.

The project identified by the team will help establish level III water system in barangay Sta. Clara, which is far from the town proper inhabited by mostly by indigent people. Most of their water sources are shallow well, handpumps, open dug well which are prone to contamination especially during the rainy season. Sta. Ana's Municipal Health Officer Dra. Corazon Bilbao hopes that this project will finally address water shortage during El Niño as well as sanitation issues.

"HRC introduced the Zero Open Defecation program to our municipality in which four barangays in Sta. Ana were declared as certified Zero Open Defecation barangay. The project we identified will complement the sanitation program. This activity will help us identify other projects not in the [government's templated] menu that are equally beneficial to the communities," Bilbao added.

Water System



GAMAL: RECLAIMING DIGNITY THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION

By SYLWYN SHEEN ALBA-SALVADOR

In the community of Aleb, Baayan and Pigeng in Itogon, Benguet, water system was restored through “gamal”, an Ibaloi term for free and collective labor. This was after Typhoon Mangkhut devastated their water source leaving the households in the area short of this basic necessity.

“Gamal, as a tradition and part of the local culture, promotes and enhances the value of self-reliance. We strongly believe that part of the process to recovery was for the people to reclaim their dignity out from the devastating impacts of any disaster through the spirit of collective actions,” said Rey Velasco of Kaiabang Cordillera People’s Alliance-Benguet, a local ecumenical partner of the Regional Ecumenical Council in the Cordillera (RECCORD).

Prior to the typhoon's wrath, some families living particularly in upland areas have been struggling to fetch water every day, as the source is far from their houses. "Since we are in a mountainous area, most of the challenges lie on ensuring supply of water in each household. Even our children need to fetch water from the reservoirs which takes around 15 minutes of walk from our place," a community member in barangay Ucab recalled.

The response team went to the water source and found that there were some leaks due to the strong winds and flooding caused by Mangkhut which led to contamination water reservoirs. In addition, the journey to the reservoirs were a bit dangerous if not cautious due to the steep and slippery trails, especially during rainy season. This poses another threat for the safety of the children and the community members.

Another story of solidarity can be seen when a family, living near the water source, permitted the project to use part of their land to station the water motors. "We own the land. But what shall it benefit us and the people if we deny the access to water especially in this time of trouble?" said Rebecca Remiendo, the owner of the land where the water source can be found. "We just have to share it for the whole community," she added.

"We are greatly humbled to be able to serve the communities affected by Mangkhut. Indeed, the success is not just ours, as implementors of the project, but with the whole community," Marti Cabangon, another staff of Kaiabang CPA-Benguet mentioned. "Our joy also comes with the thought of bringing back the playing time for children, instead of risking their safety in fetching water."

NCCP's WASH, through its water system rehabilitation projects, was able to bring potable water back to 1,030 families through its water system rehabilitation projects in five communities in Benguet and Mountain Province. "Water is life, without it, we cannot live. Hazards will surely come. But like water which nourishes our bodies, may our hospitality and unity continue to flow in our communities, for in unity we will not fall," Edward Santos, Humanitarian Program Manager of NCCP, concluded.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management



EVES OF ADAMS

By NOE CENAL

Others would think that the womanhood is limited to the capacity of a woman to give birth and adhere to the assigned role of the society for her to be a mother focusing on her own family. But the response of the following women prove otherwise.

"I was heavily bothered. I could not care to sleep while thinking of my church members living in just small nipa huts." Pastor Crisma of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shares as she recalls her experience the night before Typhoon Mangkhut landed and affected her hometown in Adams, Ilocos Norte.

Selfless, her concern was more for the two churches of about 37 families that she is pastoring. "The morning after, I went out with my camera to take pictures and document the aftermath. I saw roofs torn from the houses, families in the evacuation center waiting for food and worried of their properties. One church member questioned why God allowed this to happen to them."

The pastor documented the picture of devastation typhoon has left: inaccessible roads, houses and infrastructures destroyed, knee-deep floods, and crops no longer good for harvest. About forty families were isolated in a certain area with about six to eight hours of walk just to access food. She submitted a report to the Ilocos Regional Ecumenical Assembly, the regional ecumenical formation of the ACT Alliance member - National Council of Churches in the Philippines, as a hopeful call for assistance



Another woman leader is Analyn Dupagen, a barangay health worker and a mother of two. After the Mangkhut's onslaught, together with other BHWs, they stayed at the evacuation center for three days assessing any health emergencies they need to attend to, and helped in preparing and distributing the food assistance provided by the local government. Analyn also helped in the clearing operations with other community members. Her role was not limited to taking care of her family but also of her community.

Patricia Mungcal, a young DRR Officer, facilitates the community-based DRRM orientation of the NCCP-ACT Alliance. She raises awareness and understanding of the community's

vulnerability to disasters such as various geographical, environmental and socioeconomic factors; and puts emphasis on the collective capabilities and local capacities to prevent or mitigate the risks of disasters. She also highlighted their rights as community members and disaster survivors to claim what the duty-bearers – the government, must deliver to assist them in a timely and efficient way.

Patricia shared her vision that is anchored on a strong Filipino culture: Bayanihan. “We envision that the communities receiving these kinds of trainings would realize the importance of collective action in disaster preparedness. We look forward to seeing planning committees where the leaders are not just the ones doing the action but also the residents, men and women –because the communities that easily get back on their feet are the ones who are united.”

The active participation of the ‘Eves of Adams’ in the DRR and humanitarian response is a concrete testament that the role of women surpasses that of being caretaker of the family to also being a builder of the community. “Historically, women are known to be leaders in the field of politics, faith, and health. They do not only stay at home, and they do not stay silent in times of struggle. Filipino women have courage not only to fight for themselves or their family. This strength extends to the community that she is a part of,” Patricia said.



Disaster Risk Reduction and Management



THE VALUE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

By SIMON CHAMBERS

“It was the longest and strongest typhoon that we have ever experienced in our area,” said Gil Oamil, a rescue responder from the Centro 1 Barangay in Sanchez-Mira.

An early warning system notified residents of the typhoon two days before making landfall allowing families to get to the nearest evacuation centre. The tropical cyclone lasted 18 hours, wreaking damage to the community and destroying livelihoods.

ACT Alliance member the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) was the only organisation to provide support to the Centro 1 Barangay in response to Typhoon Mangkhut. Centro 1's Barangay Captain, Melbina Mangasing, who is involved with the local church, coordinated with the local bishop and NCCP around meeting the needs of the Barangay. As ACT members are rooted in the communities which they

serve, NCCP was able to quickly respond to the immediate needs of the Barangay.

NCCP distributed food packs consisting of rice, sugar, legumes, dried fish, canned food, biscuits, salt, oil and other food items to thirty-eight families. As each food-pack could feed a family of five for two weeks, NCCP helped to alleviate hunger until families were able to return to their livelihoods.

Despite the strength of the typhoon, ongoing emergency preparedness initiatives from the local government in collaboration with churches limited human suffering in the Barangay.

The Centro 1 Barangay community centre conducts disaster preparedness training twice a month where senior citizens, widowers and other vulnerable groups are urged to participate. Before Typhoon Mangkhut, residents received training on how to secure their homes from strong winds and heavy rainfall. Other capacity building sessions offered include preparedness and response to tsunamis, earthquakes and fires.

Residents are also encouraged to ensure that they keep a fully equipped emergency pail in their homes, consisting of canned food, water, a first aid kit, a radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, clothes and other essentials. Many families relied on their emergency pails once the typhoon made landfall.

"The trainings are critical to ensuring that everyone in the community is prepared for an emergency," said Mangasing. "Because of our efforts in this Barangay, we were more prepared than we were last time."

As the Philippines is particularly prone to typhoons and other disasters, emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction initiatives will remain essential for the resilience of the Filipino people. NCCP will continue to work with local government units in the areas which they responded to Typhoon Mangkhut to build the capacity of communities to better cope with disasters.

Quality and Accountability



ECUMENICAL HUMANITARIAN AID REACHES BENGUET COMMUNITIES

By SHERWIN DE VERA

Smiles filled the faces of residents affected by Typhoon Ompong (Mangkhut) in Benguet as they received assistance from the humanitarian response team led by protestant churches through the Operation Paglingap of the NCCP-ACT Alliance. A total of 425 families from Cobabeng, Ekip and Mangagew in Bokod, Sitio Pangtal, Poblacion and Adireg in Kabayan, and Upper Baculungan Sur in Bugias, received food relief on October 16-17.

This was in coordination with the Regional Ecumenical Council in the Cordillera (RECCORD) and Serve the People Brigade-Cordillera Disaster Response Network.

SPHERE STANDARDS

During calamities and disasters, the people affected by the event have the right to receive assistance, primarily from the government and as additional support from humanitarian institutions explained Almond del Rosario.

“After disasters, food relief are given as a life saving measure during the emergency phase,” he explained.

Del Rosario is the lead person for the NCCP's Typhoon Mangkhut response to the regions North of Manila.

He pointed that international standards mandates that food items should be enough to sustain a family of five for a week or about 10 kilograms of rice. Nutritional value of the food items must also correspond to the required intake of individuals which is at least 21 kilocalories a day.

“Our packs comply with the Sphere Standard, with 20 kilograms of rice, eight cans of sardines, one kilogram of mungbean and dried anchovies. We do not give noodles and coffee because these items do not have the needed nutrition,” Del Rosario explained.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development family food package distributed during calamities and disasters is enough for only two days for a family of five. It contains 6 kilos of rice, 4 cans of sardines, 4 cans of corned beef or meatloaf and 6 sachets of coffee or cereal drinks. While food packs from local governments commonly contain about half of the DSWD package.

A veteran of the Yolanda relief and rehabilitation where he served as the NCCP's livelihood officer, Del Rosario said in his eight years in humanitarian service, he has yet to see government response that follows international standards.

“As the primary responder, the government should be the one following the Sphere Standard. Besides having the fund and logistical capacity, the government also receives the assistance from foreign donors so there is no reason why it cannot provide the appropriate response,” said Del Rosario.

DISMAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Narratives from the communities reached by the relief mission illustrated how weak the government’s disaster response has been, with some not receiving any assistance at all.

Residents in Upper Baculungan Sur claimed they received no assistance even for the opening of their roads.

“They [the government] did not attend to our needs after the calamity, they just don’t know how hard it is for us here after the typhoon,” said Laldi Bilango, a member of the barangay council in mixed Ilokano and Kankana-ey.

The councilman shared they opened the roads themselves, by pooling funds to rent a backhoe and community labor.

In Kabayan, the goods delivered by choppers were only distributed a week after, claimed the recipients during a brief program before the distribution.

While already passable, clearing is still ongoing along the Kabayan-Bugias road, with some portions under constant watch for falling rocks. The municipality was isolated for almost five days after the typhoon.

Beneficiaries in Barangays Ekip and Cobabeng also noted that items given during the activity are much greater than the ones distributed by the national and local governments. In Sitio Mangagew, Cobabeng, residents said the team was the first to bring relief goods after the typhoon.

Del Rosario said their team heard common stories from communities they have visited, noting that complaints ranges from insufficient, inefficient and politics-tainted relief delivery.

GET ORGANIZED

The barangay chairperson of Ekip, Francis Delfin, acknowledged the role of the local people's organization Sakbat, who reached-out to Kaiabang for assistance right after the calamity.

He said that in the past, it was also Sakbat that facilitated the delivery of relief goods that they pooled to start a cooperative that provides them with cheap rice and groceries up to this day.

Residents of Cobabeng also affirmed the importance of their association not only to get assistance during disasters but also for their other needs.

In Baculungan Sur, the activity also served for the community organization to rekindle their campaign for increasing the farm gate price of their produce and demand for production subsidy from the government.

Kaiabang's Lilian Falyao said that local organizations are vital in asserting the rights of communities for sufficient and efficient relief delivery.

"For the past years, the success of Kaiabang's response to disaster-stricken communities is anchored on the existence of people's organizations that provide timely and appropriate information, the necessary manpower to move the goods, and manage other assistance such as livelihood support," she said.

Meanwhile, Del Rosario reminded the beneficiaries and their local partners that disasters do not only arise from natural occurrences. He underscored that organizations must also unite against projects that result to man-made disasters such as destructive projects and militarization.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Message from a Youth Volunteer

The infants, children, and the youth are the most affected by disasters, especially those belonging to the marginalized sectors of our society. Our role as young people today is very important as each one of us is born with different gifts, talents, capabilities, and uniqueness which we can use to help others who are in need.

The best way to encourage more young people to serve is by sharing your experience. Building up our courage to speak up and molding us to lead now and for the future generation is what the world needs.

Jacob Trent Ngileb

Youth Volunteer from the Episcopal Church in the Philippines



Message from an ACT Members' Staff

The youth today are most especially exposed to humanitarian crises and impacts of climate change, compared to the generations that came before us. Our generation knows that the world is in crisis and most of us, especially those from the marginalized sectors, witness and bear the heaviest brunt. And while it is important to safeguard the rights of the young people in any humanitarian crisis, it is also important to engage them and harness their compassion and capacities for humanitarian preparedness, response, and advocacy. We have unique skills to offer, curious minds, and thirst for justice. This could easily be seen in the dynamic global youth movement for climate justice. Locally, we see this as the young people stand in solidarity with our farmers, indigenous people, and workers.

As a young humanitarian worker and advocate for human rights and climate justice, I am blessed to be exposed and learn from the communities and survivors of humanitarian emergencies. And I want to share this opportunity with my fellow young people through community organizing. Because the energy, skills, and compassion is already present among the youth, organizing and mobilizing them are now even more urgent and relevant.

Patricia Mungcal

Program Assistant on DRRM, NCCP



Messages from an ACT Members' Staff

Working with faith-based organizations gives me the feeling of belongingness and security. It is where people have common advocacy or calling of helping those who are in need and believing that what you do to others is a result of the faith that is founded in one's being which is to share the gospel which is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Passion and commitment is evident to each staff and volunteers. Traveling to remote and risky areas just to reach those who are disadvantaged and most affected by typhoons and disasters is not a hindrance. You can hear them saying that God will protect us and provide what the community needs, and that is faith. Faith that produces joy and love that transcends to every person who receives help and trusting that in every smile that you see gives the assurance that your labor is not in vain.

Bennette Mañulit

Response Officer, Christian Aid

The background image shows a group of people in a forest setting. A woman in a plaid shirt is on the left, and another woman is on the right holding a baby. In the foreground, there are several large white bags with the text "act alliance RELIEF PERATION" printed on them. The entire image has a red overlay.

Messages from an ACT Members' Partner

As a Christian and an indigenous person myself, what drives me to do humanitarian work is the passion for service even in times of calamities whether it is man-made or natural disasters. It is innate within us as indigenous people the value of sharing what we have to people in need and those who are suffering, coupled with Christian mandate of giving or sharing our talents, time and resources to the least, the lost and the last amongst our people. In serving our people, we are also serving the LORD our God who provides us with our daily needs.

Ptr Maricar Delfun
Coordinator, Regional Ecumenical Council in the Cordillera



LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE TYPHOON MANGKHUT RESPONSE

By JOANA VILLAFLO, ANA MARIE DIZON, EDWARD SANTOS



PRIORITIZING THE UNREACHED AND THE MOST VULNERABLE

SETTING CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZATION

The NCCP and its regional ecumenical councils (RECs) held coordination meetings to consolidate rapid needs assessment data and jointly develop a selection criteria as guide in prioritizing most vulnerable communities. These include the extent of damage to properties and livelihoods, hard-to-reach and unserved/underserved areas, and capacity to recover of the affected families. The wide network of churches present or having ministries in the most remote areas made it possible to reach the isolated communities. While, CA and its local partners chose to bring help to the most remote areas, upland and coastal communities where indigenous groups live, which can only be reached through hours-long boat rides and treks and helicopters.

Along with the conscious choice of reaching these remote places, the ACT response also ensured that the most vulnerable sectors are given priority by using a selection criteria. Continuing assessments helped define appropriate and relevant interventions based on changing local context and needs. The beneficiary selection and validation processes were communicated to all stakeholders through community consultations.

CONCRETIZING HUMANITY AND IMPARTIALITY

To maximize resources, NCCP and CA have committed to serve and aid affected families who have minimal capacity to recover or have no/limited access to basic social services. ACT implementing members and its ecumenical and local partners continued to adhere to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) commitments on delivering quality and accountable aid. Local churches were guided to practice impartiality in beneficiary selection by not discriminating based on religious affiliation. In delivering support to affected communities, partners were encouraged to employ inclusive processes such as providing accessible distribution site, addressing the special need of vulnerable groups and avoid proselytizing.



MAXIMIZING LOCAL CAPACITIES

DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The NCCP, as the only national ACT member, was able to deliver assistance immediately, despite some delay of international support, by maximizing its reserve emergency

funds. Pre-arranged agreements with trusted suppliers such as credit line and flexible payment arrangements, expedited procurement and facilitated faster delivery of relief goods.

The response also reflected areas of improvement in CA's internal processes. Mangkhut demonstrated the system of support between HD/ICH and the country team, especially in the light of the Philippine office's small team and capacity. This response enjoyed a much needed hand from London and showed how internal processes could be facilitated and expedited through support and communication.

Core competencies were continuously developed and improved among the NCCP and CA staff and local partners. Policies and mechanisms are regularly reviewed and enhanced to adapt to changing contexts (i.e. child protection and safeguarding, assessment templates, complaints response mechanism).

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS

Several years of training and capacity building of the NCCP's regional ecumenical partners on disaster risk reduction and emergency response have laid down the foundation for a more inclusive and relevant humanitarian response. The RECs regarded the past trainings on disaster preparedness and response planning, and the organization of the Ecumenical Disaster Response and Management Committees as key toward delivering a more efficient and effective response to Typhoon Mangkhut.

Local churches, which are already integrated in the communities, can become first responders in emergencies, and will remain there even after the crises. Churches are rich in both in-human and material resources, that need to be fully maximized (i.e. churches opened their facilities to accommodate evacuees, church volunteers were mobilized in the relief delivery operations). Aside from the tangible, local faith leaders exercise some degree of influence which can promote social values such as 'bayanihan' (communal action

of helping one another), compassion to the needy, and service to the poor which are very essential in times of disasters. Faith actors have also performed special role in providing psychosocial support through personal counselling, church fellowships and worships and pastoral visitations.



While, CA espouses the partnership approach, giving decision to the local partners to lead the response. This, however, entails strategic support from CA as a partner organization by acting as ad hoc technical guidance provider throughout the response period. Cascading of knowledge and information to the field/local level is important, with an awareness of the varying levels of capacity of local/community-based partners. This leads to the question of 'how local is local'? There appeared to be two layers within the localization spectrum – national level organizations and local organizations based in the intervention area. For the former, support may be limited due to geographic presence and limitation in resources while for the latter, being rooted in the area gives them better capacity to monitor and provide support.



COORDINATING AND COMPLEMENTING RESPONSES

The Typhoon Mangkhut response was carried out alongside several other interventions of various organizations, maximizing opportunities for collaboration and complementation.

The NCCP served as a coordination point for the various humanitarian responses of its member churches, community-based organizations, and local partners. Regular coordination meetings held between NCCP Emergency Team and partner RECs helped spawn a synergy among its members through information sharing and capacity/response mapping. However, engaging more churches in the ecumenical response is a continuous effort which the regional EcuDReaMCs must learn to take on.

Strong coordination and relationship of local churches with community-based people's organizations facilitated rapid needs assessment and smooth preparation for relief delivery operations. For instance, the local farmers' group in Ilocos, facilitated community consultations and decision-making sessions involving survivors, led to timely delivery of appropriate livelihood assistance. This has also strengthened the spirit of volunteerism in the community by sharing resources and capacities in the actual RDOs.

Established partnerships through multi-sectoral groups and other faith-based organizations have also resulted to complementation. Coordination with Serve the People Brigade in Cordillera allowed NCCP to assist unserved communities, while the Roman Catholic church opened its parish to accommodate the Protestant team and become staging area of goods.

While, CA's cash grants in the early weeks post-typhoon was complemented by assistance from other organizations like Save the Children, Oxfam, Americares, Humanity and Inclusion, Islamic Relief Worldwide and WFP which provided education, WASH, cash, food security and agriculture interventions. CA's partners also worked with other agencies and faith-based organization which led to holistic response. For instance, CA's cash and community-led projects through PDRRN were partnered with core shelter and financial inclusion initiatives through the support from Oxfam and Caritas Germany in Cagayan. Mabuwaya Foundation and New Tribes Mission were instrumental in logistics support which helped PHILRADS reach Agta communities in Valley Cove in Cagayan by utilizing their helicopter.

Courtesy visits to the local authorities such as the municipal DRRM offices and barangay centers promoted transparency and avoided duplication of responses in affected areas, thus making the response more efficient.





MONITORING AND ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

Regular monitoring visits were conducted to ensure effective delivery of services.

Local ecumenical partners aided the monitoring of the early recovery and rehabilitation services set up by NCCP even beyond the project period. Continuing assessments conducted by local partners resulted to relevant changes in the project intervention (i.e. need to repair community water systems instead of providing hygiene kits). Conduct of post distribution evaluation with the local partners has also promoted learning and recommended improvements in the response.

Continuing assessment and post distribution monitoring also allowed NCCP to provide additional agricultural assistance to the communities in Benguet affected by Typhoon Yutu (Rosita) which traversed through the same path in Northern Luzon a month after Mangkhut.

Following the provision of cash support to families, post-distribution monitoring was conducted by CA and its local partners to check on the appropriateness of support, manner of delivery, utilization of cash, among others. For the small grants, regular conversations with local organizations were done by

the partners in Cagayan and Kalinga. However, there was some difficulty in monitoring in Isabela due to the proximity of the area which was exacerbated by weather and logistical challenges, but PHILRADS is still able to provide remote support.

LINKING RESPONSE TO RESILIENCY

NCCP recognizes the need for sustaining the gains of community participation to promoting resilience even after the response. The community based DRRM/CCA orientation conducted in target communities received positive feedback raising awareness on survivors' right to receive assistance, right to hold the primary duty bearers accountable, and providing a platform to discuss and plan emergency preparedness and response activities involving barangay leaders and community members. The active engagement and participation of the local churches and people's organizations in the barangay/municipal DRRM committees provided opportunity to sustain these efforts.

Specifically, for the community-led projects of CA, a study was done using the Linking Preparedness, Response and Resilience (LPRR) framework. Findings show how projects are aligned with the resiliency objective, informed by existing vulnerabilities and recent disaster impacts. These were identified by the local groups themselves but were validated, developed and refined with the support of NGO partners. In addition, sustaining the support of partner NGOs is also affected by NGO partner capacity, geographical presence and resources.

Close coordination with local government units is crucial in this aspect given the limitations of support by local partners post-project. Working with local leader and government agencies in all stages of the response allowed the LGUs to assume ownership and carry on with the task of supporting the communities even after the project duration.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IS KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Community organizing as a strategy employing the rights-based approach is essential so that the affected population recognize their rights and the support due them. It is a long term process, yet it leads to survivors affirming their self-worth and capacity to recover from the disastrous situation.

Their empowerment for self-determination is as crucial as their mobilization into disaster response. Thus, community participation is central in all aspects of the humanitarian response. For instance, management of farm tools and other farm inputs is more effective when policies and guidelines were developed and agreed upon by all members of the farmers' organization. Memorandum of understanding or partnership agreements developed by the survivors themselves, with minimal guide from the NCCP, clearly identifies the roles of all stakeholders, promote ownership and a sense of collective responsibility.





LEARNING AND IMPROVING

ACT implementing members and partners captured the lessons and best practices through focus group discussions, regular debriefing and reviews, and joint evaluation sessions.

In the post response inter-REC learning events, improvement of emergency preparedness and response plans have been recognized as the most urgent action. This includes updating on their EPRPs and applying the learning points from the Typhoon Mangkhut response especially on coordination, sharing of resources, alliance building and capacity building. While, some leaders of community organizations are also invited to participate during project evaluation with local partners.

CA partners, HRC and CODE NGO, both had learning reviews as organizations, after completing the first phase. Partners were aware of the value of reviewing and evaluation past actions and applying lessons in the next projects and programming. CA brought partners, including NCCP, together for a comprehensive review and lesson learning action on January and May 2019.

On top of these learning sessions, the NCCP, together with the Catholic and Evangelical group, jointly reflected on the significant role of faith-based organizations in Typhoon Mangkhut response. The learning event highlights the distinctive character of FBOs in responding to a crisis its significant role in upholding human dignity, putting people at the center of its intervention, promoting compassionate service, providing psychosocial support, and amplifying the voices of the unheard in a humanitarian crisis.



ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Conscious efforts were made to ensure accountability among ACT implementing member's local partners and RECs through continuous education and promoting adherence to safeguarding policies and accountability standards such as the ACT Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policies, and Complaints Response Mechanism. Volunteers and local partners were given orientation on these policies and standards prior to relief delivery operations.

COMMUNICATING AND MANAGING FEEDBACK

In every relief distribution, a brief orientation is held to discuss the objectives of the intervention, share situational updates, and pertinent information on the assistance to be distributed. During this time, the NCCP and its local ecumenical partners also share solidarity messages to help uplift the community and explain how the beneficiaries can also hold the responders accountable in its conduct. While, CA supported its local partners in installation of accountability mechanisms through communication materials, dialogues, orientations and discussions.

Similarly, complaints and response mechanisms were in place, with multiple channels and formats, according to the different preferences on each area. Complaints, feedback or suggestions are received through channels appropriate to the context of the community.

NCCP distributed accountability forms/flyers together with the relief goods containing a list of food and non-food items that each family shall receive and the contact details of the NCCP focal person for any complaint/feedback. Complaints and feedback were forwarded to appropriate committees for resolution. Complaints were also welcomed during project monitoring visits and/or community assemblies.

CA received a total of 3,400 feedback and complaints, majority of which were expressions of gratitude while the rest are complaints and questions on non-inclusion in the beneficiary list and on the selection criteria. All concerns were addressed through revalidation or explanation on the criteria with the help of local community leaders. While NCCP and CA's partners have established complaints and feedback mechanism, they recognize points for improvement in the aspect of tracking and documentation.

On the other hand, visibility materials released through regular social media posting, publication of articles in the website and situation reports through emails, not only help fundraising efforts but also promote transparency to the public.

ACT Philippines Forum members approximately raised

**US\$ 1,143,000 OR
PHP 54,724,000**

for Typhoon Mangkhut's humanitarian response in 2018

**CHRISTIAN AID SPENT
GBP 352,568 OR PHP 19,250,000
(OUTSIDE ACT APPEAL)**

**NCCP SPENT
US\$ 681,179 OR PHP 35,474,069
(ACT APPEAL)**

DONORS: Christian Aid, Church of Sweden, COS SIDA Funds, CWS New Zealand, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Finn Church Aid, Irish Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Primates WRDF Canada, UCC-USA Disaster Ministries, United Church of Canada

FORUM-LED RESPONSE

The ACT Global Strategy Hope in Action – Putting People First is a timely and relevant call in today's volatile humanitarian, development and political context. ACT, as a Christian, church-based alliance, recognizes, in all its

engagements and responses, the primacy of the well-being of the people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, by upholding human dignity, ensuring the realization of human rights, and bearing prophetic witness. ACT's strategy on shifting to national, sub-regional and regional forums to lead the implementation of the Alliance's work is key to a more contextualized and locally-led response.

Coordination was a vital component of the ACT Philippines Forum's response to Typhoon Mangkhut. At the onset, there was a common goal to collaborate in all phases of the project - assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and learning. Having in place a clear EPRP, orchestrating a functional division of tasks among ACT members and harmonizing a cohesive strategy, was one of the key enablers for an effective and accountable humanitarian response.

The relationship founded on a common understanding of partnership and cooperation between and among forum members is crucial in this aspect. The Forum served as a dynamic platform for its international and national members, not only for sharing information, but also became an opportunity for leveraging partnerships, resources and capacities. For instance, NCCP's resources were shared to implement the cash assistance of Christian Aid's local partners, while LWR facilitated a SPHERE orientation to capacitate ACT implementing members' partners at the beginning of the response. Later on, ACT members maximized the various areas of synergy and addressed the challenges within the Forum collectively.

With the intensifying levels of natural and human-induced disasters, the Forum acknowledges that the humanitarian community needs to invest more in scaling up local capacities through flexible programming approaches, strengthening local organizations, and emphasizing emergency preparedness and linking to development and advocacy for a more sustainable humanitarian response.



The background image shows a humanitarian aid distribution site. In the center, a white truck with its back open is being loaded with boxes. A large purple banner with the words "EMERGENCY RESPONSE" is visible on the truck's side. A crowd of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered around the truck. In the foreground, an elderly man with dark hair and a blue patterned shirt is looking towards the right. Next to him, a woman with dark hair tied back and wearing a light blue cap is also looking in the same direction. The scene is set outdoors during the day.

EPILOGUE

LOCALIZATION: KEY TO HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS

By FEMIA BALDEO

The ACT Philippines Forum is committed to localize humanitarian response in a coherent, collective manner, and in a way that is responsive to the context of the affected population, putting the people at the center. As localization has become a strategic approach for the ACT Forum, we strive to implement measures and initiatives for a more balanced humanitarian system, where the role of the local humanitarian actors is valued and supported.

Started during the Haiyan Response, the Forum's journey of localization has gained traction as manifested in the ACT Forum's Emergency Response for the Mangkhut Typhoon. The implementation results of our response had repeatedly confirmed that localization is the right direction not only because it is considered morally and ethically right but because there is an increasing body of evidence that localization increases impact and improves effectiveness as it ensures communities and people affected by the typhoon are at the center.



The ACT Forum (NCCP and CA) worked with a diverse range of implementing partners on the ground, optimizing existing partnerships and strengthening the voices of the affected populations in four regions which were badly affected by Mangkhut.

The regional ecumenical councils (RECs) of the NCCP proved to be very effective partners in the Mangkhut response because of their established relationships with the FBOs at the national level and their position of influence and trust coupled with their knowledge of the community context. This has facilitated a locally-led response which provided better access and connections with the affected communities. As local actors, the RECs of the NCCP and other local organizations that CA worked with were also affected themselves and this has given them the personal understanding of what needs to be done.

To facilitate the FBOs and other local partners on the ground to unleash their potential as humanitarian responders, LWR together with NCCP and CA undertook some capacity building activities particularly briefing on SPHERE and the Core Humanitarian Standards, as well as, orientations on the Code of Conduct. This is out of our commitment to cause no harm to the communities we serve.

WAY FORWARD...

While there have been successes in engaging the FBOs in the Mangkhut response, much remains to be done. The ACT Forum will continue to engage the Philippine FBO Forum (FBO PH) more strategically to enable them to invest in their national and local networks, as they act as a catalyst to raise the profile and influence of front line responders. FBO PH is a local faith-based network composed of the humanitarian arms of the Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant groups in the country. To this end, the ACT Forum continues to make greater effort to support and enable the local actors, the FBO PH and other local organizations and LGUs to enhance their capacity to lead the humanitarian response. Moving forward, it is hoped that the ACT Forum will be able to work with other counterparts both nationally and internationally not only in humanitarian response but also along development, climate change and gender equality to reduce peoples' vulnerability.



SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ACT Philippines Forum would like to thank all of our volunteers, regional ecumenical councils, local partners, donors and partner communities who made this Typhoon Mangkhut Response a meaningful and worthwhile experience.

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